The Race for Peru’s Last Mahogany Trees

Illegal logging and the Alto Purús National Park

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1. **Summary**

Peru’s Alto Purús National Park and its surroundings comprise one of the world’s last great wilderness areas. The 2.5 million hectare park is Peru’s largest and was created in 2004 partly to protect groups of uncontacted hunters and gatherers who live there. The park also harbors some of the last large stands of bigleaf mahogany trees (*Swietenia macrophylla*), an exceedingly rare timber species and one of the most valuable on the international market. As a result, in recent years the park and its surroundings have come under siege by illegal loggers. The logging continues despite Peruvian and international laws intended to protect mahogany, indigenous people, and conservation areas. It is detrimental to the Alto Purús ecosystem, indigenous communities in the area, and threatens local populations of mahogany. The illegal logging also threatens the survival of the migratory hunters and gatherers, some of the last uncontacted indigenous people left on earth.

We recommend:

- removing immediately loggers operating in the park and adjacent reserves for voluntarily isolated (uncontacted) people
- improving protection of the park by strictly controlling travel on the primary access routes
- improving coordination between park guards and the ecological police in order to enforce protected area boundaries and prosecute offenders
- investing in conservation and sustainable development projects in indigenous communities in order to engage local people in protecting the park and to encourage them to use the resources on their titled lands in sustainable ways
- pressuring the United States government to respect international laws prohibiting the importation of mahogany illegally cut from Peru’s protected areas

Our findings and recommendations are based on an investigation conducted from August to December 2006 in the Alto Purús National Park and the adjacent indigenous communities, forestry concessions, and reserves for uncontacted people. The investigation involved overflights and ten weeks of travel up six rivers that serve as the primary access routes to the park. Data were collected through personal observations and a combination of informal and structured interviews with various stakeholders including park guards, forestry engineers, indigenous leaders, non-governmental organization (NGO) staff, and loggers.
Illegal logging

The majority of the illegal logging is occurring in two general regions (see map below).

1) Loggers use the Las Piedras and Tahuamanu Rivers to access the park’s southern region and the adjacent Madre de Dios Territorial Reserve for People in Voluntary Isolation.

- On the Las Piedras River, we found six active logging camps in the park and two in the territorial reserve (see camp photos on page 36).
- One logging team cut 13 trees from the park in 2006: ten Spanish cedar and three mahogany. They decided to cut cedar because the price for mahogany was low.
- Another team used three sawmills simultaneously to cut approximately 100,000 board feet of mahogany from the park during the previous year.
- We found approximately 25,000 board feet of mahogany in a camp on the border of the park and the uncontacted reserve.
- According to several loggers, most loggers have left the area due to low prices for mahogany, but they will return in early 2007 when Peru begins filling a new export quota for mahogany and the price rebounds.

2) The western side of the park and the Murunahua Territorial Reserve for People in Voluntary Isolation are being accessed via small rivers and illegal logging roads.

- Loggers use a network of logging trails in the headwaters of the Sepahua River to access the park’s Cujar River. During an overflight, we located an active logging camp inside the park near the Cujar River. This camp has grown significantly since a 2004 investigation (see photos on page 29).
- Trails connect the Inuya River with the park’s Curiuja River. A group of loggers working on the Curiuja told us that they had cut five trees totaling 15,000 board feet so far, and that last year, when the price for mahogany was high, there were several other logging teams working on the Curiuja.
- Loggers have used tractors to cut illegal roads from the Ucayali River to the Yurua River basin. During an overflight of the region, we found one illegal road (see photo on page 44) and two logging camps inside the Murunahua reserve.
- Also we found a logging camp inside the park near the Envira River.
- Forestry engineers on the Inuya and Sepahua, who are responsible for checking the legality of wood being transported downstream, continue to be threatened with violence by illegal loggers. Their post on the Inuya was burned to the ground by loggers in 2003.
2. Introduction

One of the largest tributaries of the Amazon, the Purús River begins as a small stream below the thick canopy of giant, centuries-old trees in the jungle of southeastern Peru. In the rainy season, the stream becomes swollen with branches, logs, and other debris that is pushed inexorably downstream by daily rainstorms. But in the dry season, it slithers lazily between beaches exposed by the receding water. It is during this season that the Mashco-Piro people visit the upper parts of the Purús—a region referred to as the Alto Purús—to collect turtle eggs laid in the sandy beaches. Nomadic hunters and gatherers, the Mashco-Piro number perhaps 500 individuals, and are some of the earth’s last surviving indigenous people living in voluntary isolation. Incredibly, there are at least three such groups—also referred to as uncontacted people, or simply uncontacteds—living in the Alto Purús region, the Mashco-Piro being the largest. They migrate seasonally, crisscrossing the Alto Purús region, hunting with bow and arrows and sleeping on leaves placed below temporary shelters constructed from palm fronds. But the main reason the Mashco-Piro and other uncontacteds live in the Alto Purús is not the abundance of turtle eggs—it is simply that there is nowhere left for them to continue their nomadic and isolated way of life.

Over the past century, rubber tappers, missionaries, fur trappers, and peasant farmers have pushed deeper into the Peruvian Amazon, forcing the Mashco-Piro and other uncontacted groups further upstream into the shadowed headwaters of the Alto Purús and nearby rivers. This forest frontier is also the last place in Peru with large stands of bigleaf mahogany (Swietenia macrophylla), among the world’s most valuable tree species. While still intact and relatively pristine, the Alto Purús is now under siege by loggers spurred on by the First World’s demand for mahogany. With nowhere left to hide, the uncontacted people have been forced to defend their territory, and in recent years, violent conflicts between uncontacted people and the loggers have become more common, with deaths on both sides.

Recognizing its extraordinary ecological and cultural value, in 2004 the Peruvian government protected the region’s core as the Alto Purús National Park. Covering 2.5 million hectares, it is Peru’s largest park and the central link in one of largest networks of strictly protected land in the Amazon basin—an area almost the size of Costa Rica (Leite-Pitman et al. 2003). Located in the remote Madre de Dios and Ucayali states, in one of the most remote and inaccessible parts of Peru, the Alto Purús is perhaps the best-preserved and most important wildlife corridor in the upper Amazon. It supports numerous endangered plants and animals, including large-ranging carnivores such as the harpy eagle (Harpia harpyja), the short-eared dog (Atelocynus microtis), and the giant river otter (Pteronura brasiliensis). The Alto Purús is truly one of the world’s last great wilderness areas, an international conservation priority of the highest magnitude.

The Alto Purús region includes the park, the Purús Communal Reserve (200,000 ha), two reserves for uncontacted people (the Murunahua Territorial Reserve to the northwest and the Territorial Reserve for People in Isolation in Madre de Dios to the southeast), forestry concessions, and titled indigenous communities (see Map 1).
Map 1: Alto Purús National Park and Surrounding Areas
Despite the protected status of most of the region, its flora, fauna, and peoples are threatened by the illegal logging. Protection of the park and territorial reserves for uncontacted is weak at best, and the bold act to protect a region of extraordinary ecological and cultural value has been little more than a symbolic gesture as mahogany continues to be cut from within park and territorial reserve boundaries. Both Peru and importing countries like the United States are responsible for enabling the plunder of one of the last great wilderness areas on earth, exploiting people in local communities, and threatening the survival of some of the world’s last uncontacted people, all for the sake of providing wood for the luxury furniture market.

