



CRISIS

Amazon In Focus

SUMMER 2020



AMAZON WATCH

OUR MISSION & VISION

Our Mission

Amazon Watch is a nonprofit organization founded in 1996 to protect the rainforest and advance the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Amazon Basin. We partner with Indigenous and environmental organizations in campaigns for human rights, corporate accountability and the preservation of the Amazon's ecological systems.

Our Vision

We envision a world where the collective rights of Indigenous peoples and the rights of nature are respected and where healthy forests, biodiversity, and the global climate are fully protected by governments, corporations and civil society.

We strive for a movement of global solidarity rooted in interconnectedness and practices of decolonization to respect the rights of Indigenous peoples and to permanently protect the Amazon rainforest which is perilously close to a tipping point of ecological collapse.

We believe that Indigenous self-determination is a critical component of any successful conservation strategy for the Amazon, and see that Indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contribute greatly to sustainable and equitable stewardship of Mother Earth.

We seek solutions that will lead to the transformation of our economic, financial and political governance systems to ones that are life-affirming and regenerative.

We commit, in the spirit of partnership and mutual respect, to support Indigenous, forest, and traditional peoples in their efforts to protect life, land, and culture in accordance with their aspirations and needs, by advocating for true solutions that respect the principles of climate justice.

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OUR WORK

Stop Amazon Destruction

Amazon Watch resists the destruction of the Amazon by challenging disastrous development projects and resource extraction and by promoting Indigenous rights.

Advance Indigenous Solutions

Amazon Watch supports and promotes Indigenous-led alternative solutions to climate change, natural resource extraction, and industrial development.

Support Climate Justice

Amazon Watch joins with the climate justice movement to address the fact that the most vulnerable—especially Indigenous peoples and people of color—bear the brunt of environmental destruction, corporate greed, and climate change, and are often excluded from top-down solutions.

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Photo: Rucha Chitnis

Dear Friends of Amazon Watch,

Thank you for your support of our critical work to protect and restore the Amazon rainforest, advance Indigenous-led solutions and demand climate justice! Our work has always been important, but considering the current crises facing the Amazon, its forest guardians and all of humanity, it's more critical than ever to unite to stop the destruction and defend the defenders.

The Amazon and our global climate are in crisis. Following rampant deforestation and fires that ravaged the Amazon rainforest last year, the Amazon is now facing a tipping point of ecological collapse. The Amazon is also facing a humanitarian crisis with the COVID-19 pandemic that is spreading exponentially across the region, with the potential of ethnocide of Indigenous peoples if immediate and ongoing action is not taken.

While the challenges may seem daunting, we still have time to shift from “tipping point to turning point” for the Amazon, the global climate and all of humanity.

At Amazon Watch, we have and are taking immediate action by responding to the calls and demands of Indigenous peoples across the Amazon to respect rights, lives and territories that are increasingly threatened by land-grabbers, extractive activities, agribusiness expansion, governments, corporations, international financiers, and now the COVID-19 pandemic.

With increased capacity and resources over the last year, we have expanded direct support and coordination with partners on the ground across the Amazon—including legal and communications capacity—and distribution of over \$1 million in rapid response grants to support women defenders, stop fires and prevent COVID-19. We have also expanded our global advocacy and communication campaigns in coordination with Indigenous and international allies, including over 250 organizations who signed a global call for an immediate moratorium on all extractive activities in the Amazon. And, we are building a Pan-Amazon Alliance and launching global initiatives in solidarity with Indigenous peoples including the Amazon Emergency Fund and Artists for Amazonia.

In unity, we are building a global movement to act for the Amazon, Indigenous rights and climate justice. Our movement is intersectional and is rooted in principles and practices of solidarity, equity, justice, anti-racism and decolonization. Our movement recognizes that the systems that violate human rights also violate Mother Earth and need to be transformed. This is a turning point for humanity to come together to resist systems of oppression and exploitation and uplift visionary solutions to protect and restore the balance of nature and human rights.

Thank you for standing with us during these challenging, but transformative times. Your support means solidarity with Indigenous peoples at a time when the world desperately needs their wisdom, guidance and solutions to restore the balance of nature and respect for humanity and all life.

