



AMAZON WATCH - UPDATE 2012



Defending the Xingu - Challenging the Belo Monte Dam, Brazil

The Belo Monte dam on the Xingu River in the heart of the Brazilian Amazon is an emblematic battleground for advancing indigenous rights, rainforest protection, and clean energy in Brazil. The dam, the third largest in the world if built, will cause extensive social and environmental harm in the Xingu region while paving the way for 70 new dams proposed in the Amazon region. The dam will forcibly displace thousands of indigenous and traditional people and more than 40,000 people around the dam site of Altamira, destroy up to 5,000 square kilometers of pristine forest, and dry up nearly 62 miles of the Xingu River, essentially destroying what is known as the Xingu's "Big Bend." Despite local resistance, as well as national and international condemnation, the Brazilian government has approved Belo Monte and initial construction has begun. Against this dramatic backdrop, Amazon Watch is working in solidarity with the people of the Xingu River, dozens of Brazilian and international NGOs, as well as Brazilian and global celebrities to document and publicize the impacts on vulnerable indigenous populations of the Xingu River. We aim to keep the Belo Monte controversy in the media spotlight and to bring an unprecedented level of pressure on the Brazilian government to suspend dam construction and ultimately prevent future upstream dams on the Xingu River.



Promoting Clean Energy Alternatives in Brazil

Brazil has the third largest electricity sector in the Western Hemisphere, behind the U.S. and Canada. Large hydropower currently accounts for more than 80% of Brazil's electricity generation, compared to approximately 1.5% from wind and solar. Yet rather than diversifying its power supply to integrate more sustainable energy sources, the Brazilian government plans to build 70 new large dams on tributaries of the Amazon River over the next 20 years. This out-of-touch "business as usual" scenario will have devastating impacts on indigenous populations, ecosystems, and the global climate. Amazon Watch is a leading force in a growing consortium of sustainable energy advocates, civil society organizations, green energy companies, and policy experts working to transform Brazil's old energy paradigm based on unsustainable mega-dams into a sustainable energy paradigm based on energy efficiency and renewable energy generation. Amazon Watch and our partners are working to publish an alternative energy compendium and organizing roundtables and events focused on sustainable solutions for Brazil's energy future during the UN Earth Summit, Rio+20 in June 2012 and beyond.



Amazon Watch Priorities



Chevron: Clean Up Ecuador Campaign

On February 14, 2011, nearly 18 years after indigenous people and rural villagers in Ecuador filed a class-action lawsuit against Chevron, an Ecuadorian court ruled in favor of the communities and ordered Chevron to pay \$18 billion for environmental cleanup, health care, clean water, and other restoration efforts. While Chevron has vowed to fight “until hell freezes over”, this verdict represents the first time globally that indigenous people have sued a multinational corporation in the country where the crime was committed, and won. An Ecuadorian appeals court issued its rulings in the case in early 2012, rejecting Chevron’s appeals and making the verdict final. Chevron is doing everything in its power to fight this judgment, including bringing the case to an international arbitration panel, asking the panel to declare the judgment and appeal null and void. While this process is expected to take three to four years, Amazon Watch will continue to support the 30,000 indigenous and rural people of the Ecuadorian Amazon demanding justice in this case. We will continue to mobilize awareness and pressure Chevron’s CEO and Board of Directors to finally do the right thing: fund healthcare facilities, clean and healthy drinking water for affected communities and a full-scale environmental remediation.

Defending Achuar Territory by Stopping Talisman Energy in Peru

Since 2008, Amazon Watch has campaigned to pressure Talisman Energy, Inc. of Canada to cease operations and withdraw from its oil concessions in Blocks 64 and 101. These blocks are located deep in the heart of Achuar territory encompassing the Pastaza and Morona River basins in the Peruvian Amazon. We are supporting the Achuar’s defense of their ancestral territory and their demands that Talisman respect their rights and leave Achuar territory immediately. In 2011, Talisman adopted a new Global Community Relations Policy committing to not enter Achuar territory where they do not have community consent, but the company is using flawed protocols to determine this consent and is attempting to establish oil-drilling operations there. Amazon Watch is engaging with the company directly, as well as through a shareholder group we helped catalyze, to develop solid implementation guidelines, ensuring that the policy results in concrete changes in their operations on the ground. We are also coordinating with Canadian activists who have vowed to continue and expand their campaign “Canada 4 the Achuar” until Talisman respects the Achuar and leaves their ancestral territory. We believe we can win this campaign in 2012, if we support communities on the ground, local organizing in Canada, and continue engaging and pressuring Talisman.

