

Amazon Watch Program Update—Fall 2006

Indigenous Lands Protection Project in the Southern Ecuadorian Amazon



Amazon Watch made significant strides this fall in protecting the rights, lands, and cultures of the Shuar, Achuar, and Kichwa of Ecuador's Southern Amazon basin, whose territories amount to nearly 6 million acres of pristine, richly-diverse rainforests. Over the past several months we have: (1) stepped up the pressure on ConocoPhillips (the Texas-based oil company now positioned to drill on these lands); (2) developed innovative new strategies for land protection and rights with our indigenous partners on the ground; (3) amplified the voices of Southern indigenous leaders in the North; (4) directed financial resources to the South to tackle the imbedded problems of oil and debt; and (5) advanced a pioneering community-based participatory mapping project in Ecuador.

Challenging ConocoPhillips

At the ConocoPhillips Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Houston this spring, Chairman and CEO James Mulva stated that the company's slated oil projects in Ecuador were under review. Seizing this opportunity to influence the company, Amazon Watch turned up the heat this fall to challenge ConocoPhillips to respect indigenous rights and protect the pristine rainforests of Southern Ecuadorian Amazon.

Shareholder Pressure

Amazon Watch galvanized a group of heavyweight ConocoPhillips shareholders to raise concerns with the company, including inside its annual stockholder meeting, over the company's Southern Ecuador drilling plans. Amazon Watch funneled key on-the-ground information to the shareholder group, provided analysis of the potential impacts of drilling in this region, and created opportunities for shareholders to hear directly from members of local affected communities. Patricia Gualinga, a Kichwa representative from Sarayaku whose territories lies within ConocoPhillips' block 23 oil concession, briefed shareholders on a conference call while visiting the U.S. (see below). Shareholders also sent a sign-on letter to ConocoPhillips' management outlining their concerns about the company's potential drilling plans, as well as highlighting the history of questionable activities carried out previously by Burlington Resources (bought by ConocoPhillips in the spring of this year). With critical information and analysis provided by Amazon Watch and local communities, shareholders are currently working to file resolutions with the company for the 2007 proxy.

Private Finance Pressure

Amazon Watch has collaborated with the Rainforest Action Network (RAN) and their global finance team to highlight the financial role played by several leading U.S. banks in the financing of forest destruction and rights violations. Both Bank of America and Citibank provided \$500 million each in loans to ConocoPhillips to purchase Burlington Resources, violating their own lending policies (which prohibit the financing of companies involved in operations in ecologically fragile and culturally sensitive rainforest areas). We worked to get these serious concerns raised directly with the banks and pushed them to respond. During her visit to the U.S., Kichwa representative Patricia Gualinga briefed the team at RAN on the history of rights violations endured by her community and their continued resistance to oil extraction on their lands.

Direct Pressure on ConocoPhillips' Leadership

ConocoPhillips' CEO James Mulva traveled to San Francisco in September 2006 to deliver a keynote speech at the Bank of America Investment Conference. Amazon Watch

communicated his plans to the Shuar, Achuar, and Kichwa leadership in Southern Ecuador, who promptly wrote him a letter again reiterating their opposition to oil activities on their lands and demanding that his company abandon its two oil concessions in Southern Ecuador. Amazon Watch delivered this letter to Mr. Mulva during his San Francisco visit, as well as distributed information and materials to conference participants about the company's catastrophic drilling plans in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

Strategizing with our Indigenous Partners

In September of 2006, Amazon Watch staff traveled to Ecuador to meet with NGO partners in Quito, as well as our indigenous partners throughout the Amazon basin. While meeting with Sarayaku and the Achuar federation NAE, and also the Shuar federation FIPSE, we together devised new strategies for the next year of the campaign both within Ecuador and internationally. In addition, we gained updated, first-hand information regarding oil company activities on the ground that will help us continue to galvanize public, media and shareholder pressure in the U.S. to stop current oil project plans.

Bringing Indigenous Voices to the North, Directing Financial Resources to the South

Amazon Watch organized, financed and coordinated the trip of Sarayaku leader Patricia Gualinga to the U.S. from October 10-17. Ms. Gualinga has played a critical leadership role in her community's successful efforts to keep oil extraction off their territories for over a decade. Their efforts have inspired grassroots resistance movements across the globe and thrust their struggle into the headlines of major international news media. Patricia leads the legal strategies of Sarayaku's groundbreaking case currently pending before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of America States, underscoring the human rights abuses suffered by the community at the hands of the Ecuadorian military and oil company contractors.

Together with Amazon Watch, Ms. Gualinga briefed members of the Latino Caucus of Representatives of the California State Legislature in Sacramento, and met with staff of incoming California State Treasurer Bill Lockyer — a key member of the Board of Directors of CalPERS and CalSTERS who hold significant shares in ConocoPhillips.

Ms. Gualinga spoke to students and faculty at Stanford University, which is a major institutional investor in ConocoPhillips. She also joined award-winning indigenous actress and Amazon Watch Youth Ambassador, Q'orianka Kilcher (*The New World*), at high-profile speaking engagements including the Peak Oil and Climate Change international strategy conference held by the International Forum on Globalization in San Francisco.

