



## Living Amazon Initiative

# SOUND LAND PLANNING AND CONSERVATION



17%

OF THE AMAZON  
FORESTS HAVE  
DISAPPEARED DURING  
THE LAST 50 YEARS

Land and resource use are primarily motivated by economic interests ranging from the large-scale needs of extensive landowners and industrial-scale investors to those of subsistence farmers. While demand is a key driver for habitat conversion, how this process plays out spatially is largely determined by the rules for land occupation (or lack thereof). In the Amazon, where a significant proportion of the lands are still considered to be public and undesignated, land grabbing and illegal encroachment are rampant. The means most often used to lay claim to an area is to deforest it, and then show it to be “productive” by sowing crops or raising cattle.

Most Amazonian countries have regulations for land use planning and zoning, but their application and enforcement tend to lack the needed strength. When followed, these regulations are often problematic, as they are mostly geared towards a “productive” approach to land use based on land conversion. This ignores the importance and economic value of environmental services.

In fact, planning in the region has historically been carried out at a scale that does not match the requirements of conservation of ecosystem services or species habitat, thereby diluting the constructive role that zoning could serve.

### 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 “Sound land planning and conservation”.

Amazon biome

Amazon basin



## Our aim

Under the framework of its Living Amazon Initiative, WWF aims to promote the appropriate use of natural resources, by supporting appropriate planning processes which incorporate biome-scale considerations.

## How we plan to make it happen

- Building the technical grounds for place (landscape)-scale decision making with a biome perspective
- Supporting the development and/or improvement of land-use planning that impacts priority places
- Promoting the clarification of legal land tenure, particularly within or around priority places
- Influencing protected area systems for creation and management of protected areas of biome importance
- Strengthening areas of critical conservation/climate importance

## Our proposal: An integrated system of protected areas and conservation corridors for the biome

Studies in the Amazon have shown a strong inverse correlation between the clarity of tenure for a particular parcel of land and its vulnerability to deforestation. Undesignated public lands lack a legal framework regulating their use and are subject to illegal private appropriation and conversion (land-grabbing). The mere designation of lands as protected areas, forest concessions or indigenous territories greatly reduces the probability of deforestation. A network of inter-connected protected areas and indigenous territories across the Amazon would help halt the advancement of the arcs of deforestation that move ever deeper into the forests. Designation of the remaining public lands in the Amazon, as well as the effective management of those lands already designated as reserves and indigenous territories, is needed to address the threat of deforestation and conversion.

There is also an urgent need to incorporate climate change considerations and aquatic habitat protection measures into land use and conservation planning for the Amazon. In this regard, the Living Amazon Initiative has developed a Decision Support System which helps generate a basin-wide analysis of conservation status considering the biome's main threats. This information has been consolidated through the calculation of the Ecological Risk Index (ERI) which integrates hydrological and biodiversity information that enables the assessment of the potential impacts of alternative development scenarios.

Based on this scientific approach, WWF aims to stabilize and strengthen land tenure through land use planning, protected area creation, consolidation and sustainable financing, and partnering with indigenous peoples to strengthen the management of their territories.



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### Promising experiences: A REGIONAL APPROACH FOR AMAZONIAN PROTECTED AREAS

Over the years, WWF has participated in the creation of a number of important protected areas including Peru's Manu National Park in 1973, Bolivia's Pilon Lajas National Park in 1976, French Guiana's Amazonian Park in 2007, and Colombia's Yaigoje- Apaporis National Park in 2009. In Brazil, WWF was instrumental in the conception and subsequent implementation of the Government's primary mechanism for creation and consolidation of protected areas in the Brazilian Amazon: the Amazon Region Protected Areas program (ARPA) launched in 2002.

However, given that the forces behind the transformation of the Amazon extend beyond a national context, it is necessary to approach the region as a whole in order to ensure the viability of the system.

In 2010 a promising effort for the conservation of the Amazon was agreed on during the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD - COP 10) in Nagoya, Japan. Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Guyana, Suriname and Venezuela committed to the joint implementation of a Programme of Work for Protected Areas (PoWPA) within the Amazon biome, as to build a regional conservation strategy based on the national systems of protected areas, for which they now have the support of Red Latinoamericana de Cooperación Técnica en Parques Nacionales, otras Áreas Protegidas, Flora y Fauna Silvestre (REDPARQUES), the CBD Secretariat, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Amazon Conservation Treaty Organization and WWF's Living Amazon Initiative.



#### 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

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