The Alto Purús: mahogany’s last stand

Unsustainable logging has caused a precipitous decline in mahogany throughout its historical range in Central and South America. In 2001, Brazil stopped exporting mahogany because of concern over the social and environmental impacts, and as a result Peru has become the world’s largest exporter. As of 2004, mahogany’s range in Peru had already decreased by 50%, and experts estimate that within the next decade it could shrink by an additional 28% (Kometter et al. 2004). Mahogany is one of the most valuable tropical timber species on the international market, and the Alto Purús has the highest density of mahogany trees in Peru (Kometter et al. 2004). As a result, the Alto Purús has become the hotspot in all of South America for illegal mahogany logging.

The logging continues despite various Peruvian and international laws meant to protect the species. Peru’s Forestry Law Number 27308, passed in 2000, established a 10-year ban on mahogany and Spanish cedar (Cedrela odorata) logging in several watersheds including the Alto Purús. In November 2002, mahogany was listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), an international accord intended to protect endangered species from overexploitation as a result of international trade. As such, exporting countries, like Peru, must ensure that mahogany shipments are not detrimental to the survival of the species (CITES 2002). As an Appendix II species, mahogany shipments can be exported only if they are given a “non-detrimental” finding by Peru’s Scientific Authority. However, an estimated 80% of Peru’s mahogany is exported to the United States despite overwhelming evidence gathered by researchers that the majority of the exported mahogany is coming from Peru’s protected areas or is harvested by other illegal means, for example without adhering to management plans (i.e., Fagan and Shoobridge 2005, Salisbury 2007).

At some point along the chain of custody, from the stumps left in the forest to the port in Lima where it is loaded onto ships, exporters are obtaining permits for wood that is

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1 Henceforth, Alto Purús refers to the entire region—the park, communal reserve, territorial reserves for uncontacted, forestry concessions, and indigenous community lands.

2 At the time of this report, a proposal to upgrade mahogany from Appendix II to I had not been submitted to the CITES secretariat for consideration at the next CITES meeting scheduled for June 2007 in the Netherlands. However, the secretariat reserves the right to strengthen protection by listing it in Appendix I, if it decides that Peru has not upheld Appendix II regulations and trade continues to threaten its survival. Peru’s second most valuable wood, Spanish cedar, is being proposed for listing on Appendix II.
obviously out of compliance with CITES regulations. However, clearly the impetus for
the illegal logging is demand from the First World. Importers like the United States, and
less so the European Union, need to do their part to uphold CITES and reject mahogany
from Peru until it can prove that the wood is legally harvested.

The impact of illegal logging on indigenous people
In the communities outside the park along the Alto Purús, Curanja, and Yurúa Rivers,
timber is the primary source of income, so leaders are willing, if not eager, to trade
mahogany trees for food and other goods. The loggers have established an exploitative
system where they offer overpriced equipment such as boat motors, generators, and
chainsaws, and goods like salt, sugar, clothing, and shotgun shells, to communities in
exchange for permission to cut trees. The equipment and goods are given in advance, but
without adequate reading skills, or knowledge of how to measure wood, the communities
usually end up owing the loggers additional trees for these goods as part of a debt-
patronage system. When the trees have all been cut, the loggers move further upstream to
the next community.

Both the Peruvian government and NGOs have provided very little assistance to the
communities to help them manage their trees in a sustainable manner and improve their
standard of living. Most communities, especially those located upstream towards the park
in the most remote areas, suffer from poor nutrition, inadequate health care, and lack of
schools or teachers. For the most part, they have been left on their own to deal with the
onslaught of loggers on their lands. As the trees are rapidly eaten up by hungry
chainsaws—trees worth tens of thousands of dollars on the international market, which
could improve the lives of several generations if managed in a sustainable manner—an
already impoverished people grows even more destitute.

In 2004, the authors found an increase in violent encounters between the loggers and the
Mashco-Piro and the other uncontacted groups in the park and adjacent lands (Fagan and
Shoobridge 2005)3. While there have been deaths on both sides, the uncontacteds are
clearly at risk; despite being excellent marksmen, their arrows are simply no match for
the loggers’ guns.

Concerned with the impunity with which the loggers were acting, and the effects on the
region’s ecology and human inhabitants, we began an investigation of logging activity in
the region in August 2006.

3. Objectives

The primary objectives of the investigation were to:

3 The results of the 2004 investigation are described in: Fagan, C. and Shoobridge, D. 2005. An
Investigation of Illegal Mahogany Logging in Peru’s Alto Purús National Park and its Surroundings. It can
be found at: (http://www.parkswatch.org/spec_reports/logging_apnp_eng.pdf)
• document illegal logging activities in the park and adjacent reserves for uncontacteds, forestry concessions, and titled indigenous community lands

• provide Peru’s National Institute of Natural Resources (INRENA) with information needed to improve park management, including priority actions to strengthen protection

• better understand the legal status of logging in the titled communities and forestry concessions

• understand current income opportunities in the communities and the extent of their dependence on logging income

• identify potential conservation and sustainable economic development projects to provide income and reduce dependence on logging

• identify strategies to engage local communities and indigenous federations in the protection of the park and to promote the sustainable use of their resources in community lands

4. Methods

The fieldwork was conducted between August and December 2006. It involved separate investigations of the six rivers that serve as the primary access routes to the park: the Alto Purús and Curanja Rivers to the northeast, the Sepahua and Inuya Rivers to the west, the Las Piedras River to the south, and the Yurúa River to the northwest (see Map 2). A total of 10 weeks were spent in the field on these rivers. The only major access route that was not visited was the Tahuamanu River. A summary of its conservation status, based on a recent investigation by INRENA and NGO personnel, is included in this report (see section 5.5).

The investigations were done in collaboration with INRENA, the Federation of Indigenous Communities of the Purús (FECONAPU), and the Interethnic Association of Development of the Peru Forest (AIDESEP). Representatives from these organizations joined us for parts of the fieldwork.

Logging activities were documented using a video camera, print cameras, an audio recording device, and a Geographical Information System (GIS) unit. Data were collected through personal observations and a combination of casual conversations and structured interviews with INRENA staff, including park guards, forestry engineers, and the park’s director; leaders of indigenous communities and indigenous federations; staff of various NGOs; local people; and loggers. Particular methods for each investigation are described in subsequent sections.
While primarily concerned with the protection of the park, the research also focused on
the status of illegal logging in adjacent indigenous communities along the Alto Purús and
Curanja Rivers, a region referred to as the park’s “zone of influence” because these rivers
offer the easiest access to the park. Here we implemented a socio-economic survey to
understand income sources, the extent of dependence on logging, and the particular needs
of these communities. We also investigated logging in the indigenous communities along
the Yurúa River but did not implement the survey due to time constraints.

Three overflights were conducted. The first followed the Alto Purús River from the town
of Puerto Esperanza, through the park, and along the border near the confluence of the
park and forestry concessions on the Sepahua River. The second and third overflights
followed the border of the park along the headwaters of the Inuya River and the
Murunahua territorial reserve near the Yurúa River.

5. Results

The most important results are summarized here, then explored in detail in subsequent
sections.

1. Mahogany has been removed from most of the lands surrounding the park and
parts of the park itself. On the Las Piedras River, mahogany has been removed from
all but the most upstream section of the river inside the park. The trees are also rare
along the western border of the park in the headwaters of the Inuya and Sepahua
Rivers. As a result, loggers are working in the interior of the park and adjacent
uncontacted reserves.

2. The park’s access routes lack effective control or monitoring, and loggers easily
launder park wood through adjacent forestry concessions and community lands.
According to the park’s Master Plan, control posts are needed on the Sepahua, Inuya,
Alto Purús, Curanja, Tahuamanu, and Las Piedras Rivers. Only the Tahuamanu and
Las Piedras have control posts responsible for protecting the park (both built in late
2006). The Sepahua and Inuya have forestry control posts to monitor forestry
concessions, but not the park. At the time of the investigation, the Alto Purús and
Curanja did not have posts of any kind. Armed policemen should be stationed at the
posts to ensure the safety of the park guards.

