

March 4, 2008

New Scientific Study and Presentation on the Amazon

On Tuesday, March 4, 2008, a new paper titled, *Future Of The Western Amazon: Threats From Hydrocarbon Projects And Policy Solutions*, will be presented by the authors, who are leading ecologists, conservation scientists and indigenous rights advocates, from 2:15 – 3:30 PM, in the US Capitol, HC-7.

This new study is about the impending threat to biodiversity and indigenous peoples from a wave of planned oil development in the Western Amazon.

One of the authors is world-renowned scientist Dr. Stuart L. Pimm, who in 2006 won the world's leading environmental science award, the Royal Netherlands Academy Dr. A.H. Heineken Prize.

New detailed maps of how oil concession blocks overlap protected areas and concentrations of biodiversity of birds, mammals and amphibians will be presented for the first time.

The authors warn that the Western Amazon has reached a critical crossroads. It constitutes the most biologically rich and intact part of the Amazon basin and is home to a great diversity of indigenous peoples, including some still uncontacted by modern civilization. Moreover, the Western Amazon has a high probability of retaining a stable climate in the face of global warming, unlike the drying eastern Brazilian Amazon. The recent boom in hydrocarbon prices and the growing global demand, however, are leading to unprecedented levels of hydrocarbon exploration and development in the region.

The authors synthesized information from government sources and present a status overview of oil development in the Western Amazon. The startling results: Over 140 hydrocarbon concession blocks now cover 159 million acres of primary Amazon rainforest. That is equivalent to the size of the second largest U.S. State of Texas.

The most dramatic situation is currently unfolding in Peru, where over 70% of the Amazon has now been zoned into oil and gas blocks. The vast majority of these blocks are newly leased, thus the Peruvian Amazon faces an unprecedented wave of exploration reaching even the most remote regions of the country.

In Ecuador, around 65% of the Amazon has been zoned into oil blocks. Most of the development is currently slated for in and around Yasuní National Park, the country's only Amazonian park.

The situation in both Bolivia and western Brazil is set to change rapidly in coming years. Impacts to the Amazonian regions of these countries has been limited up to now, but recent government initiatives aim to dramatically increase the scope of exploration in remote and largely pristine areas.

The authors will present an overview of current regional policies governing oil development, land protection, and indigenous rights. They will discuss a set of policy alternatives that would better protect indigenous

rights, biodiversity, and the regional environment. These include the potential for roadless development of hydrocarbon resources, closer involvement of indigenous peoples in decisions affecting their land and livelihoods, and the role of the broader international community in the future of this exceptional region.

The Authors:

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- **Stuart L. Pimm, Ph.D.**, Doris Duke Professor of Conservation Ecology, Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences, Duke University
Extraordinary Professor, Conservation Ecology Research Unit, Department of Zoology and Entomology, University of Pretoria, South Africa
Winner of the 2006 Royal Netherlands Academy Dr. A.H. Heineken Prize for Environmental Sciences, generally considered the world's leading prize for environmental science

Date: Tuesday, March 4, 2008

Time: 2:15-3:30 PM

Place: U.S. Capitol Building, House of Representatives Side

Room: HC-7

Contact:

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