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Alliance of Leading Environmental Researchers & Thinkers



[Political Attack on Amazonian Protected Areas](#)

ALERT members Philip Fearnside and Thomas Lovejoy -- two of the world's most eminent authorities on tropical environments and development -- are intensely worried about recent political attacks on protected areas in the Amazon:

Avoiding Amazon Dieback

If conservative legislators in Brazil get their way, nature reserves in the Amazon could be slashed by around 1.5 million hectares -- an area bigger than the Bahamas.

From a nature-conservation perspective, this would be a foolish and dangerous step backwards.

By promoting further forest loss, the attack on nature reserves might even destabilize the Amazon's climate, which relies on moisture that the rainforest effectively produces itself.

Further forest disruption could even tip the balance toward [Amazon dieback](#) -- a catastrophic scenario in which more deforestation worsens dry-season droughts and wildfires, leading to ever more deforestation.



Political Maneuvers

Political dangers are popping up all over the Brazilian Amazon.

For example, Brazil's vast state of Amazonas -- twice the size of Texas -- has so far prided itself in being one of the most intact areas of the Amazon.

But the cancer of deforestation is set to grow rapidly in southern Amazonas, where forests are already highly vulnerable.

In March, Congressional members from Amazonas -- with the backing of Brazilian President Temer -- moved to revoke or drastically downgrade protected areas in southern Amazonas (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

Trouble is also brewing in nearby Pará, another massive Amazon state. On March 12, it only took 7 minutes for one of Brazil's Congressional Chambers to mutilate 510,000 hectares of reserves in Pará, transforming them into public lands or a loose land categorization (APAs) that has almost no real protection, and can be sold as private property.

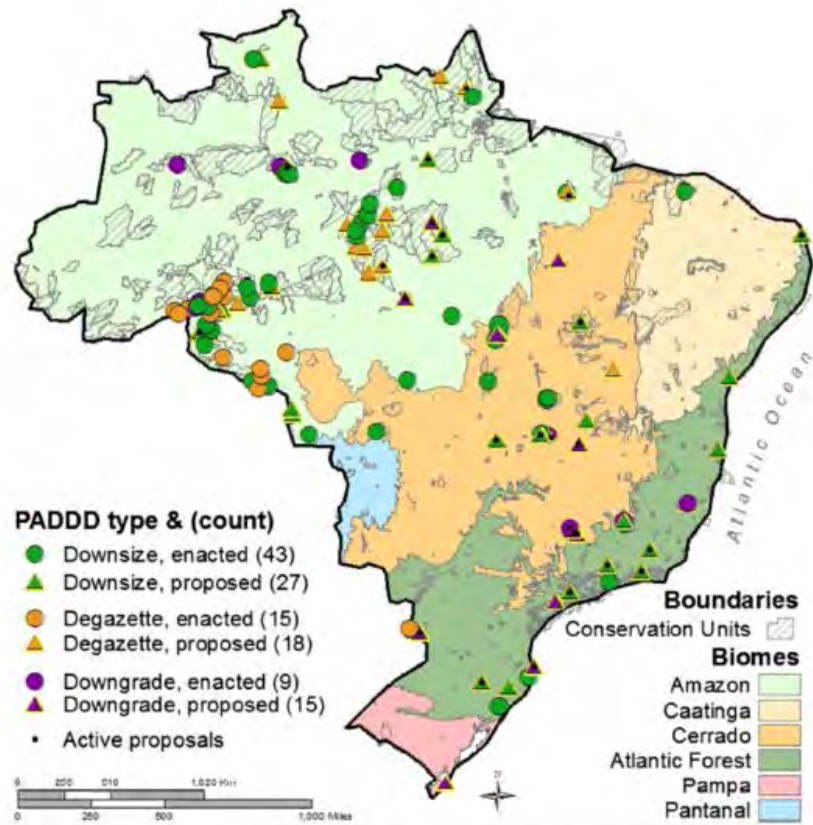


Fig. 1. Map of all enacted and proposed (both active and inactive) PADD events in Brazil, 1900–2014. Spatial data are available in database A1.

Growing Attacks

In Brazil, as in many other developing nations, attacks on protected areas are proceeding apace. Parks are being carved apart, weakened legally, or entirely cancelled to allow access for mining, oil and gas developments, dam construction, and to slice up the parks with new road projects.

This phenomenon has an acronym: PADD, or Protected Area Downgrading, Downsizing, and Degazettement. And there's even a [cool website](#) where you can see thousands of PADD events happening right now, in any part of the world.



The Amazon's protected-area network plays a vital role in limiting the vulnerability of the region's forests to aggressive land-use exploitation.

The Amazon has regional and even global impacts on our climate, and is a storehouse for incredible biodiversity.

It's time for the world to stand up for the Amazon -- to show parochial political groups in Brazil that far too much will be lost if the wheels of progress crush nature beneath them.



[April 20, 2017 Philip Fearnside](#),

[Brazil](#), [Amazon](#), [Amazonas](#), [Para](#), [deforestation](#), [rainfall recycling](#), [tipping point](#), [Amazon dieback](#), [PADDD](#), [park degazettement](#), [President Temer](#), [rainfall](#), [drought](#), [Philip Fearnside](#), [Thomas Lovejoy](#)