With deep gratitude for your support,

Leila Salazar-López
Executive Director

RESPONDING TO THE AMAZON IN CRISIS

The Amazon is in crisis. It has been for some time. For nearly a quarter century, Amazon Watch has sounded the alarm that the forest and its Indigenous inhabitants are at extreme risk, and thus the future of our fragile planet. This has been our purpose as an organization since 1996. For years, the plight of the Amazon was not known or talked about on a global scale. But in August of 2019, all of this changed. Last summer, the world reacted to the news of the fires that swept across the Amazon in a way it never had before. The world became aware and took action. Now, there is no looking back.

What began as a movement led by Indigenous peoples of the Amazon has become a movement global in force, reach and scope.

As a result of your support, Amazon Watch stepped up even more boldly, powerfully, and unapologetically to advance Indigenous rights and solutions and protect the rainforest.

Among our achievements:

- **Regranted more than \$1 million** to more than 100 Indigenous-led and traditional groups across the Amazon

through the **Amazon Defenders Fund**. These grants responded to the fires, supported Indigenous women's leadership, provided life-saving resources for the COVID-19 outbreak and funded vital community support projects including food sovereignty and protection for Earth Defenders.

- Co-launched and seed funded the first-ever **Amazon Emergency Fund (AEF)**, a **pan-Amazon initiative** providing swift and immediate funding to Indigenous organizations. This fund works to stave off the spread of COVID-19 and provide emergency assistance to communities in dire need.
- Co-launched **Artists for Amazonia** featuring artists and activists throughout the world. This online experience captured millions of viewers throughout the world and raised critical funds for the Amazon.
- Formed an **international network** of solidarity with Indigenous peoples across the Amazon of more than 250 organizations to amplify the demands of Indigenous groups, including a call for an **immediate moratorium** on

all extractive activities like mining, oil, and logging, industrial agriculture, and all religious proselytization.

- **Expanded our field staff teams on the ground** in Brazil, Ecuador and Peru all while drastically reducing our own operating costs.

And this is just the beginning.

This is how movements gain and maintain momentum. This is how you capture the moment of a movement and invite the world to design a new and better future together.

This is not short-term work. This is long-term work with short-term wins. To truly address the ongoing destruction of the Amazon rainforest and the potential ethnocide of Indigenous peoples, we must continue to respond rapidly and also co-create systemic change.

Creating system change means understanding that the fires that claimed over 11 million hectares of forest in Brazil and Bolivia were not seasonal wildfires, but the result of arson set by those spurred by Bolsonaro to plunder the Amazon for commodities. Stoking racism towards Indigenous peoples led to over 9,000 fires being deliberately set on their

lands. Preventing the next fires means stopping the attacks, advancing the rights of Indigenous communities in resistance, and ending the deforestation that leads to the increase in fires.

Behind Bolsonaro and the ruralistas of Brazil are international financiers, banks, and corporations. That's why we also co-lead global campaigns targeting these companies and demanding change. Those who profit from rainforest destruction - the real forces behind the deforestation - like BlackRock will no longer escape the spotlight.

Added to the challenges of fire and destructive climate change practices is the COVID-19 pandemic. This could mean ethnocide for the Amazon's Indigenous peoples. The global pandemic puts their lives in even more danger as governments fail to appropriately address the crisis. Amazon Watch together with our allies takes daily action to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to support those communities where the virus has taken hold.

Support for Indigenous peoples and communities confronting the pandemic, horrific fires, genocidal attacks and

expansion of deforestation and resource extraction has never been greater. Our work in solidarity and partnership has always been the most effective and just approach to these issues, and—thanks to you—that call has now risen above the din. Your support today and in the future days and months is critical to ensuring the survival of Indigenous peoples and the preservation of the Amazon rainforest. This work cannot be done without you.

Together we are the hope for this movement and the answer to the crisis that confronts all of us.