3. The recently constructed park control post on the Las Piedras River is not
effective at preventing logging upstream in the park and uncontacted reserve.
The post is not stopping illegal logging because it is located too far downstream and
allows loggers to continue laundering illegal wood through forestry concessions and
community lands located upstream near the park and uncontacted reserve.

4. Loggers are active in the western side of the park in the headwaters of the Cujar
and Curijuja Rivers. Loggers enter the park through forestry concessions on the
Sepahua and Inuya Rivers and transport the wood by bribing the forestry engineers or
threatening them with violence. The control posts on these rivers are staffed with forestry engineers responsible for monitoring the forestry concessions—not park guards responsible for protecting the park.

5. **The park suffers from poor coordination between government agencies.** INRENA’s park guards and forestry engineers need to work together to monitor logging on the border of forestry concessions and the park. In addition, the park guards need better support from local police offices, who are responsible for enforcing the law and prosecuting offenders.

6. **Illegal logging has caused an increase in violent encounters between loggers and uncontacted people.** For example, since 2002, loggers have reported four conflicts in the park and uncontacted reserve along the Las Piedras River, resulting in deaths on both sides.

7. **Support for the park is waning among the indigenous communities on the Alto Purús and Curanja Rivers.** Community members witness illegal loggers acting with impunity inside the park and thus question why they should respect park regulations. The local indigenous federation, FECONAPU, the catholic priest based in Puerto Esperanza, and other local politicians are calling for a removal of the park.

8. **Indigenous communities on the Alto Purús, Curanja, and Yurúa Rivers are being exploited by loggers.** Locals lack an understanding of basic wood measuring skills, laws governing logging, and experience with business negotiations. As a result, they rarely receive fair compensation for their trees. More often than not, they unwittingly become indebted to the loggers who advance the people overpriced goods in exchange for undervalued wood.

9. **Indigenous communities near the park lack adequate health care, education, and nutrition, despite having title to mahogany-rich lands.** Investments in capacity building are needed to improve lives and engage locals in the management of their lands and protection of the park.

10. **Sustainable logging projects have been unsuccessful.** Conservation and development investments in the forestry concessions and the indigenous communities near the park have not stopped illegal logging in these areas, improved the standard of living in communities, or encouraged the sustainable management of trees.

11. **The impetus behind the illegal logging is international demand.** Lower prices for mahogany prevent loggers from accessing remote areas like the park to find it: high travel and transportation costs can’t be justified by low prices. On the other hand, high prices make working in remote areas economically viable. On the Las Piedras River, low prices for mahogany have caused loggers to extract Spanish cedar instead.
5.1 Illegal Mahogany Logging in the Alto Purús

We found evidence of illegal logging in several parts of the Alto Purús National Park, in adjacent reserves for uncontacted people, and in the area of titled indigenous communities on the Alto Purús and Curanja Rivers. In these community lands, the logging is unsustainable, exploitative, and illegal due to a failure to follow legitimate management plans. Government and NGO assistance is minimal and community leaders lack the training and know-how needed to protect their rights as unscrupulous loggers continue to invade their lands (see section 5.2).

The logging occurs in the park and reserves because INRENA’s parks sector lacks the budget and staff to effectively control access to the park and reserves. Park guards are not allowed to carry guns, and thus are easily intimidated by armed loggers and unable to enforce boundaries. Many of the loggers access the park and reserves via adjacent forestry concessions—state lands that are leased by the government to loggers. INRENA’s forestry sector lacks the funds to monitor activities in these remote areas to ensure that park boundaries are being respected, and loggers easily launder wood taken from the park or reserves with permits from the concessions.

We witnessed loggers using the forestry concessions on the Sepahua and Inuya Rivers to access the western section of the park on the Cujar and Curuja Rivers, respectively (see section 5.3). Loggers are active on the Las Piedras and Tahuamanu Rivers in the park’s southeastern section (see sections 5.4 and 5.5, respectively). And northwest of the park along the Yurúa River, loggers are operating in several indigenous communities and further upstream in the Murunahua uncontacted reserve. It is expected that loggers are also active further up the Yurúa in the park itself (see section 5.6).

5.2 The Alto Purús and Curanja Rivers: the Northeast Region

Introduction

The Alto Purús and Curanja Rivers begin in the far western part of the park. Both rivers flow in a northeasterly direction through the park, the Purús Communal Reserve, and an area of indigenous communities before entering Brazil. The communities comprise one of the most culturally diverse regions of Peru. Eighty percent of the region’s population of 3000 belongs to eight indigenous groups (Cashinahua, Sharanahua, Culina, Mastanahua, Amahuaca, Chaninahua, Asháninka and Yine) living in 42 communities along the two rivers. The remaining 20% of the population are mestizos and, to a lesser extent, Brazilians living in the town of Puerto Esperanza, the provincial capital and economic hub located near the Brazil border. Access to the region is by plane—there are no roads connecting it to other parts of Peru—which land on a paved landing strip at the small military base in Puerto Esperanza. The area’s remoteness and inaccessibility has protected the region from settlers, ranchers, and loggers, keeping the forests around the communities and the park intact and relatively pristine.
The communities range in size from small single-family units of 15 members, to larger developed towns with upwards of 230 people (INRENA 2005a). Twenty-three of the 42 communities have titled lands, totaling approximately 300,000 hectares. Inhabitants survive with a combination of subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing, and tending small garden plots. Occasionally, meat, fish, and garden cultigens are brought to Puerto Esperanza to be sold to mestizo storeowners.

However, there is a limited market for these items, and more often than not they are forced to trade them for goods, usually a fraction of their actual value. With very few income opportunities, most of the communities have been willing, if not eager, to sell the mahogany trees within their lands to loggers, who over the past few years have arrived in droves from other parts of Peru. The loggers are able to exploit an impoverished people desperate for money and manufactured goods, ironically a people who own rights to the largest reserves of commercially viable mahogany in Peru outside of a protected area.

**Methods**
The investigation took place between the 17th and 31st of August. We chartered a plane to fly from Pucallpa to Puerto Esperanza and conducted an overflight of the park focused on the headwaters of the Alto Purús River near the park’s western border. In Puerto Esperanza, we rented a dugout canoe and 9 HP motor and hired two Cashinahua men as boat drivers. The men were official representatives of The Federation of Native Communities of the Purús River (FECONAPU). Their presence enabled us to enter the indigenous communities upstream. From Puerto Esperanza we traveled for two weeks up the Curanja and Alto Purús Rivers. We stopped at 10 communities to conduct a socio-economic survey, interview community leaders, and to visit logging sites in the surrounding forest. On the Curanja, we traveled as far as Puerto Paz, an abandoned missionary settlement near the border of the Purús Communal Reserve. On the Alto Purús, we traveled to the Amahuaca village of Guacamayo, the last community before the Reserve (see Map 3).

**Key findings**
- Unsustainable and exploitative logging in the indigenous communities.
- Waning support for the park from local people.
- Local people lack a basic understanding of logging laws, their rights under these laws, and wood measuring skills. As a result, they are unable to protect themselves and their resources from unscrupulous loggers.
- There is a need for conservation and sustainable development projects in the communities to engage people in protecting the park and conserving the trees and other resources on their lands.
Eight different cultures are represented in 42 communities on the Alto Purús and Curanja Rivers.

