

Brazil Puts Two Belgioms of Forests Under Protection.

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Just one week after the excellent news about the Great Bear Rainforest comes another stunning victory with the announcement that a huge area of the Brazilian Amazon rainforest will be protected from destructive logging.

The Brazilian government is trumpeting the creation by Presidential Decree of new conservation units totalling 6.4m hectares, an area twice the size of Belgium.

The news comes only days after the first anniversary of the murder of Sister Dorothy Stang, assassinated as a result of her campaign to protect the rainforest and the communities that depend on it for their survival.

Of the area to be protected, 1.6m hectares will be permanently protected and completely sealed off to loggers. Logging concessions will be available in another 2.8m hectares where good management practices will be established to ensure sustainable and eco-sensitive practices, and a further 2m hectares will see the benefit of improved development guidelines.

A Great Step Forward But Much More Needed

"This is a great step towards the protection and sustainable use of the world's last ancient forests but is only a fraction of what is needed," said Paulo Adário, forest campaign coordinator for Greenpeace Brazil.

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The Amazon rainforest is under threat from drought, fires, land clearance and illegal and destructive logging - the equivalent of 18 football fields are cleared every minute - and this has led to a dramatic loss of biodiversity as well as contributing towards climate change.

The area to be protected is particularly vulnerable to exploitation because a road that cuts through the region, the BR-163 in Pará State, is about to be paved. This could open the forest up to further soy plantations, cattle ranching, logging and other forms of destruction.

However this is another fantastic victory for Greenpeace and our allies, with hopefully more to come. Next month sees the Convention on Biological Diversity being held in Brazil - a perfect opportunity for governments worldwide to make good on their promises and ensure the survival of more of the world's rapidly-disappearing ancient forests.

Whilst the 6.4 million hectares is a victory for many communities in the Amazon, it still represents less than two percent of the total Brazilian Amazon. An area one-third the size of the new conservation area is lost every year in the Amazon to logging, soy plantations and cattle ranchers.

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The new conservation areas will be created in a crucial part of the Amazon alongside the notorious highway called the BR163. The road cuts through the heart of the Amazon and a promise by the Brazilian Government to pave the road has resulted in accelerated rates of deforestation in the area. Without the increased protection this decree provides, this area would have soon been destroyed for soy plantations and cattle ranches.

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