AMAZON DEFENDERS FUND

The Amazon Defenders Fund (ADF) is the solidarity grantmaking fund at Amazon Watch dedicated to supporting Indigenous-led organizations in their quest to defend and protect the Amazon rainforest, advance solutions to deforestation, fires, floods, land grabbing, repression, violence and all threats to Indigenous sovereignty and autonomy. ADF supports initiatives which dismantle existing patriarchal systems of power and privilege to advance the voices and leadership of Indigenous women, girls and gender non-confirming individuals.

The need for ADF has never been more urgent. In the past year alone, Indigenous communities in the Amazon have confronted unprecedented levels of deforestation, violent attacks, fires that have devastated the living forest, oil spills, flooding and political uprising.

In response to these staggering events, in the last year alone ADF granted more than \$1 million to Indigenous and community



Photo: Conselho Terena Archives

partners across the Amazon. More than two hundred distinctive grants were distributed swiftly and quickly in response to the fires in Bolivia and Brazil, the devastating outbreak of COVID-19, and in support of urgent humanitarian and political mobilizations led by Indigenous communities.

ADF remains resolute in rapidly responding to immediate, life-threatening needs, as well as to projects that support legal defense; pan-Amazon advocacy collectives; Indigenous-led workshops and assemblies;

community-led territorial and ecosystem mapping; land titling projects; critical communications initiatives; non-violent direct actions; and field monitoring of industrial activities and their impacts.

ADF exists to support Indigenous peoples' rights to pursue and exercise their collective rights, culture, and livelihoods. Your support of ADF is a profound act of solidarity, turning turmoil into transformation.



MORE THAN \$1 MILLION GRANTED IN 1 YEAR

OVER 200 GRANTS TO MORE THAN 100 GROUPS ACROSS THE REGION

AVG. GRANT \$5000

TYPES OF GRANTS:



FIRE RESPONSE

- Aid in Response to Fires
- Protective Equipment
- Indigenous Firefighting
- Indigenous Forest Guardians
- Food Distribution



COVID-19 RELIEF

- Emergency Health Supplies
- Oxygen Concentrators
- Food Distribution
- Advocacy for Healthcare Improvements



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Protection and Well-being Aid for Earth Defenders at Risk
- Solar & Communications
- Travel for National and International Meetings
- Food Sovereignty
- Community Mobilization
- Communications: Internet, Radio, Computers, Video Production
- Human Rights Monitoring



INDIGENOUS WOMEN

- Development & Training
- Mobilization
- Advocacy
- Assemblies

INDIGENOUS NATIONALITIES:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Kichwa | Wampis |
| Sapara | Asháninka |
| Cofan | Cacataibo |
| U'wa | Awajún |
| Achuar | Guajajara |
| Munduruku | Suruí |
| Kayapó | Guarani |
| Shipibo-Konibo | Kaiowá |
| Ka'apor | Tikuna |
| Yawanawá | Maró |



Photo: Culture Hack Labs

A LIGHT AGAINST THE RISING DARKNESS IN BRAZIL

By Christian Poirier

To observe Brazil today is to watch a country that once offered the promise of social and environmental progress, enter a dystopian free fall. Even before the pandemic, we were witnessing many hard-fought gains for the Amazon and Indigenous peoples under threat. Bolsonaro's Brazil, with its persistent erosion of human rights and democratic norms, spikes in violence, and environmental destruction, exposes one of our planet's most distressing crises: the rise of fascism. The situation urges us to act decisively, to support those resisting this abominable regime and to take action from wherever we are from.

In contrast to the darkness spreading in Brazil, the country's Indigenous movement is channeling its centuries-long struggle for survival and self-determination into an effective counterweight against the Bolsonaro regime by waging effective activism,

from grassroots to global levels. In doing so they offer us hope and inspiration and remind us that their fight for the future of Brazil's forests and forest peoples is also our own.

Many of us became aware of the crisis in the Brazilian Amazon with the advent of last year's fires, as the world awoke to dramatic images of the rainforest burning out of control. The fires were not an isolated phenomenon. This tragedy is better understood as a manifestation of the criminality, impunity, and violence that has exploded since Bolsonaro took power. Indigenous peoples and traditional communities of the Amazon have been sounding the alarm about risks to the rainforest for years and resisting its destruction – sometimes at the cost of their own lives. As our partner Alessandra Munduruku puts it: "All this attention on the Amazon was awakened by the images of fires

in the trees. But we, the Indigenous peoples, have been shouting about it since much earlier.”