Logging activity in the communities has increased exponentially since the authors first began working in the region in 2000 (Shoobridge 2001, Fagan and Salisbury 2003, Fagan and Shoobridge 2005). At that time, mestizo loggers were new arrivals, bringing the first chainsaws to the communities and trading manufactured goods for trees. Now, several communities have allowed some of the world’s largest timber companies to set up operations in their lands. Puerto Esperanza has been transformed from a sleepy, isolated frontier settlement into a hub of the logging operations occurring upstream in the communities.

The process begins with the loggers contacting the presidents of each community to offer manufactured goods in exchange for a certain number of mahogany trees. Most loggers pay 50 Peruvian centavos (15 U.S. cents) per square foot of mahogany. In exchange for the trees, the presidents of the communities receive goods at inflated prices as advance payment for the trees. The natives then owe the loggers trees for these goods. Commonly given goods are outboard engines (“peque peques”) for their dugout canoes, gasoline, shotguns, bullets, salt, sugar, and plastic kitchen products. More often than not, the natives ask for additional loans from the loggers, such as gasoline to travel between their community and Puerto Esperanza. Thus, even before the logging begins, the natives have accrued large debts to the loggers.
When we visited the communities in 2004, we found that most if not all of the loggers were operating without the proper permits or management plans. There has been some improvement in this regard as four communities have received proper permits and management plans with the assistance of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). One of the objectives of WWF’s sustainable forestry project is to reduce the native’s dependence on loggers by enabling the communities to retain possession of their permits and management plans and do the logging themselves, thus earning more money. The project has been successful to varying degrees in these four communities. However, in most communities it remains business as usual for the loggers. Once the community president has reached an agreement with the loggers, the natives lose all control of the process. The loggers obtain the permits and draft management plans with the costs added to the community’s debt. And because there are no written records, the communities never know how much they owe.

The communities are allowed to sell their mahogany as long as they abide by Peruvian laws meant to protect the species. In addition, because an estimated 80 – 90% of the mahogany from the communities is bought by the United States, CITES regulations, which protect mahogany as an Appendix II species, are applicable. What we’ve found, however, is that in the absence of any real monitoring or oversight by INRENA’s forestry sector, proper management plans are not followed; thus the logging is not only unsustainable but illegal, not to mention entirely exploitative of the natives.

Logging in the indigenous communities
Generally speaking, the local people lack the experience in business negotiations and handling money needed to protect themselves from unscrupulous loggers. This disadvantage is exacerbated by poor reading skills and a total lack of understanding of how to measure wood. During our investigation we visited 10 communities and interviewed two-dozen community leaders, yet we did not meet one person who knew how to measure a board foot of wood. It is impossible for the natives to ensure that they are receiving correct payments when they are unable to measure the amount of wood taken by the loggers.

We found numerous examples of loggers taking advantage of the natives. To give but one example, the president of Santa Rey asked us to explain a bill from a logger which indicated that the community would only be paid 49% of the value of the wood already cut. The logger’s explanation was that the discount was for the expenses involved in estimating the volume of wood to be extracted, a confusing explanation even for those with fluent Spanish reading skills, and clearly a task for which a discount is not justified. Without outside help from people with adequate reading skills, and general knowledge of logging laws and community rights under those laws, abuses like this will continue. Furthermore, once under the cover of the forest, the loggers are able to act with impunity in the absence of any effective monitoring system. We collected numerous testimonies that described loggers operating without permits or management plans, ignoring management plans, using one community’s permit to launder wood cut elsewhere, and ignoring community boundaries.
Loggers are cutting an estimated average of 40 mahogany trees per community annually (see Table 1). However, not all the cut trees are used. Many are cut down and left to rot if the loggers find small holes in the trunks. The photo below is from the community lands of Triunfo, a community of eight Cashinahua families totaling approximately 48 people.

![One of many felled mahogany trees left to rot because of a hole in the trunk.](image)

Loggers cut the 30-meter tree but then found a hole in the trunk. With many more trees to choose from, they simply left it to rot in the forest. Professional loggers should be able to test a tree for holes before cutting it down, but here they have no incentive to do so. Trees with holes should remain standing as they are vitally important as seed producers, especially for mahogany which is slow to mature and grows at a very low density. Such blatant waste is an affront to the people of Triunfo (and the other communities) whose future depends on the sustainable use of their natural resources.

Triunfo is an impoverished community even relative to other communities in the region. It has no health post or access to medicines. There are no schools for the children, no wells for clean drinking water and no latrines. And they have no other reliable sources of income to buy the basic goods needed for survival like salt, kerosene, and clothing. Put simply, the future of the younger generations of Triunfo depends to a great extent on how they manage their mahogany reserves. It is sadly ironic that while the children of Triunfo go hungry, not a five minute walk into the forest is a huge mahogany tree lying rotting—a tree worth tens of thousands of dollars on the international market.

**Socio-economic survey: summary of key results**
The survey was conducted in ten communities on the upper parts of the Alto Purús and Curanja Rivers. We chose these communities because they are located closest to the
communal reserve and park. One of our objectives was to learn about community attitudes towards the new protected areas (both created in late 2004); as the communities located closest to them, they are most impacted by the protected area categorizations. These communities will also be included in efforts to involve locals in the protection and management of the communal reserve and park.

![A Cashinahua husband and wife from the village of Colombiana.](image)

The other reason for choosing these communities is the increase in logging activity upstream over the past few years. Loggers started with the more accessible communities located downstream closer to Puerto Esperanza. But as mahogany has become scarcer downstream, the loggers are now targeting these more remote communities with their rich mahogany reserves. We wanted to gain a better understanding of the impact of logging on the communities, both in regards to the people’s dependence on logging income and the actual impact of the logging on the forests. We also were interested in learning about community needs and gauging interest in conservation and sustainable development projects.

The size of the communities surveyed ranged from 32 to 195 people with an average size of 84 inhabitants. The communities represented the Cashinahua, Sharanahua, and Amahuaca ethnic groups. Below is a brief summary of key results.

**Logging activity**

One hundred percent of the communities were logging at the time of the investigation. Of the nine communities, seven were working on their own with various logging companies; one was receiving support from WWF as part of its sustainable forestry project; and one
has an agreement with WWF to provide timber for a new office being built in Puerto Esperanza.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Estimated number of mahogany trees cut in 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Santa Rey</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triunfo</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curanjillo and Nueva Vida**</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nueva Luz</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel Grau</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombiana</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balta</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gasta Bala</td>
<td>6 (as part of WWF’s forestry project)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guacamayo</td>
<td>18 (for construction of WWF office)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Curanjillo and Nueva Vida share titled lands. Their responses regarding logging were combined.

Table 1: Estimated number of trees cut in 2006

Not including Guacamayo, which cut several different species but not mahogany for construction of the WWF building, the remaining eight communities cut only mahogany; however, Gasta Bala cut their six trees as part of a sustainable forestry project with WWF. Excluding Guacamaya and Gasta Bala from the analysis, the number of mahogany trees cut by the communities not receiving outside logging assistance ranged from 20 to 60, with an average of 41 trees.

When asked whether they had forestry management plans—mandated by law to ensure sustainable harvest numbers, replanting of samplings, and no overdependence on one species—five of the nine respondents said that the loggers do have management plans but they (the community) had never seen them. Two responded simply “yes,” one responded, “yes, but the logger doesn’t follow it,” and one responded, “I don’t know”.

Table 2 lists the responses to the question, “what is the main problem with logging in your community. The most common response was the low price, followed by the scarcity of trees, and several complaints regarding their treatment by the loggers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the main problem with logging in community?</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low price</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loggers don’t pay them</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahogany is hard to find</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They don’t know how to measure wood</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loggers lie to them</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loggers waste trees with holes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goods provided by loggers are over-priced</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loggers don’t tell them how many trees they have cut and, therefore, how much the community owes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Main problems with logging in the communities
WWF implemented their sustainable forestry project in three communities. One intention of the project was to help the communities take control of the logging occurring on their lands and reap the full benefits of the use of their resources. Interestingly, and unfortunately, the community of Gasta Bala decided to use the management plans developed by WWF and in the subsequent year invite a logging company to continue working on their lands, instead of taking control of the logging processes themselves and making significantly higher profits.

