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MINING MADNESS IN THE AMAZON

September 26, 2017 by Bill Laurance

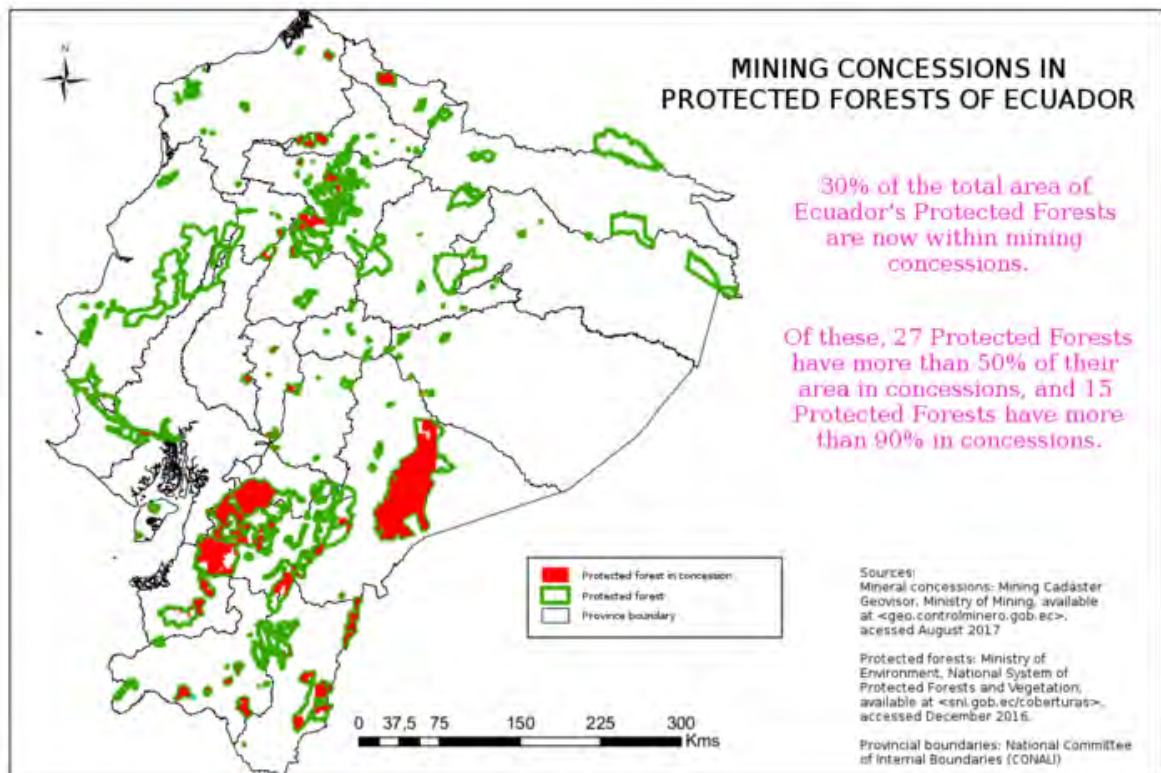
Legal and illegal mining is veering out of control in the Amazon — imperiling not just surviving wild-lands but also national parks, protected areas, and indigenous peoples too.

Here, John Seed from the [Rainforest Information Centre](#) and [ALERT member Philip Fearnside](#) give us a glimpse of the ongoing onslaught in Ecuador and Brazil, respectively.

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In Ecuador, Protected Forests (Bosques Protectores) are increasingly being handed over to mining interests, with no environmental research or consultation with indigenous or local communities.

Analyses by John Seed and others indicate that mining concessions now span nearly 3.7 million hectares in Ecuador — an eighth of the national land area, collectively exceeding in size the nation of Japan.



Mining concessions

And the mining tsunami is sweeping right into Ecuador's protected areas.

Overall, 30% of all Protected Forests in Ecuador are now in mining concessions. Of these, 27 Protected Forests will lose over half of their area to mining, and 15 will lose over 90% of their area.

The impacts on biodiversity are frightening. For example, more than 1 million hectares of the best bird habitat in Ecuador — a global hotspot for biodiversity — are now under mining concessions.

This includes Bosque Protector Molleturo Mullopungo, home to dozens of critically endangered species that is now completely covered with mining concessions.



RENCA

BRAZILIAN AMAZONIA

Miners are also running amok in Brazil, where President Michel Temer and his 'ruralist' allies in Congress have seemingly declared war on the environment.

In March, Temer [publicly invited international mining corporations to Amazonia](#).

To tempt big miners, Temer is also opening up the vast RENCA, the national reserve of copper and minerals, for mining development.



(c) Mongabay

Located in northern Amazonia, the RENCA spans an area the size of Switzerland — 4.6 million hectares — is rich with intact native forests, biodiversity, and indigenous peoples.

It contains nine protected areas and two indigenous reserves.

The RENCA was protected by Brazil's leaders in 1984 to reserve the country's richest mineral resources from foreign exploiters.

But if Temer has his way, it will soon be open slather for foreign miners, in what one Brazilian senator described as “the biggest attack on the Amazon in 50 years.”

Notably, the Congressional Committee considering legislation to open up the RENCA is receiving massive [campaign contributions from Vale](#), one of the world's biggest mining corporations.

Just as is happening in the RENCA, protected areas in Brazil have been attacked again and again by changing their legal classification (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).



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In most cases, the vulnerable protected areas are those that overlay mining claims (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

Opening up the RENCA will change the Amazon irrevocably — creating huge industrial mines as well as networks of new roads — which in turn provide avenues for forest invasions, land theft, illicit logging, and illegal gold mining.

In Brazil as in Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, and far beyond, aggressive miners and the lethal spider-webs of roads they bulldoze are opening up far larger areas of forest for exploitation and destruction.



Mine
September 26, 2017 /Bill Laurance