The fires raging in the Brazilian Amazon are as much political as they are physical. Bolsonaro relentlessly attacks Brazil's Indigenous minority precisely because their ancestral lands offer boundless opportunities to the powerful economic interests that brought him to power. His regime continues to churn out reckless plans to legislate the stripping of Indigenous peoples' constitutional rights to land and self-determination to make way for mining, agribusiness, and devastating infrastructure like dams.

What our partner Sônia Guajajara of the Association of Brazil's Indigenous Peoples (APIB) terms “institutional genocide” Bolsonaro calls his “dream.” To this, she responds: “Your 'dream', Bolsonaro, is our nightmare and our extermination because mining brings death, illness, and misery and it destroys the future of our children.... The blood that runs in our bodies is formed through struggle and resistance, and we will not let our nightmare come true.”

Sônia helps to lead the National Indigenous Mobilization (MNI), a leading force among Brazil's resistance movements. MNI's ability to swiftly and effectively respond to Bolsonaro's attacks by organizing direct actions, legal challenges, political pressure campaigns, and high-profile media have deterred the worst rollbacks. However, it is clear



that the Indigenous movement's efforts pit them against dominant and ruthless forces. And it could ultimately fail without local and global solidarity, with dire consequences for us all.

Amazon Watch is standing with MNI and APIB's efforts to resist Bolsonaro, uphold and restore vital human rights and environmental protections, and target the economic and political forces that enable the actors behind the crisis. To reverse today's disastrous trends, we need to look beyond the criminals in the Brazilian government and their henchmen on the ground. This is why Amazon Watch leverages the global markets that sustain their behavior and provides a bridge between their influential actors and Brazil's grassroots movements.

Our Complicity in Destruction II report, released last year in partnership with APIB, exposed dozens of international corporate

financiers of Amazon destruction including major private banks like France's BNP Paribas and asset managers like BlackRock. These findings have helped raise awareness of the forces that underpin Brazil's crisis while channeling public action toward institutions that could make or break Bolsonaro's agenda. Our strategy has not only proven timely but also adaptable to countering emerging threats, such as the expansion of industrial mining on Indigenous lands.

In 2020, we are redoubling our solidarity efforts with our Brazilian partners while convening and catalyzing a global movement towards corporate and political accountability. Indigenous peoples are the first and last line of defense between the future of the forest and its irreversible destruction. Together, with global upswell of support, we will not let the forces of disorder unleashed by Bolsonaro's fascist regime go unchallenged.

GUARDIANS OF LIFE

The film is calling on the world shocked by last summer's fires to stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples across the Amazon who are the best protectors and defenders of the Amazon rainforest. Only when Indigenous peoples and territories are protected can the Amazon rainforest thrive.

"Guardians of Life" is a short film in collaboration with Amazon Watch, Extinction Rebellion, and writer and director Shaun Monson, which centers on the near-critical stage of the climate crisis the planet is facing.

The video features Academy Award winner Joaquin Phoenix and also stars Q'orianka Kilcher, Rosario Dawson, Matthew Modine, and Albert Hammond Jr.

The film engaged millions of people around the world to take action for the Amazon:

- **News stories garnered over 8 million views**
- **Shared online over 200,000 times**
- **872,000 likes on Instagram**

Also starring Adria Arjona from Good Omens and Game of Thrones star Oona Chaplin. The film was produced by Nation Earth, Amazon Watch, Extinction Rebellion and Mobilize Earth with support from Artists for Amazonia, the Climate Save Movement and the Environmental Media Association.

Watch the film at amazonwatch.org/guardiansoflife





THERE IS STILL TIME TO PROTECT THE SACRED HEADWATERS OF THE AMAZON

By Kevin Koenig

At a time when the world needs to be racing to protect the Amazon, new threats in the headwaters of the mighty Amazon River in Ecuador and Peru puts this area, known as the Amazon Sacred Headwaters, in great peril.