Despite Gasta Bala’s decision, we believe that most communities would like to take control of logging operations on their lands. Significant investments in training and education are needed, specifically in regards to wood measuring skills and clarification of forestry laws. Without outside assistance, local people along the Alto Purús and Curanja Rivers will continue to suffer egregious exploitation by the loggers and the rapid extirpation of their mahogany trees.

### Community needs and desired projects

Eight of the ten respondents said that a lack of medicine or a health post was a primary need or problem in their community. A chicken and hen breeding project and assistance with diversifying gardens were the most common responses to the question, “What projects would you like implemented in your community?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the primary needs or problems in the community?</th>
<th>No. of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of medicine or a health post</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No well for drinking water or the well is broken</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No school</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No solar panels for electricity</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prices for crops are too low or there is no market for crops</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: Community needs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What projects would you like implemented in your community?</th>
<th>No. of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breeding chickens and hens</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated gardens / help with crops</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handicrafts</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicinal plants</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish farming</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health project</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with logging</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4: Projects desired by the communities*

### Government complicity in the transport of illegal mahogany

The only access to the Alto Purús and Curanja rivers is via plane from the city of Pucallpa to the landing strip in Puerto Esperanza. All wood cut in the native communities is flown out on military planes rented by one powerful logger. His monopoly on renting aircraft allows him to set exorbitantly high prices on goods flown in from Pucallpa. (Prices for goods are three times higher in Puerto Esperanza than in Pucallpa.) He also
decides who is allowed to enter or leave Puerto Esperanza on his planes. The control this logger holds over the region cannot be overstated. A notorious illegal logger and egregious exploiter of the natives, he profits from every piece of wood that leaves the region including, regrettably, the wood cut in WWF’s sustainable forestry project.

*Mahogany boards (far left) ready to be transported by a Peruvian Air Force plane.*

**Waning support for the park**

Amahuaca natives living on the Alto Purús River occasionally travel through the park to visit family on the Sepahua River. They report that over the past year there has been a significant increase in logging activity in the western side of the park. In addition, local Sharanahua fishermen often travel deep into the park to fish. Several men report finding a large quantity of cut mahogany boards in the upper stretches of the Alto Purús River near a place called Alerta or Dos Bocas. The boards were cut in the headwaters and washed downstream by heavy rains before the loggers were able to transport the wood to the Sepahua River. While on the Sepahua, we interviewed a logger who told us about this incident, in which loggers lost an estimated 5,000 feet of mahogany in the park.

The continued presence of illegal loggers has fostered feelings of resentment towards the park among the communities. The resentment stems from their belief that they shouldn’t be forced to respect the new park and restrictions on logging, when loggers continue to steal mahogany from the other side of the park. FECONAPU, the highest authority in decision-making on indigenous matters on the Alto Purús and Curanja Rivers, has filed a formal request with INRENA to remove park status from the land. They argue that they can be more effective at controlling illegal logging than INRENA.
Uncontacted Indigenous People

The Alto Purús National Park is one of the few places on earth where uncontacted people live. The park is home to at least two different groups. The Mashco-Piro are the largest group, numbering perhaps 500 individuals. It is believed that they migrate seasonally between the headwaters of the Alto Purús River and Manu National Park to the south. A second group is referred to as the Curanjeños because they live in the headwaters of the Curanja River and likely migrate to Brazil. They are a much smaller group, comprised of a handful of families.

Over the last four years, a group of four Curanjeños, one man and three women, began visiting the communities of Santa Rey and Balta on the upper Curanja every few months to trade turtles and forest meat with the communities for manufactured goods. At the time, a group of Pioneer missionaries (an evangelical Protestant missionary organization from the Untied States) were attempting to contact the Mashco-Piro at a settlement they built on the Alto Purús River called Monterey. When they heard about the presence of the Curanjeños, the Pioneers left the Alto Purús River and moved to the Curanja to attempt to contact the Curanjeños. The missionaries were able to procure land from people of Balta and built a new town, which they named Puerto Paz at an area known to be frequented by the Curanjeños. There they planted a large garden of banana and yucca. Over the past four years, these four Curanjeños have had sporadic contact with the missionaries at Puerto Paz. Finally, in 2006, a man named “Hipa” by the missionaries and his three wives visited Puerto Paz and decided to stay. After living together for several months, the missionaries have since left Puerto Paz.
Conclusion
We believe that missionaries should not be allowed to attempt to contact voluntary isolated people in the region. If other people like Hipa and his wives decide to leave the forest for a more settled life, they should be provided with health care, including inoculations against common illnesses, and protected from self-serving missionaries and loggers. In the communities along the Alto Purús and Curanja Rivers, conservation and sustainable development investments are needed to engage locals in the protection of the park, reduce dependence on logging income, and encourage the sustainable use of their timber resources. Such projects will also improve standard of living. The lack of support among locals for the park is a serious threat to its viability. INRENA must prevent illegal logging inside the park before members of the communities on the Alto Purús and Curanja will agree to respect new park laws. As the park’s closest neighbors, these people need to be engaged in efforts to protect the park. Developing and supporting a fully functional committee of park guards made up of local community members is an important first step in that direction. See section 6 for detailed recommendations.
5.3 The Sepahua and Inuya Rivers: the Western Region

Introduction
The western border of the Alto Purús National Park follows a series of hills that form the watershed divide between the Urubamba River, which includes the Sepahua and Inuya Rivers, and the Park’s Curanja and Alto Purús Rivers. The Sepahua and Inuya Rivers begin in these hills just a few kilometers from the park, and flow in a westerly direction, away from the park, through forestry concessions and indigenous communities. Historically, the upper sections of both rivers were too remote and inaccessible for loggers. Plus, rich reserves of mahogany trees downstream meant that loggers didn’t have to travel so far for trees. The forest surrounding the headwaters of these rivers was frontier, virgin forest inhabited seasonally by migrating uncontacted people and visited on rare occasions by narcotic traffickers moving their product to Brazil. However, in recent years, as mahogany has become exceedingly scarce in more accessible places, loggers have begun using the Sepahua and Inuya Rivers to access the rich mahogany reserves inside the park and along its borders. The loggers threaten the integrity of the park by depleting local populations of mahogany and wildlife. The logging also threatens the survival of the uncontacted groups who live there.

Methods
The town of Sepahua was used as the logistical base for investigations of the Sepahua and Inuya Rivers. Sepahua is a mixed mestizo and native town of approximately 3500 residents located at the confluence of the Sepahua and Urubamba Rivers. The investigation of the Sepahua River took place from December 1st to the 8th using a 10-meter boat and a 9 HP motor. Two native men were hired as guides and boat drivers. One was from a small community on the Sepahua River and the other was a former logger who had spent several years on the river in various logging camps. The investigation focused on a network of logging trails that connect the headwaters of the Sepahua with the Las Piedras River inside the park. We also visited an old logging camp at the Union stream, where another trail network connects to the park. However, we did not stay to investigate these trails due to the presence of narcotic traffickers.

The Inuya River was investigated from December 10th to the 18th. The Inuya is larger than the Sepahua and we used a 40 HP motor for the lower parts, and the same 9HP motor for the upper, shallower section. We hired a mestizo logger with years of experience on the river to drive the boat and three Amahuaca men from a small community on the upper Inuya as guides. The investigation focused on trails in the headwaters that are used by loggers to cross to the park’s Curiuja River (upper Alto Purús River).

