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AMAZON
Initiative

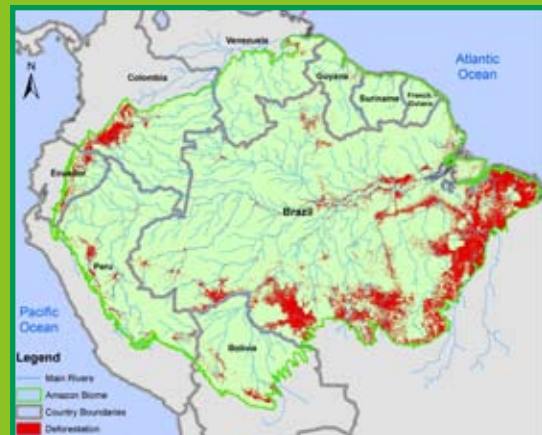
The Amazon Initiative – supporting sustainable development

WWF is dedicated to building a future in which people live in harmony with nature. Through the Amazon Initiative, we are determined to help protect large enough areas of the Amazon to preserve most of its biodiversity, maintain its ecological functions and services, and support its sustainable development for the benefit of its people and the planet as a whole.

Good news - bad news

The good news is that 80% of the Amazon's original forest is largely intact – compromised at its margins but healthy in its remote core.

The bad news is that its landscapes and habitats, which have been under siege for decades, now face even larger pressures driven by the demands of international markets and aggravated by the effects of climate change. Uncontrolled colonization along roads, logging, agriculture, cattle ranching, mining, and oil and gas operations have reduced the Amazon forest by between 17,000km² and 27,000km² a year since 1990. That means that every year the Amazon loses a forested area nearly the size of Belgium.



Source: WWF 2008

The effects could be catastrophic. Already at least a fifth of global CO₂ emissions are the result of deforestation in the tropics, a large percentage from the Amazon.

But the region is also affected by global warming: scientists agree that little more of the original Amazon forest cover can be lost if we are to sustain the hydrological cycles and other climatic conditions that are the prerequisite for its existence. Further significant deforestation could trigger large-scale and probably unstoppable deterioration of the biome.

Strangely for such an apparently fertile area, many of the Amazon's soils are poor, with large areas unfit for long-term conventional agriculture. Left standing, and sustainably managed, the forests provide ecological services – from the regulation of climate and rainfall to the provision of raw materials – that are far more valuable for humankind than any short-term gains to be had from the forest's uncontrolled depletion.

What WWF is doing

WWF's Amazon Initiative aims to take a huge step towards the long-term maintenance of the Amazon biome. Below are the main lines of strategic action.

Strategy 1: Shifting the paradigm of development in the Amazon

The lack of an integrated sustainable development vision for the Amazon as a region and the lack of national policies in support of sustainable development in the Amazon are major obstacles to conservation and the appropriate use of the region's natural resources. A regional policy instrument, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty, exists, but differing perspectives among the countries of the Amazon currently limit its effectiveness. Bi-national or tri-national agreements on particular sectoral issues may be more feasible to achieve within a five-year timeframe.

WWF will work with national authorities, international entities and other key partners so that the governments of the Amazon countries develop a joint Amazon vision informed by the perspectives of civil society and based on principles of integration and sustainability. Sectoral agreements based on sustainable development principles will also be encouraged.

Strategy 2: Bolstering the Value of Natural Ecosystems

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 global average 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. The relationship between the Amazon and global climate is complex and bi-directional. To summarize the situation:

Amazon forest conservation will be necessary to stabilize the world's climate, and stabilization of the world's climate will be necessary to conserve Amazon forests. A



Amazon biome crosses national borders

% of the biome in each country

Bolivia	7
Brazil	60
Colombia	7
Ecuador	2
French Guiana	1
Guyana	3
Peru	12
Suriname	2
Venezuela	6

post-Kyoto 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 supporting the inclusion of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) in the post-Kyoto climate treaty framework. 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 reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

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

Strategy 3: Sound Land Planning and Conservation

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 (tierras baldias/terras devolutas) 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 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. Any planning process will be incomplete if it fails to accommodate the future changes that are expected to occur as ecosystems respond to climate change.

The Amazon Initiative is aimed at stabilizing and strengthening 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.



Amazon biome landscapes

- 79.9% tropical evergreen forest
- 6.8% anthropic (incl. pastures & crops)
- 4% savannas
- 3.9% flooded and swamp forest
- 1.4% deciduous forest
- 1.2% water bodies
- 2.8% others (incl. shrubland & bamboo)

Strategy 4: Sustainable commodities

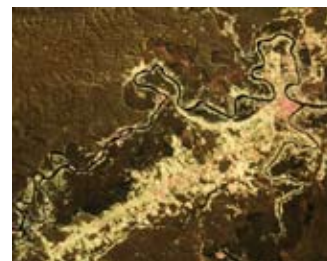
Until recently, the patterns and rates of conversion of Amazon forests for agriculture and for the raising of livestock were largely determined by national policies and national or regional economic forces. Amazon agriculture and livestock rearing were largely isolated from global economies and commodity markets. Beef production was lower than local demand, and large-scale mechanized agriculture had yet to penetrate the region.