The Sacred Headwaters in the Upper Amazon is the birthplace of the Amazon river. Spanning 30 million hectares in Ecuador and Peru, this area is home to nearly 500,000 Indigenous peoples from 20 nationalities, including peoples in voluntary isolation. It is the most biodiverse terrestrial ecosystem on the planet, and it represents both the hope and the despair of our times.

This rainforest region remains largely free of industrial extraction due to the successful efforts of Indigenous peoples to protect and defend their territories. Here, Indigenous peoples have stopped industrial waterways, dams, roads, and drilling plans by companies including Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ARCO, Andes Petroleum, ENI, Petrobras, CGC, and Talisman Energy, among

others. Their efforts have stopped extraction and bolstered Indigenous rights throughout the region and beyond. From their communities in the rainforest to the streets of the urban cities of Quito and Lima, and in dialogue with state governments, Indigenous peoples in the Sacred Headwaters region continue to adamantly express their opposition to any new oil drilling.

But a renewed push by Ecuador and Peru to expand extraction and auction new oil blocks in this area threatens Indigenous peoples and their Amazonian territories. In response, Indigenous nations are joining together in a new initiative, led by the regional Amazonian Indigenous confederations of both countries, CONFENIAE and AIDSEP respectively, calling for an immediate moratorium on new extraction and exploration, while pursuing a just transition away from fossil fuel dependency, to post-petroleum economies that elevate Indigenous solutions and respect their rights and autonomy. Amazon Watch is proud to be working

alongside Indigenous nationalities to realize this big vision, and is joined by Pachamama Alliance, Fundación Pachamama, and Stand.earth.

Oil Expansion in the Last Place on Earth it Should Happen

Ecuador has announced plans to leave the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) by 2020 to boost production and has reformed its hydrocarbon contract structure to attract new investment. Peru hopes to pass hydrocarbon reform in 2020 to expedite drilling.

But the Amazon biome is on the brink. Scientists warn that we are at the tipping point of no return, where the lush, tropical Amazon rainforest could go through a process of 'savannahfication.' Drilling for new fossil fuels in the most biodiverse rainforest on the planet – that regulates essential hydrologic and carbon cycles – is a recipe for disaster.

New and ongoing oil extraction also threatens the very livelihood and cultures of Indigenous peoples, some of whom live in voluntary isolation. For them, oil production and deforestation are existential threats to their survival as a people.

The threats that oil extraction poses to Indigenous peoples, biodiversity, and standing forests in the Sacred Headwaters region should make leaving fossil fuels in the ground here a planetary priority.

A Huge Climate Opportunity

Ecuador and Peru's plan to greatly expand oil production comes at a time of climate crisis. The science is clear: the world must begin a rapid phase out of fossil fuel production, and keep oil in the ground.

The oil industry is a major driver of deforestation in the western Amazon, both directly and through the carving out of new roads that facilitate access to other extractive industries like agribusiness and mining. Expanding oil production and looking for new crude reserves underneath standing forests that help mitigate climate change by sequestering carbon, will greatly exacerbate climate disruption. A new report by the UN Environmental Program and leading researchers revealed a gap between new oil production and country climate commitments. It found governments are planning to produce 50% more oil, gas, and coal by 2030 than is consistent with the Paris Agreement, a dangerous discrepancy that threatens climate stability. Drilling in the Amazon Sacred Headwaters will only generate less than two months of the world's oil supply, but will cause irreparable damage locally and globally.

Keeping 5 billion barrels in the region underground is equivalent to avoiding over 2 billion metric tons of CO2 emissions, and maintaining the integrity of the living forest is equivalent to 4 billion metric tons of carbon. This collectively represents the equivalent energy use of 200 million U.S. homes for 10 years.

China, California, Chile, Major Businesses and Finance Institutions All Connected to the Problem

A massive portion of the existing and expanded crude oil production is being used to pay off billions in loans to China – a country with a stated ambition to advance an ecological society. Over 50% of the crude oil from the Western Amazon goes to California refineries – much of it used to fill up the gas tanks of one of the most progressive regions on the planet. Chinese and international banks and finance institutions are funding the build-out of oil drilling in the region and major brands are fueling their fleets with the spoils.

