



WWF

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GUYANA'S PROTECTED AREAS KICKOFF

New legislation paves the way
for country's first ever national
system of protected areas

Although probably better known for its
gold and diamonds, Guyana, located on
the Northeastern tip of South America,
boasts a much more valuable wealth: its
nature, which as from now will be safer
than ever before.

Close to eighty per cent of the country's
surface is covered by pristine forests,
home to **(read more...)**

LIVING AMAZON INITIATIVE

For a living Amazon

October 2011 | panda.org/amazon

Kaieteur Falls National Park,
Guyana

ALSO INSIDE THIS EDITION...

The two shades of Amazon gold:
small scale mining, large scale impacts



New publications & resources



AN AMAZON VISION

CLAUDIO MARETTI

A message from the Leader of the Living Amazon Initiative

Today, more than ever, the conservation Vs development dichotomy is being put

to the test in the Amazon. Some months ago, members of the Brazilian parliament introduced proposals to change the Forest Law, originally approved in 1930 to protect natural vegetation, slopes, water sources and local populations.

These changes, allegedly presented as a contribution to Brazilian agriculture, would actually enable thousands of local authorities to allow forest clearing for “food production” - even in areas currently protected -; reduce the extension of protection forests along streams and rivers; release sensitive areas for cattle raising; allow the felling of tree species under threat; and reduce the area of natural vegetation that must be kept in rural landholdings, in the Amazon and beyond.

Fortunately, civil society - both nationally and internationally - has strongly advocated for reconsideration in this regard, and recently, formal requests for more time to analyze the proposed changes have put off voting within the Committees appointed for this task, which would hopefully enable considerable improvements to the current text.

As this happens in Brazil, the National Parliament of Guyana has recently approved the Protected Areas Bill which paves the way for the country's first ever national system of protected areas, in a country with over 80% of its territory covered by pristine Amazon forests.

On one hand, this shows how the fate of the Amazon is clearly linked to commercial and political trends, and thus, to each one of us. On the other hand, it also exemplifies how important it is for civil society and authorities in the region to continue fostering their countries' leadership in the fulfillment of international commitments, especially with regard to the goals for the reduction of deforestation and habitat loss and the maintenance of ecological services as an adaptation measure to address climate change, locally, regionally and globally.



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(cont.) GUYANA'S PROTECTED AREAS KICKOFF

harpy eagles, jaguars, river dolphins and manatees, and an array of indigenous groups still inhabit these unique ecosystems.

According to WWF's Living Amazon Initiative (LAI), the Guiana shield is one of the most important places for conservation within the Amazon; however, unlike the rest of the countries in the region, no formal protected areas system has existed in Guyana until now.

"In recent years, major steps have been taken by the national governments in the region to articulate their systems of protected areas under a regional action plan, and Guyana may now be able to contribute even more to this biome-scale commitment to conservation", says Claudio Maretti, Leader of WWF's LAI.

<2%
TERRITORY
IS CURRENTLY
PROTECTED

Less than two per cent of the country is under some kind of protection, compared to the recent global decision to achieve 17% (CBD CoP-10), and thus it is difficult to control extractive activities such as logging and especially illegal mining which have been increasingly affecting fragile ecosystems such as the Amazon forests, which are also critical as climate regulators. This is why; the conservation community has had their eyes set in this country's huge potential, for a long time.

A long awaited commitment

After several years drafting and consulting proposals to build consensus around a much needed protected area legislation, on July 7th, the National Parliament approved the Protected Areas Bill setting the path for a much greener future for Guyana.

This recently approved law is not only paving the way for the creation of new protected areas, but will also facilitate mobilizing the necessary funds to design and set the foundations for the management structure of a new protected areas system in Guyana.

"This, too, will aid the country towards meeting the protected areas targets established by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to which Guyana is a signatory" says Patrick Williams, country manager of WWF Guianas.

Towards a regional and global contribution

WWF established its presence in Guyana in 1999 and has ever since worked side by side with local populations and the government in promoting the conservation of the country's unique heritage.

Moreover, its network of specialists has supported this effort from the get go. Recently, on February 2011, authorities from WWF US, WWF Forest and Climate Initiative, WWF-Norway and WWF-Guyana had a

meeting with President Bharrat Jagdeo as to further commit the necessary support towards promoting protected areas in Guyana in the broader context of the Amazon and the country's commitments to the CBD.

In this regard, WWF's Living Amazon Initiative is already planning to take the next steps as to help assess land use planning and support the creation of biodiversity reserves in Guyana which are expected to complement a new national system which may soon be articulated with that of other countries in the region.

During last year's Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 10) in Nagoya, Japan, the ministers of Amazonian countries took a historical step by committing their support to foster a new comprehensive vision for conservation in the region, based on articulating the progress of the national systems of protected areas. Ministers and authorities from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Suriname and Guyana launched the first report of the Programme of Work in Protected Areas (PoWPA) on the Amazon biome, and committed to support the regional action plan for the 2011-2020 period. In this regard, according to Maretti, "this is certainly the best possible step Guyana's government could have taken towards helping build an Amazon-wide conservation vision, not only for the benefit of the country and the region itself, but of the world, and WWF will do its best to support this effort".