Additionally, Amazon Watch organized several in-person meetings with foundations, grant programs, and individual donors to promote Sarayaku's proposals for financial support in order to continue their groundbreaking and inspiring work. These efforts resulted in raising \$7,250 USD in direct funds for Sarayaku. This money will help fund the community's legal work, their national campaign, and their local monitoring and resistance campaign. The funds will also: (1) support a joint communications project with the Catalan government; (2) finance the post-production and distribution of Sarayaku's new video highlighting their decade-long struggle; (3) fund the transfer of an iMac computer with state of the art editing equipment; and (4) support the training of award-winning Sarayaku filmmaker Eriberto Gualinga.

Following on the heels of this successful trip, Amazon Watch kept the momentum strong by helping to bring the President and Vice President of the Achuar federation of Ecuador to New York to participate in the international conference and teach-in: "Indigenous Peoples'

Resistance to Economic Globalization: A Celebration of Victories, Rights, and Cultures,” which features 30 indigenous speakers from every continent. Amazon Watch mobilized media coverage for the Achuar’s New York visit. We also made it possible for them to share strategies and experiences with other indigenous leaders from around the world, as well as meet with foundations and NGO allies.

Making the Connections: Oil and Debt in Ecuador

In all of Amazon Watch’s work, we recognize that a key driver of resource extraction throughout the Amazon Basin is external debt — much of which national governments accrued due to predatory lending practices by international financial institutions and private creditors. Rather than creating the much-touted prosperity and 'development', debt-driven resource extraction has led to greater economic disparity, environmental devastation, and social and health crises throughout the Amazon. Alleviating the debt burdens of Amazonian countries and promoting a clean energy future is the first step towards justice and true prosperity.

Together with other NGO allies, Amazon Watch worked to produce a full page ad which ran in the *Financial Times* on November 14, 2006. The ad, entitled “Where Oil Flows....Debt Grows” and accompanied by the website www.endoilaid.org, focuses on the practice of international financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in diverting taxpayer money intended for poverty alleviation to instead subsidize the international oil industry. In the ad, Amazon Watch highlighted Ecuador as an example of the downward spiral of debt and dependency created by oil extraction.

On the ground in Ecuador, the “Green Plan” has made significant progress. Thanks to the work of Fundación Pachamama, Amazon Watch, and other partner groups in Ecuador, the proposal to permanently protect Ecuador’s Southern rainforests from oil extraction gained traction recently when the Fundación Faro chose a preliminary policy paper on the “Green Plan’s” urgency and economic feasibility as the most important environmental policy paper for 2006. All presidential candidates in Ecuador’s upcoming election were then briefed on the policy, with strong indications that key front-runner Rafael Correa would support it.

Advancing the Community-Based Participatory Mapping Project

The mapping project of Shuar, Achuar, and Kichwa lands by the communities themselves has steadily advanced this fall and is set to wrap up in early December of this year. The results include the production of a key map of their territories threatened by oil extraction, which will include demarcated community boundaries, cultural and sacred sites, as well as land and resource use patterns. The process itself is helping to train indigenous leaders in map-making, land demarcation, and create awareness of the multitude of ways in which their territories would be impacted by oil extraction.

Recent advances in the community-mapping project include the highlights below.

- Critical work was recently undertaken with the Shuar federation FICSH (Federacion Interprovincial de Centros Shuar) to respond to information gaps on location and land tenure status of Shuar lands. Unlike many of the other indigenous organizations, FICSH does not have a global map of its territory.
- The completion of an important review and editing of airstrip information and community names with local aviation pilots.

- The digitalization of results from the first field visit for community mapping in Achuar villages and the use of river network modeling using digital terrain models was employed.
- The Achuar knowledge of river networks demonstrated in their community maps is much more extensive than the existing base cartography for Ecuador, so an innovative modeling technique used by the NGO group Shinai in Peru is being adapted for use in Ecuador. As a result, the final community maps will contain complete information as to the rivers known and used by the Achuar, combining field data from participatory workshops and GPS points with remote sensing (SRTM) modeling. This methodology will be fully-documented for future use in the rest of Achuar territory and neighboring indigenous lands.
- In September, a workshop in Puyo, Ecuador was held with indigenous organizations to review and design the presentation of the regional map with key rivers and landmarks of each peoples' territory. Also, a participatory analysis was done of existing environmental and social conflicts.
 - To date, the mapping project includes the following indigenous groups:
 - NASHIE (Shiwar): 9 villages, 700 people
 - NAE (Achuar): 64 villages, 5000 people
 - FIPSE (Shuar): 68 villages, 6000 people
 - FICSH (Shuar): several hundred villages, 7000 + people
 - Sarayaku (Kichwa): 5 villages, 2000 people
 - OPIP (Kichwa): 7 villages, 3000 people
 - NAZAE (Zapara): roughly 5 villages, 400 people
 - ONHAE (Huaorani): roughly 5 villages, 500 people