Still Time: An Indigenous-Led Bi-National Conservation Vision

Fortunately, there is still time to protect this critical area and there is an Indigenous-led conservation effort underway that is a true model for our time. Similar to a Green New Deal, the Amazon Sacred Headwaters Initiative seeks to usher in a new era of clean, renewable energy, reduce fossil fuel dependence, and create a just transition for the economies of their countries that supports the Indigenous solutions that have helped protect this area for millennia.



FOLLOW THE MONEY TO STOP RAINFOREST DESTRUCTION

By Moira Birss and
Pendle Marshall-Hallmark

When the Amazon fires brought worldwide attention to the climate crisis last summer, Amazon Watch was able to shine a spotlight on the critical role that big finance plays in supporting such destruction. In several key reports, titled *Complicity in Destruction*, *Investing in Amazon Destruction*, and most recently, *Investing in Amazon Crude*, Amazon Watch research unveiled the ways that major international financiers are directly funding the companies most responsible for deforestation and oil extraction in both the western Amazon (in Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia) and the eastern Amazon (Brazil). The latest report, published in March, not only lays out in detail the links between major finance and crude oil extraction but also highlights the organized resistance that such projects currently face from Indigenous peoples in the region.

Environmental activists across the country and around the world are utilizing Amazon Watch's reports to further their fight against the financial institutions that are backing the climate emergency. Amazon Watch also played a strategic role in two of the most significant initiatives in the movement to end the financing of climate destruction: the BlackRock's Big Problem campaign and the Stop the Money Pipeline coalition.

BlackRock's Big Problem is a campaign specifically calling on BlackRock—the world's largest asset manager with over \$7.4 trillion USD in assets under management and the world's largest investor in fossil fuels—to divest its assets from all fossil fuel and deforestation-risk commodity companies. Amazon Watch collaborated with allies from the Sunrise Project, the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, and others to

publicly launch the campaign in the Fall of 2018. Since then, the initiative has gained traction and important attention. In early 2020, BlackRock's CEO Larry Fink announced that the asset manager would be taking companies that make more than 25% of their revenue from coal out of its active funds; that it would offer ESG (environmental, social and governance) funds as part of its flagship investment fund offerings; that it would use its position as a majority shareholder in several of the companies it invests in to call for more environmentally sustainable business practices; and that it would keep a closer eye on how the agribusiness companies it's invested in may be causing deforestation. Though these commitments are by no means sufficient to end the BlackRock's Big Problem campaign, Amazon Watch and our allies will continue to keep public attention and pressure on the Wall Street giant for its role in financing the climate crisis. In taking these initial steps, BlackRock is showing signs it may become a leader in the U.S. finance industry and could set an important standard for other asset management companies to follow going forward.

Amazon Watch is also a leader in the Stop the Money Pipeline coalition. Formed in November of 2019, Stop the Money Pipeline is a diverse collection of groups calling for an end to the financing of environmental destruction and brings together existing campaigns (among them BlackRock's Big Problem) targeting the worst offenders in each part of the



financial sector: asset management, banking, and insurance. Just as activists are targeting BlackRock for its role in investing in the climate crisis, Stop the Money Pipeline participants are also targeting J.P. Morgan Chase—the largest bank in the United States and the largest private funder of fossil fuels in the world. Since the Paris Agreement, Chase has dumped more than \$269 billion into new fossil fuel projects. Bowing to pressure from the Stop the Money Pipeline coalition and groups like the Rainforest Action Network, the Sierra Club, and the Gwich'in Steering Committee, Chase announced plans in February 2020 to stop advising and lending to the coal mining industry, and to stop funding new oil and gas drilling projects in the Arctic. Stop the Money Pipeline activists are also targeting Liberty Mutual, a top global insurer of coal, oil and gas. This mobilization builds off of ongoing fossil fuel divestment efforts that are focused on pension funds, university endowments, and other private funds.