Key findings
• Loggers are using networks of trails on the Sepahua and Inuya Rivers to access the park and cut mahogany on the Cujar and Curiuja Rivers, respectively.

• There are trails connecting the Sepahua to the park’s Las Piedras River. Loggers were not active there during the investigation, but will likely move to the
headwaters of Las Piedras in the park once trees become scarce on the nearby Cujar River.

- On the Mapuya River, a tributary of the Inuya, five logging companies, each with its own tractor, have built roads to access mahogany in the Yurúa River watershed. They are active in the Territorial Reserve for Uncontacted Murunahua people and most likely inside the park.

- There is very little mahogany left in forestry concessions on the Sepahua and Inuya Rivers. All mahogany being transported down these rivers should be considered from the park and territorial reserve unless proven otherwise.

- There is no monitoring of logging activities on the concessions adjacent to the park, and therefore loggers are able to ignore park boundaries and remove wood from the park. Monitoring is also needed to ensure that management plans are accurate and correctly implemented.

- The INRENA forestry control posts in the Sepahua and Inuya Rivers are ineffective at preventing the transport of illegal wood from the park. Loggers either bribe the forestry engineers responsible for checking the legality of wood shipments or threaten them with violence. The Inuya post has been rebuilt after being burned to the ground by loggers in 2003.

- Narcotic traffickers have established camps in the upper Sepahua region.

**Background**

Beginning in 2000, large timber companies such as Santillán, Tuesta, and Pezo began transporting tractors up the Sepahua and Inuya Rivers to the forestry concessions that border the park. The tractors were used to clear roads through the concessions to the border of the park to drag the cut wood from the park back to the concessions. Over the last few years, the most easily accessible trees near the border of the park have been cut. As a consequence, it became more profitable for these large companies to move the tractors to other rivers that still have mahogany, rather than move further into the park. Smaller loggers have now moved into the region to work on the logging trails left by the larger companies. Logging coordinators, or “patrons”, recruit poor, native and mestizo men, promise them a percentage of the profits, and send them into the forest with chainsaws, gasoline, and supplies like shotgun shells and salt to preserve meat. These groups of loggers are now using the old tractor roads to extract mahogany from the banks of small rivers deep inside the interior of the park. The trees are cut into boards with chainsaws (illegal in Peru because of excessive waste) and carried out of the park on their backs. These small-scale loggers are referred to as “tabloneros” because they carry the boards, or “tablones” in Spanish, out of the forest. Once out of the park, they are floated down small tributary streams to the main channels of the Sepahua and Inuya Rivers. Then the wood is either laundered with wood supposedly being harvested legally from the
concessions, or simply floated down the rivers at night. In this way the plunder of the park continues.

The Sepahua River
There are twelve forestry concessions on the Sepahua, four of which border the park. Several concessions are active, producing “white” woods, such as lupuna (*Chlorisia integrifolia*), cumala (*Virola sp.*), tornillo (*Cedrelinga catenaeformis*), ishpingo (*Amburana cearensis*), and requia (*Guarea guidone*), among others. These trees are still abundant in the concessions but much less valuable than mahogany and Spanish cedar and are cut primarily for the domestic and Asian market. There are three areas on the Sepahua that are used by loggers to access the park: the Union and Panguana Streams are used to access the Cujar River, and the Zungaro Stream is used to access the Las Piedras River.

The Union – Cujar Region
Loggers and narcotic traffickers use the Union and Panguana Streams to access the Cujar River in the park. According to local people, the logger who owns the lease on the concession that includes the Union Stream has moved his tractors to the Mapuya River, a tributary of the Inuya (see below). Before leaving, he extracted one million board feet of mahogany from the concession between 2001 and 2004. The current group of tabloneros loggers has established a camp on the border of the park. According to a man who has visited the camp, the loggers use the camp as a base of operations for cutting inside the park on the Cujar River.

There were several groups working on the Cujar during 2006. One patron brought a team of loggers from the city of Pucallpa, a large city of 300,000 people located 400 miles to
the north. He also hired several native men from the town of Sepahua, paying them 300 Soles (100 US$) for six months of work. According to a member of this team, they lost 5000 feet of mahogany when a flash flood washed the boards off the riverbank and down the Cujar and into the Alto Purús River. This is the same wood that was found by natives on the Alto Purús River. As explained in section 5.2, the Purús Indigenous Federation, FECONAPU, is using this incident as evidence that the park is not working and should be removed.

The Union and Panguana regions are also being used by narcotic traffickers. They buy supplies in the town of Sepahua and hire local people to transport them upstream to the park. The location of an old logging camp at the Union Stream is now a supply camp for “narcos” working in the park. According to one of the guards hired by the narcos to guard the supplies, they were ten men from Huanuco, Peru. Their camp can be reached by walking seven hours along the logging roads and streams. From the camp, they travel down the Alto Purús River through the park, communal reserve, and indigenous communities and into Brazil. When asked how they pass through the military checkpoints in Puerto Esperanza and at the border, they replied that their bosses “know how to do it.”

**The Zungaro – Las Piedras Region**

The trail network connecting the Zungaro Stream with the Las Piedras River in the park had recently been cleared by a family of Piro natives traveling from the Las Piedras to visit family in Sepahua. There was no evidence of recent logging activity. According to one of our guides, a former logger, because most of the loggers working on the Sepahua are not from the area, they do not know that the Zungaro provides relatively easy access to the park. He believed that when mahogany eventually runs out on the Cujar River in the park, the loggers will move further upstream and find the trails connecting the Zungaro to the park’s pristine forests on the Las Piedras.
This logging camp is located on the border of the Alto Purús National Park near the Sepahua River. It has grown significantly from 2004 (above) to 2006 (below).

The Inuya River
The mouth of the Inuya River is located on the Urubamba River, several hours by boat from the town of Atalaya, the capital of Atalaya province and the region’s economic hub.
The Inuya’s accessibility—much more accessible than the Sephua—has resulted in significant deforestation on its lower reaches, mainly for cattle ranching and agriculture. The lower part of the river is divided into forestry concessions and small communities made up of Andean and mestizo immigrants and natives. The upper part of the Inuya is similar to the Sephua. It becomes small and shallow, difficult to impossible for boat travel in the dry season. Here the forest is relatively intact and divided into forestry concessions and small Amahuaca settlements.

According to INRENA forestry engineers, only two of the more than 20 forestry concessions on the Inuya still have mahogany, so practically all of the wood harvested is white wood. During the investigation, the river was full of log rafts being transported downstream.

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The forests of the Inuya River still produce significant amounts of white woods (pictured here) but mahogany is found only upstream near the park and uncontacted reserve.

**The Inuya – Curiuja Region**

Brothers from a small Amahuaca community located in the upper Inuya have been hired by a patron named Julio Cuero to cut and transport mahogany boards from the park’s Curiuja River. The three brothers travel four hours upstream by boat and then walk 10 hours to reach their camp on the Curiuja. Two of the brothers spend the day cutting the wood while the third looks for new trees and hunts. They eat meat everyday, usually peccary or spider monkey. At the time of the investigation, they had cut five mahogany trees totaling approximately 15,000 feet. The patron has promised to pay them 700 Soles (220 US$) per month of work. However, a fourth brother not currently logging said that the previous year the same patron paid him only 510 Soles (160 US$) for six months of work, a fraction of what he was promised.
When the brothers finish cutting in January 2007, the patron will send a team of 20 professional wood haulers from the city of Pucallpa to haul the wood out to the Inuya. In March they plan to transport the wood down the Inuya and into the Urubamba to the town of Atalaya. The men claim that their patron pays a bribe of 1500 or 2000 Soles (470 or 600 US$) to the INRENA forestry engineers at the control post on the Inuya to allow them to pass by with the wood at night without an inspection.

