



Living Amazon Initiative

BOLSTERING THE VALUE OF NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS



**FOREST DEGRADATION
AND DEFORESTATION
REPRESENT UP TO 20%
OF GLOBAL CARBON
EMISSIONS**

Undervaluation of natural ecosystems, and the multitude of environmental goods and services they provide both locally and globally, is one of the critical drivers of habitat destruction and degradation in the Amazon. This undervaluation is partly linked to insufficient quantitative information about the current and potential economic benefits derived from the resources and services provided by the Amazon's natural ecosystems, especially when compared to the large, tangible returns provided by other land uses.

However, this undervaluation is also linked to the predominant and flawed perception that natural ecosystems are "useless lands" waiting to be converted to more "productive" and "socially beneficial" uses. This current development paradigm has resulted in little political will to enforce legislation that, while imperfect, exists to improve the management and viability of these goods and services.

While ecosystem goods and services have inherent value and provide benefits that may be nearly impossible to quantify, supporting the development of economically competitive alternatives to the current major land uses of the Amazon is being proposed as a critical component of an effective response to halting the advance of the deforestation frontier.

WWF's vision for the Amazon

WWF 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.

WWF's Living Amazon Initiative

Built upon 40 years of conservation experience in the region, the Living Amazon Initiative is one of WWF's global initiatives, and it concentrates some of the organization's most promising and challenging efforts which aim at promoting a biome-scale conservation vision for the largest rainforest and river system on Earth. One of the five transformational strategies identified to achieve this is "Bolstering the value of natural ecosystems".

Amazon biome

Amazon basin



Our aim

Under the framework of its Living Amazon Initiative, WWF seeks to bolster the value of natural ecosystems and supports the development of the technical foundation for appropriate valuation.

How we plan to make it happen

- Generating the applied research and pilot experiences to promote forest carbon markets/ financial incentives as credible mechanisms to generate income, maintain forest cover, and reduce forest-carbon emissions
- Providing the technical foundation for the economic valuation of environmental services other than carbon in the Amazon
- Advocating for comprehensive forest and forest related policies
- Promoting demand for sustainable forest products

Our proposal: The value of the largest rainforest on Earth

Conserving the Amazon is important not only for biodiversity, but also for mitigating global climate change. The vegetation of the Amazon contains 90-140 billion tonnes of carbon. Slowing global warming and keeping average global temperatures from rising more than 2°C will be very difficult if emissions of CO₂ from tropical forest destruction worldwide, and in the Amazon in particular, are not curtailed sharply in the coming years.

A mechanism by which tropical countries could receive compensation for their achievements in sustainably reducing their emissions from deforestation and forest degradation presents a major opportunity in the Amazon for simultaneously conserving biodiversity and achieving a major reduction in CO₂ emissions globally.

WWF will assist the national governments of the Amazon in adopting reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD), or similar mechanisms. WWF will help them develop national REDD programs, including establishing national baselines and effective monitoring programs, and to implement legal and institutional frameworks to enable compensation for REDD.

While these actions will address the value of the Amazon at the biome level, Responsible Forest Management, of which WWF has extensive experience, will be a key strategy at the priority place or landscape level.



Promising experiences: TOWARDS AN INCREASED VALUE

WWF has, over the years, fostered some of the most successful and promising efforts aimed at increasing the perceived value of natural ecosystems throughout the Amazon. Dozens of indigenous communities and private companies in countries like Peru and Bolivia have improved their forest management practices under the framework of schemes such as the Forest Stewardship Council certification. This has not only improved the livelihoods of thousands of local families, but has underpinned the conservation of hundreds of thousands of hectares of tropical forest by acknowledging the value of well managed ecosystems.

Moreover, WWF has accompanied groundbreaking experiences in REDD mechanisms, at the subnational level, as that led by the Government of the State of Acre in Brazil, which today fosters the conservation of over two million hectares of forest through the valuation of its role in climate regulation.

Through the Living Amazon Initiative WWF is taking a step further in ramping up such results and experiences to the national and regional levels, having already supported the historical engagement of the Government of Guyana towards a National Low Carbon Development Strategy.

Through the articulation of ongoing experiences, lessons sharing, capacity building and policy design WWF is helping to build the necessary conditions for forest ecosystems to be accurately valued, based on their contributions to global climate, local livelihoods and people around the world.



**90-140
BILLION**
METRIC TONS OF
CARBON STORED IN
THE AMAZON FORESTS



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.

www.panda.org/amazon

WWF's Living Amazon Initiative

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