Over the past few months, Stop the Money Pipeline has been turning up the heat on all of these targets, while

also demanding that the government step in to regulate the risk fossil fuel investments are posing to our climate and communities. On January 10th, activists in DC launched the Stop the Money Pipeline during a “Fire Drill Fridays” action, accompanied by environmentalist leaders and celebrities like Bill McKibben, Annie Leonard, Jane Fonda, and Joaquin Phoenix. On February 13, activists all over the country participated in an intergenerational day of divestment action, with students on college campuses targeting universities to divest their endowments from fossil fuels, and retired people targeting state pension funds to do the same. Actions continue to escalate into the spring, with a major mobilization called Fossil Fuel Divestment Day that took place online on April 23rd, 2020 and a “People’s Assembly On BlackRock” organized for the week of its annual shareholder’s meeting in May.

Eliminating the support of these major financiers will stop the fossil fuel and deforestation commodity companies that are driving climate destruction. Together with our allies, Amazon Watch is committed to doing just that.



THE ACHUAR'S LAST STAND IN PERU

By Andrew Miller

Last year, eight Achuar and Wampis Indigenous leaders faced the CEO of the oil company GeoPark and told him repeatedly to leave their territory. Nothing swayed their resolve - not the charm offensive, or the claims of non-negotiable legal responsibilities, or the pleas to hear more about their concerns. The Indigenous communities have spoken - innumerable times - and the collective decision to keep their territories free of fossil fuel development is final.

GeoPark's 2019 annual general meeting was not the first corporate shareholder meeting crashed by Achuar leaders. Over the years, successive oil companies have signed contracts to drill in the oil concession known as Block 64. The Achuar brought their message of protecting the Amazon to Oxy's meeting in Los Angeles, then Talisman's meetings

in Calgary, and now to GeoPark's Santiago, Chile. Amazon Watch, alongside Peruvian and international allies, was there to accompany them on their journeys for justice.

The latest struggle began in 2014, when GeoPark first signed contracts with the Peruvian government. Since then the unrelenting resistance of the Achuar has frustrated GeoPark's efforts to start pumping oil. After a year of withering criticisms, the company was forced to withdraw its environmental impact study, which otherwise would have required approval by government regulators to initiate construction of the mega-project. A nascent alliance with the powerful Wampis Nation has strengthened the influence of Indigenous communities opposing the destruction of their forests and waterways.

In the face of these effective grassroots strategies, GeoPark attempted to bolster its international image by collaborating with a project called "Amazon Best Social and Environmental Management Practices" (Amazon BMP). This \$23.5 million initiative - financed by the US Agency for International Development - was seen by oil companies as a way to demonstrate they were doing the right thing and garner public legitimacy, even when they lacked the consent of local communities. Upon learning that GeoPark had arranged a "social baseline study" to be carried out specifically in Block 64, we informed the Achuar and Wampis who in turn sent a notification to USAID that such a study would not be permitted.

GeoPark's gambit unraveled quickly, bringing down the whole initiative. Communities in Colombia and Brazil similarly denounced plans that the Amazon BMP initiative had to support controversial projects. Simultaneously, a coalition of organizations generated pressure on USAID from crucial Congressional offices in both the U.S. House and Senate. Given the grassroots outcry from Indigenous communities and top-down scrutiny from Congress, USAID terminated Amazon BMP at the end of 2019, four years earlier than planned.

Despite the failure of their greenwashing attempts, GeoPark has worked to secure further oil concessions in the Colombian Amazon. In December they announced their intention to purchase



Amerisur Resources, a UK-based oil company, that had embroiled itself in a conflict with Indigenous communities of Putumayo. The Siona community of Buenavista, that has long-fought against Amerisur, has warned GeoPark that, "the business acquisition includes the obligations and liabilities for serious violations of human rights, socio-environmental damages and other impacts pending restitution for the Siona people that were caused by Amerisur."

The risks for GeoPark - and their investors - are multiplying. Not only are they facing multiple social conflicts in several countries, but they also face the prospect of a united front of Indigenous communities internationally denouncing the company's intentions to operate where they have no social license to do so. Amazon Watch presents GeoPark as a case study in the kinds of investments that large institutions should not be making, as part of the broader complex of extractive corporations driving the climate crisis.