Last year, working for the same logger, the brothers cut approximately 16,000 feet of mahogany in the park. At the time, there were several logging teams on the Curiuja, all of whom have left due to the low price for mahogany.

The Mapuya – Yurúa Region
Due to the scarcity of mahogany on the upper Inuya, many loggers have moved to the upper reaches of the Mapuya River, the Inuya’s largest tributary. There is close to 100 loggers working there, divided into five teams each with a tractor. They are creating roads to access the tributaries of the Yurúa River in the Murunahua Territorial Reserve, which is adjacent to the park and part of its buffer zone. Loggers are also active inside the park, along the Envira River.

INRENA Forestry Control Posts
There are forestry control posts located downstream on both the Sepahua and Inuya Rivers. They are staffed by INRENA forestry engineers responsible for ensuring that the logging in the concessions is legal and done in accordance with management plans, and to check the permits and legality of wood being transported down the rivers.

We heard various reports of corruption among the forestry engineers working in the region. One engineer was quitting her job due to her frustration with corruption among her bosses. They had made her job very difficult because she didn’t go along with the status quo of accepting bribes. The fact that logger patrons are still investing money to send logging teams deep into the park indicates they are confident they will be able to transport the wood through the control posts without confiscation and on to the market.

Even the honest and hard working engineers—of which there are many—are ill-equipped to effectively monitor logging in the concessions, especially those located far upstream near the park. The Inuya post, for example, is equipped with a boat and 30 HP motor but only 30 gallons of gasoline per month. The engineers use half of the gasoline just to travel to the post from Atalaya, so there is little left for monitoring activities. And the unarmed engineers are helpless against armed loggers and rarely receive assistance from the police or the army. According to an engineer working at the Inuya post, in September 2006, they called for assistance in apprehending loggers with a raft of illegal mahogany but neither the army nor navy would respond. “The police say they don’t have gasoline to come. But when we offer the gasoline, they say they don’t have the personnel. And the loggers shoot off their guns when they are passing the post, to warn us to stay inside” said the engineer. “What are we supposed to do?”
Conclusion
The large logging companies who made the roads near the park have left both the Sepahua and Inuya Rivers due to the low price of mahogany, the scarcity of trees near the rivers, and the relative abundance of trees on other rivers to the north such as the Mapuya and Yurúa. However, the Sepahua and Inuya are still being used by smaller scale loggers to access the park’s Cujar and Curiuja Rivers, and it is only a matter of time before they move further upstream to the pristine forests of the headwaters of the Las Piedras—the core of the Mashco–Piro lands. The situation on the Sepahua and Inuya clearly exemplify the inability of control posts located downstream to prevent logging in the park and to discern between legal wood from concessions and illegal wood from the park. It is common knowledge that the concessions on these rivers have very little or no mahogany left, yet mahogany from the park continues to be laundered through concession permits or smuggled under the cover of darkness. Control posts must be located upstream on the border of the park. See section 6 for detailed recommendations.

5.4 The Las Piedras River: the Southern Region

Introduction
The Las Piedras River begins in the southwestern corner of the Alto Purús National Park and flows in an easterly direction through the entire southern part of the park before crossing into the adjacent Territorial Reserve for People in Isolation in Madre de Dios. Leaving the territorial reserve, the river winds through the lands of two Piro indigenous communities, several tourist lodges, and 43 forestry concessions before joining the Madre de Dios River near the city of Puerto Maldonado. The city is the capital of Madre de Dios.
state and the economic hub for logging, gold mining, and tourism, the state’s three largest industries.

Schulte-Herbruggen and Rossiter (2003) estimated 176 different logging camps on the Las Piedras inside the boundaries of the park and territorial reserve in 2002\(^4\). This was the peak of the mahogany boom on the Las Piedras, when historically high price for mahogany sent thousands of men into the pristine forests along the river. Makeshift supply stores, bars, and brothels were built on virtually every tributary, catering to loggers working in camps up the tributaries, deep in the forest. Loggers returned from the interior and drank away their profits. Fights and murders were common and prostitutes carried tape measures to accept payments in feet of mahogany. Illegal logging activity has decreased significantly since then, due primarily to a low price for mahogany—as result of lower national quotas for mahogany exports—and increased scarcity of accessible trees along the banks of the river and its tributaries.

However, there are still loggers operating in the upper Las Piedras inside both the park and territorial reserve for uncontacteds. These loggers are tabloneros, both Piro men from the river and teams funded by small-scale patrons from Puerto Maldonado. Despite the reduction in the number of illegal loggers, there is still real potential for violent encounters involving loggers and uncontacted people. There have been several over the past few years. And if the price for mahogany rebounds, it is likely that the Las Piedras will once again be flooded with loggers. The viability of the park and the future of the uncontacteds depends on the effectiveness of efforts to control access to the upper parts of the river. During the investigation a new guard post was being built in the Piro community of Monte Salvado. However, according to reports since the investigation, guards at the new post have not been able to stop illegal loggers from entering the two protected areas. As a result, park guards moved their headquarters to an old and abandoned post located upstream on the border of the territorial reserve in an effort to strengthen protection of the reserve and park.

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\(^4\) In 2002, the upper Las Piedras was protected as part of the Alto Purús Reserved Zone, not becoming the Alto Purús National Park until 2004. Nonetheless, logging was illegal in the reserved zone as it is now in the park. Logging is illegal in all territorial reserves for uncontacteds. The territorial reserve on the Las Piedras is also protected as part of the park’s buffer zone.
Methods
The investigation was conducted between November 10th and 27th. It was done in collaboration with INRENA, and the investigation team included two park guards and the coordinator for the Las Piedras River. We hired five local Piro men as guides, boat drivers, and a cook. In Puerto Maldonado, we rented two boats (16 and 18 meters), four 65 HP motors, and two 16 HP motors. The initial plan was to travel to the river’s headwaters by boat and then walk via a small stream and trails to the Zungaro River, a tributary of the Sepahua River, which we would then descend. Our objective was to investigate reports of logging in the park between the Las Piedras and Sepahua watersheds. We were unable to cross to the Sepahua due to high water level in the stream—and the adjacent forest is dominated by heavily thorned bamboo (*Guadua* spp.), making walking through the forest next to impossible. (However, we were able to investigate the region during our trip to the Sepahua River—see section 5.3). It took us 10 days to reach the headwaters of the Las Piedras. Along the way, we conducted interviews with members of the two Piro communities, loggers, and tourist operators, and documented illegal logging sites with print and video cameras and a handheld GPS.

Key Findings
- Illegal mahogany logging is occurring inside Alto Purús National Park and adjacent territorial reserve for uncontacteds. In most cases, the loggers hold leases to forestry concessions located downstream and use those permits to launder the illegal wood.

- The amount of illegal logging fluctuates with the market price for the timber. The level of logging activity has decreased significantly since the boom years of 2000.
to 2005 due primarily to the low price of mahogany, and it is likely that the loggers will return if the price rebounds. The lower price for mahogany caused some loggers to cut cedar (*Cedrela* spp.).

- Since 2004, there has been a significant rise in violence involving loggers and uncontacteds, resulting in deaths on both sides.

- The new control post in Monte Salvado does not guarantee effective protection of the park and reserve because it is located downstream and will allow loggers to continue laundering illegal wood through forestry concessions located upstream near the two protected areas.