Protected areas and safe climate

Protected areas are not only important for biodiversity conservation, but also as means to preserve cultural and social values, and to maintain environmental services towards reducing or avoiding green house gas emissions as opposed to other plans for the region, such as hydro energy infrastructure.

This is why WWF, along several important partners, has over the years supported the efforts by Guyana's Government to adopt a Low Carbon Development Strategy, which strongly focus on avoiding deforestation, under the framework of an agreement with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, and in compliance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.



Giant otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) in the Rewa River, Iwokrama reserve, Guyana

THE TWO SHADES OF AMAZON GOLD: Small scale mining, large scale impacts

Miners in the Guianas take the first steps towards improving their practices

As gold prices increase, mining operations have

been going deeper into the Amazon, without extractive practices necessarily getting any better. Instead, small scale mining is becoming a “larger” threat than ever before to the region’s forests and rivers.

In countries like Peru, the Guianas, particularly Suriname, and Brazil gold mining is going out of control, as the operations get bigger and the impacts worsen. As to begin the urgent search for solutions, WWF Guianas recently held a high level Regional Conference on Goldmining in Paramaribo, Suriname bringing together experts from Guyana, French Guiana, Suriname and Brazil.

In the event, co-hosted with the Ministry of Natural Resources of Suriname, the specialists and members of the mining sector discussed the current status of small scale gold mining in the four countries, which according to recent reports is becoming an growing pressure to the Amazon’s

biodiversity, as well as a source of social distress and conflicts. Moreover, the extent of the activity is going from local to sub regional as, for example, strict legislation and control in French Guiana and Brazil is pushing illegal gold miners to Suriname and Guyana. Also, as prices and taxes are more favorable in Suriname than Guyana, this country is sadly becoming the number one choice for illegal gold smuggling in the Amazon, showing once again why a biome-scale vision is critical when facing the drivers of environmental degradation.

According to Dominiek Plouvier, Regional Representative of WWF Guianas “without regional cooperation, the issue of the so called small scale gold mining in the Amazon will not be solved”.

Experts agree that as gold prices keep rising exponentially, small scale gold mining will not disappear in the region, and neither its environmental impacts. In the Guianas region, satellite images show over a threefold increase in deforestation in the last decade, and almost half of Guiana’s rivers and streams are now polluted with gold mining related mercury.

Towards a solution

In recent years, WWF Guianas has been actively promoting the improvement of mining practices

as to eliminate the use of mercury, reduce deforestation, improve social and labor conditions and respect legal frameworks, not only within the mining activity itself, but throughout the complete chain of custody.

In this regard, reality shows that an important part of the solution should be sought in a market approach, by which the consumer becomes aware of its responsibility and turns to buying “green” gold. France and French Guiana are already taking the lead in this regard, within the WWF Network.

However, if a solution to small scale and illegal gold mining is to be found, a regional high level cooperation is imperative. With regard to this, an applauded first

step was made at the event in Paramaribo, when mining syndicates from Brazil, Guyana and French Guiana, and a Surinamese company signed a cooperative agreement to search for best practices.

“As the organizations of miners in the Guianas and Brazil have signed an agreement to exchange information and work more regionally, it is now up to the Governments of the Guianas and elsewhere in the Amazon to come together as to tackle this issue. On our side, WWF will continue to work as on small scale gold-mining in the region, in order to make it more responsible and less environmentally and socially damaging”, concluded Plouvier.



**RISING GOLD
PRICES
ARE PUSHING
MINERS FURTHER
INTO THE AMAZON**

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES & CONSERVATION:

The road to a more integrated vision

+110
INDIGENOUS LEADERS
PRESENT

Major event brings together key Amazonian stakeholders

Climate change, protected areas, 'green economy' and forest carbon were some of the various issues discussed

during the "Amazon Indigenous Groups Summit: Ancestral Wisdom, Peoples and Full Life in Harmony with the Forests", which took place in Manaus, Brazil from August 15 to 17.

The event, organized by the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA, for its Spanish Acronym) brought together nearly 110 indigenous leaders, as well as representatives of environmental organizations, governmental bodies and international cooperation agencies present in the Amazon. The goal was to update the positions of Pan-Amazonian Indigenous Groups on key issues in the face of upcoming international events, such as the CoP-17 of the Climate Change Convention – Durban 2011, in South Africa; and the Rio+20, in 2012; the CoP-11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CDB), among others.

Fostering a Pan-Amazonian vision

"Indigenous peoples are leading actors regarding the conservation of the Amazon. They hold the rights to the lands' resources, they have a culturally differentiated vision and a fundamental role to play in the destiny of the Amazon", declared Cláudio Maretti, Leader of WWF's Living Amazon Initiative.

