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ENVIRONMENTAL NIGHTMARE FOR THE AMAZON

August 22, 2017 by Philip Fearnside

ALERT member Philip Fearnside, arguably the world's leading authority on Amazon conservation, tells us about a chilling recent events in Brazil:

The last two months have seen a spectacular series of blows to Brazil's environmental licensing system and other eco-protections.

These have occurred in the days and even hours leading up to a congressional vote to begin impeachment actions against president Michel Temer, based on serious revelations of corruption.

ENVIRONMENTAL NIGHTMARES

There have been so many environmental and political setbacks recently that it's difficult to know where to start.

For one thing, President Temer supported and signed the notorious “land-thieves law” that [legitimizes illegal land claims of up to 2,500 hectares in area](#) (the size of 5,000 football fields), many of which are in the Amazon rainforest.

President Temer also reneged on an earlier promise to oppose an intensely controversial law that would gut the environmental licensing system for projects such as dams and highways (see [here](#) and [here](#)).



He also has effectively pardoned vast sums in fines and debts owed to the government by the powerful agribusiness and ranching sectors (see [here](#) and [here](#)), while [weakening the criteria for definition of indigenous lands](#).

The president has also supported a controversial highway project demanded by [conservative politicians](#) — known as “ruralists” — and backed measures to reduce Amazonian protected areas (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

PORK-BARREL PAYOUTS

These measures are in addition to Temer handing out [over \\$1.3 billion](#) in pork-barrel appropriations to selected federal deputies — with estimates of future handouts [as high as \\$5.2 billion](#), not including other expensive concessions to Temer’s political allies.



The “ruralists” are **benefiting hugely** from Temer’s generosity with public monies, and are now so powerful that they are blocking impeachment proceedings against him (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

The president’s political handouts are worsening Brazil’s economic crisis, while cutting into funding **direly needed by the Environment Ministry**, among other government sectors.

This is Brazil today. A president with dark corruption allegations hanging over his head is willfully sacrificing the country’s incredible environment to save his own political skin — while handing out massive payouts to his “ruralist” allies in congress.



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