Market forces are now creating growing pressures to expand mechanized agriculture and stock rearing into many of the remaining forestlands of the Amazon. Chief among these forces are the growing international demand for ethanol and bio-diesel, and the demand among “emerging meat-eating nations” for animal feed and meat.

Due to their remoteness, most of the forestlands that are suitable for agriculture or conversion to pasture have been protected from deforestation to date. Until now, farming and ranching on these lands had not been feasible because of the high cost of transportation and the lack of infrastructure. With new investments in transportation infrastructure, highlighted currently by the paving of the Inter-Oceanic Highway linking Acre (Brazil) to the Pacific, production prices are falling, and the pressure to convert forestlands for commodity production is growing. Increased access coupled with increased demand is a destructive combination for the Amazon.

Given WWF’s leadership role in creating and driving commodity roundtables and in promoting improved agricultural practices, we are well-positioned to reduce the environmental and social costs associated with the expansion of livestock and agricultural production in the Amazon.

WWF plans to work with agro-commodity producers so they will commit to locate production in agreed/zoned areas, thereby protecting priority conservation landscapes. WWF will also work towards ensuring that a significant percentage of the market for Amazon agro-commodities (grain, meat, bio-fuels) meets social and environmental production standards, thereby increasing the volume of agro-commodity production carried out to rigorous social and environmental standards.



Amazon biome population

- 30 million of which
- around 17 million in Brazil
 - around 13 million in 8 other countries and territories
 - > 2.7 million are indigenous peoples



Strategy 5: Free-flowing rivers and forest-friendly roads

Investments in infrastructure development projects, particularly in the transportation and energy sectors, are increasing rapidly in the Amazon. Remote areas that have so far had little or no contact with the globalized economy are now targets for development, compromising highly vulnerable regions and communities with no experience in dealing with such changes. However, if designed and implemented correctly, infrastructure development projects need not be destructive and can bring economic benefits to the region while minimizing the environmental and social impacts.

To achieve truly sustainable infrastructure development, WWF will promote science-based, technically solid, and socially just energy projects in the Amazon. We will also sponsor participatory decision-making systems to support a number of critical infrastructure initiatives, and promote the adoption, harmonization, and rigorous application of environmental and social standards for infrastructure development in the Amazon by investors and governments.

Rapid progress

As part of this long-term Amazon Initiative, special emphasis will be given to a series of activities aimed at achieving important results within the next three years. These are

a) Implementing the Amazon Region Protected Area network

WWF's Amazon Initiative will strengthen the Amazon Region Protected Areas Program (ARPA) by providing financial and technical support. This is a long-term initiative, which WWF was instrumental in creating, that aims to eventually safeguard a 50 million hectare network of Amazon protected areas in Brazil – an area the size of Spain.

b) Establishing a Pan-Amazonian protected area program

WWF will help extend the network of protected areas to span the entire Amazon. To do this we will secure commitments from the eight countries of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) plus French Guiana on the establishment, governance, and implementation of a Pan-Amazonian protected area program. ARPA can be used as the model to create a financing and management structure for such a Pan-Amazonian network.

Amazon biome species

- >100,000 invertebrates
- 40,000 plant species
- 3,000 freshwater fish
- 1,300 birds
- 427 mammals
- >400 amphibians
- 378 reptiles

c) Reducing the impact of infrastructure development projects in the Amazon

As governments need financing for large infrastructure development projects, WWF is working with banks to ensure best practices, so that development is sustainable rather than infringing on the ecological and social benefits provided by the Amazon. WWF will help reduce the impact of infrastructure development, particularly road and dam building, by lobbying the main investors of the region to apply “best in class” lending practices and influencing the design of at least three critical projects.

WWF in partnership

Working in partnership with key stakeholders is essential for any and all WWF interventions in the Amazon. We help generate the participatory processes and local ownership that contributes to the long-term acceptance of and collaboration with the conservation initiatives we undertake by working with government authorities at multiple levels, local and indigenous peoples, local and international non-governmental organizations, technical and academic institutions, and private sector and global support institutions (government aid agencies, foundations, and multilateral banks). For example, the great success of ARPA rests on the strong multi-sector partnership that has been formed. All WWF projects, from policy efforts, through research, to on-the-ground conservation have an outstanding group of local and international partners balancing interests and pooling resources for the common goal of protecting the Amazon.



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