Of course, Indigenous communities themselves run the greatest risks. Divide-and-conquer strategies continue to weaken their social cohesion and cultural identity. Oil contamination violates their rights to food security, health, and a clean environment. And in the ongoing Colombian armed conflict, community leaders who speak up for their rights put their own lives at risk.

Amazon Watch has supported the Achuar of the Pastaza for more than 15 years. They continue to be crucial partners, as we strengthen our work in the Sacred Headwaters region alongside other organizations and Indigenous federations. The growing alliances between the Achuar and their Wampis neighbors in Peru, their sister Achuar communities across the border in Ecuador, and into other countries like Colombia are a source of inspiration and hope. It is crucial that together we support them until the threat of oil activities and other unwanted incursions in their territory is long gone.

ARTISTS FOR AMAZONIA

Since Amazon Watch began its campaigns in 1996, we have allied with many artists to help draw greater attention to the situation in the Amazon and our work to advance Indigenous rights. People such as Cary Elwes, Ed Begley, Jr., Daryl Hannah, Martin Sheen, James Cameron, and Honorary Board member Peter Coyote have lent their talents and energy to our work many times over the years. In the fall of 2019, due to the global attention brought on from the crisis of the fires in Brazil and Bolivia, Amazon Watch was contacted by many influencers and allies seeking to lend their support. In response we greatly expanded this program and formally introduced the Artists for Amazonia campaign. This effort is harnessing the power of creative and entertainment influencers to mobilize global action in response to the crisis in the Amazon and threats to Indigenous earth defenders.

Artists for Amazonia supports movement-building and collaboration from high-profile celebrities like Barbra Streisand, Sting, and Peter Gabriel, to scientist leaders like Dr. Jane Goodall. This campaign allows us to band together to generate quick and effective action to protect the rainforest and Indigenous rights in this time of extreme climate crisis and pandemic.



In direct response to COVID-19 threats to Indigenous peoples in the Amazon, Artists for Amazonia stepped up to produce live online events in May and June to benefit the Amazon Emergency Fund. The Amazon Emergency Fund is an Indigenous-led fundraising campaign providing rapid response grants to Indigenous communities threatened by the pandemic. It's designed to mobilize funds quickly and directly into the hands of communities across the Amazon to address a full spectrum of needs.

The livestream event was titled, Artists United for Amazonia: Protecting the Protectors, and featured musical performances, entertainment influencers, Indigenous leaders, activists, scientists, and conservation advocates. The event engaged hundreds of thousands of people world-wide and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Amazon Emergency Fund.



Photo: Amazon Watch/Lucas Silva

Since 1996, Amazon Watch has protected the rainforest and advanced the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Amazon Basin. We partner with Indigenous and environmental organizations in campaigns for human rights, corporate accountability, and the preservation of the Amazon's ecological systems.

AMAZON WATCH TEAM

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Camila Rossi, Brazil Communications Advisor
Katherine Rothschild, Development Associate
Elena Maria Teare, Communications Associate
Ana Paula Vargas, Brazil Program Manager
Michael Zap, Web Manager



"In times of pandemic, giving is an act of humanity and love. In this sense, we Indigenous people of Rio Grande do Norte, thank Amazon Watch for providing us with one of the essential elements of life: food. The donation destined for us has given us dignity and hope that, together, we will overcome this chaos that plagues our country."

Dioclécio Potyguara, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil.

"Support provided served to reinforce our community territorial monitors who are controlling the border with Ecuador in order to avoid transmission of COVID19 among our Wampis communities within our ancestral territories of Kankaim and Kanus."

Wrays Perez, Pamuk (President) of the Wampis Nation, northern Peruvian Amazon

"It is only through support like this from Amazon Watch that we can mitigate the impacts caused by the absence of the State to fight the coronavirus, deforestation, fires and to strengthen our bases with protection."

Dinaman Tuxá, Bahia, Brazil - Executive Coordinator APIB, legal advisor of APOINME

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