

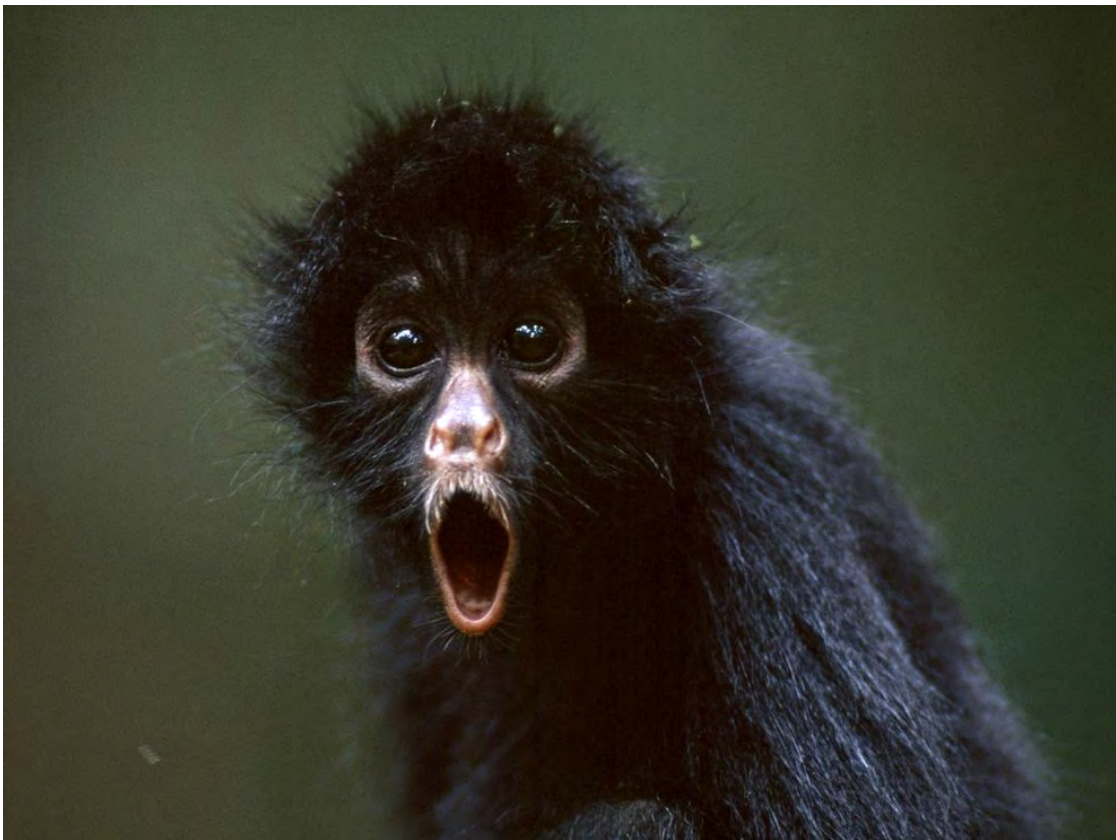
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Brazil's Politicians Unleash Illegal Loggers, Miners, and Land Thieves

June 18, 2017 by Philip Fearnside

ALERT member and long-term Amazon expert Philip Fearnside tells us about an escalating environmental emergency in Brazil:

In their rush to undo environmental protections, Brazil's politicians are again shocking the world.

These efforts are part of a "ruralist" political agenda in Brazil—designed to benefit wealthy agribusiness and large-scale landholders.

On top of past legislative moves, the latest actions would effectively abolish the nation's environmental licensing system (see [here](#) and [here](#)) while removing around 1 million hectares of Amazon forest from protected areas along the Transamazon Highway in Amazonas state.



Scary Laws

Alarming laws have already been passed by Brazil's Congress to cut protection of 600,000 hectares of Amazon forest along the Santarém-Cuiabá Highway (BR-163) in Pará state (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

These laws await only the signature of conservative President Michel Temer, who is being roiled by claims of political corruption, to take force. That will happen in just days—on June 22—unless Temer unexpectedly vetoes the legislation, which was passed by his own political supporters.

The laws would strip much of the legal protection from Jamanxim National Park and Jamanxim National Forest. They would be reverted into "APAs" (areas of environmental protection), a land category that allows logging and mining and the granting of land titles to "grileiros"—large-scale land thieves who illegally occupy public land.



The Land-Thieves Law

Another measure—popularly known as the “land-thieves law” (termed MP 759, or PLC 12/16)—is also awaiting presidential signature.

This law would allow illegally occupied areas of up to 2,500 hectares—the size of 5,000 football fields—to be legally granted in land titles.

In practice, those taking advantage of the land-thieves law often gain access to much larger areas than those legally allowed, by listing several land claims in the names of different family members.



Floodgates Opening?

And all this comes on top of a 2009 law (termed MP 158, or Law No. 11,952) that allowed private claims of public lands to be hugely increased—from 100 hectares to 1,500 hectares.

Collectively, these measures are greatly increasing the profitability of land thieving—which in the last 5 years has grown into one of the biggest drivers of deforestation in Brazil.

It's an urgent moment to pressure President Temer: don't support the aggressive land-thieves imperiling the Amazon and critical ecosystems throughout Brazil.

Messages to President Michel Temer can be emailed here (sg@presidencia.gov.br) and posted publicly [here](#) and [here](#).

FLASH UPDATE FROM PHILIP FEARNSIDE:

On June 19, President Michel Temer vetoed the proposal (MP 756) that would have transformed part of the Janximim National Forest into an "APA", thus allowing mining, logging, and the "legalization" of illegal land claims.

The veto is good news--but less than it seems.

Along with the veto it was also announced that the President would be submitting to the Congress a new bill that would essentially re-propose the same thing, albeit this time including a “public consultation” phase.

A group of Brazilian NGOs immediately denounced this maneuver.

The “Land-Thieves Law” was not among the measures vetoed by President Temer. It awaits his decision, until July 4.



June 18, 2017 /Philip Fearnside