In this regard, LAI has been working through WWF-Peru, alongside COICA for some years now, and according to WWF-Peru's Liliana Lozano, reinforcing the WWF-COICA partnership is key to incorporate conservation related indigenous issues into the agenda of global organizations. "COICA maintains dialogue with the United Nations and the Inter-American Development Bank, for example. Our objective in reinforcing and expanding these partnerships is to ensure that indigenous issues are more openly discussed on a global level, thus contributing to finding solutions which favor the conservation of the Amazon, and the effective achievement of WWF's global deforestation reduction goals", she explained.

Technical advisor to the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations Amazon Basin (COICA), Valentim Muiba, also



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explained why it is so important to defend indigenous lands. "To us, the land is our home, our market place and our pharmacy. It is where we are born, grow old, find our sustenance and extract our medicines. Indigenous Peoples cannot live apart from their lands. There is a powerful cultural identification between an Indigenous individual and the place where he was born", he declared.

The event finalized with a sturdy charter of commitments, however one of the main agreements was that guidelines which orient national programmes and international

commitments for nature conservation, should not limit the identification of priorities to the criteria of official science alone, but instead should also incorporate the culturally differentiated conservation interests and wisdom of specific groups like local communities and indigenous peoples as a key consideration towards their success.

Other stories from the region

Family-based Agriculture repudiates proposed Forest Law changes



“Efforts to destroy the Forest Law are part of a wider Agribusiness strategy to do away with Brazil’s environmental and social legislation altogether”. With that vigorous statement the leader of the Via Campesina movement in Brazil, Luiz Zarref, summed up the feelings of the family-based Agriculture sector in regard to the proposals to alter environmental legislation in Brazil. **(read more)**

Recognition of indigenous lands poses technical and political challenges to nine Amazonian countries



Indigenous lands tenure in the nine Amazon basin countries and the resources related to them were among the issues discussed in depth on the third day of the Indigenous Amazonian Regional Summit that has been taking place since the beginning of the week in Manaus **(read more)**

Scientists discover new monkey species in Amazon



Scientists on an expedition backed by WWF-Brazil to one of the last unexplored areas in the Brazilian Mid-west have discovered a new species of monkey.

The monkey belonging to the Callicebus genus was found in the northwest of Mato Grosso State and is one of the great results **(read more)**

Southern Amazon Mosaic facilitates Protected Area management



On August 25, Brazilian Minister of the Environment Izabella Teixeira signed the official document of recognition of the Southern Amazon Mosaic. The mosaic is made up of 40 neighbouring protected areas in the states of Rondonia, Mato Grosso and Amazonas with a total land area of 7 million hectares **(read more)**

The Amazon Online: Web 2.0 links Peruvian producers with international markets



Web 2.0 technologies such as social networks, blogs and other Internet tools, are increasingly demanded by large companies across different fields, and, according to Alfredo Rodriguez, WWF Peru’s Markets Specialist, now it is the Amazon’s turn. **(read more)**

IHA World Congress: a biome scale vision is key to foster a greener energy model in the Amazon, WWF says



Hydropower industry leaders, policy makers, researchers and representatives from the financial sector in over 50 countries have come together at the International Hydropower Association’s World Congress in Iguassu (Brazil) **(read more)**

Recent publications & products

BROCHURES & FACT SHEETS: The Living Amazon Initiative



As to provide a snapshot of the Amazon biome's reality and a comprehensive summary of WWF's vision for one of the most important places on Earth, this communications tool kit is a means to easily and rapidly introduce audiences to conservation needs and opportunities in the region, as well as to inspiring stories on WWF's progress in the region.



Read or download:

- The amazing Amazon
- Bolstering the value of natural ecosystems
- Sound land planning and conservation
- Sustainable agro commodities
- Free flowing rivers and forest friendly roads

BOOK: Iniciativa Amazonía Viva



Built upon 40 years of experience in the region, the Living Amazon Initiative concentrates some of WWF's most promising and challenging efforts. This strategy summary (Spanish version) is designed to share this innovative conservation approach with partners, authorities, and other stakeholders throughout the Amazon and beyond, and thus contribute to building a common conservation vision for the largest rainforest and river system on Earth. **(download)**

INFOGRAPHIC: The Living Amazon Initiative



Combining maps, statistics, graphics and illustrations, this communications tool is part of the Living Amazon Initiative's most recent efforts to increase knowledge towards a better understanding of the Amazon and its challenges. **(download)**



**Want to learn more?
Visit our new website**

About the Living Amazon Initiative

Built upon over 40 years of experience in the region, WWF's Living Amazon Initiative shares a vision for an ecologically healthy Amazon Biome that maintains its environmental and cultural contribution to local peoples, the countries of the region, and the world, within a framework of social equity, inclusive economic development and global responsibility. ([read more](#))

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Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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WWF's Living Amazon Initiative is possible thanks to the enthusiastic participation of dozens of professionals throughout its network, including WWF Bolivia, WWF Brazil, WWF Colombia (NACDPO), WWF Guianas (PO), WWF Peru (SASCPO), as well as WWF U.S., WWF Netherlands, WWF United Kingdom, WWF Germany, WWF Switzerland, WWF France, and WWF Network as a whole.

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Sound land planning and conservation (TS-3) - M. Ximena Barrera

Sustainable agro commodities (TS-4) - Cassio F. Moreira

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