Defending the U’wa’s Sacred Lands, Colombia

Since its inception in 1996, Amazon Watch has waged a campaign in defense of the U’wa territory and their traditional way of life. After years of U’wa protests and international pressure, Occidental Petroleum abandoned its oil drilling plans on U’wa territory in 2002. Since then, Colombia’s state-owned oil company, Ecopetrol, has carried out exploratory drilling from the Gibraltar gas extraction platform and is seeking regulatory approval to explore within the boundaries of the U’wa Reservation. But this is not the only threat to the U’wa. In late 2011, Amazon Watch supported an assessment for the U’wa that found they are also threatened by the Colombian armed conflict, mining operations, and eco-tourism activities within El Cocuy National Park, which overlaps their territory. Following completion of this assessment - alongside a detailed analysis of the U’wa legal situation also supported by Amazon Watch - the U’wa are prepared to re-launch a local, national and international campaign to defend their territory, “the heart of the earth”, as they say. Amazon Watch will continue to stand in solidarity with the U’wa as we have for nearly 15 years.

Challenging New Oil Developments in Peru and Ecuador

Oil and gas exploration concessions already cover over 75% of the Amazon rainforest. Yet, the Peruvian and Ecuadorian governments are, once again, planning to open up the rainforests of northern Peru and southern Ecuador to oil development, threatening the region's biodiversity, indigenous inhabitants and our global climate. In June 2012, Perupetro, the Peruvian government's licensing agency, will be hosting an auction to lease 30 lots in the Peruvian Amazon. While it is waiting to see how Peru's Consultation Law fits into the picture, it expects interest from over 40 international oil companies including: ExxonMobil, Total, British Petroleum, Anadarko Petroleum, Chevron Repsol, Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA), as well as Petroperú. Petroperú is also interested in bidding on lots in the 11th round of oil development in southern Ecuador in October 2012. The Ecuadorian government is planning the wholesale auction of some 21 new oil blocks, located in the country's southeastern Amazon. This is the largest giveaway of Ecuadorian rainforest in the country's history—roughly 10 million acres, which includes the traditional homelands of the Achuar, Shuar, Kichwa, Shiwiar, Zapara, and Andoa. Building on previous relationships with the Inter-Federational Committee (comprised of Shuar and Achuar leadership) we are providing support for the emerging coalition of affected communities and the launch of their campaign, Campana Kaprik, aimed at stopping the bidding round. In Peru, we will do the same with local indigenous federations and inter-ethnic alliances in the north, as well as coordinate nationally with AIDESEP and NGO allies. Amazon Watch is working on local, national and international levels to expose the threats caused by these new oil rounds in Peru and Ecuador.

Climate Change and the Amazon

As the world's largest rainforest, the Amazon plays a major role in the planet's climate stability. And as the largest landowners in the Amazon, indigenous peoples play a central role in protecting this ecosystem. Indigenous territories make up a quarter of the Amazon rainforest and contain the vast majority of the world's resources and biodiversity. Their territories, their rights and our global climate are being threatened by illegal logging, large-scale agribusiness, extractive industries and associated infrastructure projects such as dams and roads, and the prospects of carbon trading on their lands. Amazon Watch is working to ensure that indigenous stewardship of tropical rainforests remains at the center of emerging climate solutions by advancing indigenous rights in proposed mitigation measures such as REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation). We are committed to supporting climate change initiatives of indigenous partners throughout the Amazon, including: Supporting "Indigenous REDD" in Peru which prioritizes local territorial rights over investor rights, guarantees community-based management of the projects, and keeps indigenous territories out of carbon markets; monitoring Ecuador's SocioBosque (Forest Partners) program and supporting indigenous partners impacted by it; and supporting COIAB (Coordinating Body of Indigenous Federations and Tribes of the Brazilian Amazon) in its mission to unify indigenous communities through workshops on climate change and REDD, as well as by providing media and communications support to ensure their voices are heard at national and international meetings such as Rio+20.

Transforming the Brazilian National Development Bank (BNDES)

BNDES, an organ of the Brazilian government and the second largest development bank in the world, and has emerged as the most powerful financial institution in South America, wielding significant influence on energy and development policy in the region. BNDES is financing nearly 90 percent of the controversial Belo Monte dam, is the biggest financier of dams in the Amazon, and a key institution in the debate over renewable energy in Brazil. Amazon Watch is working with a coalition of indigenous groups and NGOs from the region to push BNDES towards greater social and environmental responsibility, accountability and transparency and to shift its investments away from large hydro in favor of clean renewable energy. In the lead up to Rio+20, BNDES is being called on to withhold financing for the Belo Monte dam, shift its investments to support a truly clean energy strategy, and adopt stronger environmental and social safeguard policies.