**Background**

Logging activity on the Las Piedras began in earnest approximately 25 years ago on the lower parts of the river closest to Puerto Maldonado. These lands are now included in forestry concessions that are in various level of activity; some are abandoned while others are being logged for white woods such as lupuna and tornillo. Only the upper, less accessible section of the river inside the park and territorial reserve still has mahogany and cedar—but not much. The majority of accessible trees on all parts of the river were cut during the mahogany boom years between 2000 and 2005.

The situation has changed dramatically over the past year. There are still loggers working inside the two protected areas, but not as many, and the large companies so prevalent in the boom years are no longer there. The drop in activity can be explained primarily by the difficulty in finding trees and the low price for mahogany—eight Soles per board foot in Puerto Maldonado as of December 2006, as opposed to 12 Soles in 2005. Now loggers have to travel two weeks to the headwaters of the Las Piedras in the park or far up its tributaries to find trees. With such a low price, it is not economically viable for loggers to work in such remote areas. But this will change; the investigation was done in November, close to the end of the year when Peru had already filled its export quota for mahogany and, consequently, demand and prices were low. A rebound in price and demand is likely.
Logging in the park and territorial reserve for uncontacteds

During the investigation, the loggers active in the park and reserve were Piro men from the communities of Monte Salvado and Puerto Nuevo, and teams of natives and mestizo men from outside the region hired by patrons from Puerto Maldonado.

Both the Piros and, in most cases, the patrons own leases to forestry concessions on the river and thus are able to launder the wood taken from the park through their concessions. Most concessions no longer contain mahogany, but forestry engineers hired by loggers to make management plans often include mahogany in the plans. There is no monitoring of the concessions to ensure that the management plans are accurate and correctly implemented. And at the time of our investigation there were no park guards to enforce park and reserve boundaries.

One group of Piros cut ten cedar and three mahogany trees in the park in 2006. At the time, the price for cedar was higher than for mahogany. The logger is waiting for prices to go up in early 2007 to retrieve the wood from its hiding place. He plans to sell it to a man from Puerto Maldonado who has a lease for a concession located downstream. The management plan for the concession indicates that there is mahogany, so he will be able to claim that the wood is from the concession and sell it with those permits. The logger estimated the three mahogany trees totaled 14,000 board feet of wood. Assuming the Piro logger receives a minimum of 1 Soles per foot, he will earn approximately 14,000 Soles or US $4,400. It is a windfall of money for someone living barely above the poverty line and offers clear incentive to log illegally in the park. The buyer will turn around and sell it for 9.5 Soles per foot or 133,000 Soles or (US $41,000) in Puerto Maldonado.

The logging camp pictured below (at left) is also in the park. The patron is from Puerto Maldonado and the actual loggers are a mixture of natives and mestizos from different parts of Madre de Dios state. The owner has a concession downstream through which he’ll launder the wood. According to the loggers, they had cut 9000 feet of mahogany and had returned to cut it into boards and transport it to market. Forestry engineers estimated the amount to be closer to 25,000 feet.
Logging camps on the Las Piedras in the park (left) and uncontacted reserve (right). Note forest meat in camp at left.

The loggers at the camp in the park pictured above were given a written denouncement by the INRENA coordinator for the Las Piedras River, a legal procedure needed for prosecuting the loggers. The seriousness of the situation was lost on the loggers, who as we left asked if we would use our boat to help them retrieve their wood washed downstream in a storm the night before.

Monte Salvado
The communities of Monte Salvado and Puerto Nuevo are the only communities on the upper Las Piedras. They are located among forestry concessions slightly downstream from the reserve for uncontacteds. Monte Salvado was formed in 1996 when several Piro families moved from their home in the central Amazon. An internal dispute among the Piro families caused one group to leave Monte Salvado in 2000 and establish Puerto Nuevo, located a day’s travel downstream.

According to INRENA personnel, Monte Salvado has prospered significantly from illegal logging upstream. Not only do they log, as we found during our investigation, but during the boom years they had a chain hung across the river to stop all boats and demand a toll to continue upstream. According to a member of the community who is a logger, in 2005 Monte Salvado had three sawmills set up in the park. In total, they cut 100,000 board-feet of mahogany from the park that year. Supposedly, the money was used to install electricity to the community run from a diesel generator.
Increasing violence
The upper Las Piedras is one of the most remote places on earth, a wilderness frontier where loggers, narcotic traffickers, and uncontacted people live outside any civilized law. Reports of violent encounters with uncontacteds in the Alto Purús have become more common as loggers continue to venture further into their homeland. It is logical to surmise that uncontacteds have simply run out of forest to run and hide and out of desperation are defending their last remaining territory. While this may be true, reports from Las Piedras indicate that loggers may now killing each other over the last few mahogany trees.

Four loggers have been killed in the upper Las Piedras over the past three years. Loggers are reluctant to report killed uncontacteds so there is no way of knowing how many have been killed in these encounters. The official reports filed with the police in Puerto Maldonado place responsibility for each of the four deaths on uncontacted people. While it is likely that uncontacteds are responsible for at least some of the violence, there is disagreement among local people over who is to blame for at least one of the murders.

In April 2005, a logger and camp cook were traveling downstream in the park when the logger was hit with an arrow shot from the riverbank. The logger died and the cook survived by jumping into the river and floating downstream for two days until she arrived at a logging camp. She reported hearing the attackers yelling in Spanish. The logger’s body was mutilated, and his watch and gold teeth removed. Disfiguring the body and taking teeth is not consistent with most verified reports of killings by uncontacteds in the Alto Purús. One person close to the murdered man believes he was killed over mahogany. He claims that the murdered man unknowingly cut two large trees—worth approximately US $15,000—in another logger’s self-proclaimed territory. “When he told me that he had cut those trees, I knew there would be trouble,” said the man.

In another incident in September 2006, loggers working in a forestry concession near the reserve were attacked with arrows but escaped. They reported that the attackers were wearing shorts and yelling to each other in Spanish. The owner of the concession filed a report with the police blaming men from Monte Salvado for the attacks. These two attacks indicate the possibility that certain loggers are impersonating uncontacteds and killing people in an attempt to keep for themselves the remaining mahogany trees.

Park control post
The new control post in Monte Salvado was to be staffed by a combination of two INRENA park guards, two members of Monte Salvado, and two representatives from the regional indigenous federation, FENAMAD (the Indigenous Federation of Madre de Dios and its Tributaries). The idea behind locating the post in the community was to include the Piro people in protecting the river, including the park.

However, INRENA personnel are concerned that by being so far downstream, below the park, reserve, and several forestry concessions, loggers will continue to claim that rafts of wood from the park or reserve are instead from the concessions. According to an INRENA official, “The control post will give Monte Salvado exclusive control over all
logging occurring upstream. This shouldn’t be.” One member of the community confided in us that he believes it will be impossible for the INRENA guards to stop people from Monte Salvado logging illegally. These fears proved to be valid. According to conversations with INRENA since the investigation, the post was not strengthening protection of the river. Members of Monte Salvado continued to be involved in logging upstream. As a result, INRENA park guards have moved upstream to an old post on the border of the territorial reserve. The post was functioning from 2001 to 2004 but abandoned due to safety concerns and lack of funding. It offers a better alternative than the new post in Monte Salvado for protecting the park and reserve.

![The new control post under construction in Monte Salvado.](image)

**Conclusion**

Our investigation found a correlation between illegal logging and market forces. When the price for mahogany was high, the river was full of loggers; when the price fell, the large logging companies left, and some loggers began cutting the higher priced cedar instead. Undoubtedly, a higher price for mahogany will bring a return of the loggers to the upper Las Piedras.

We recommend placing park guards in the old post on the border of the uncontacted reserve. To ensure the guard’s safety, an armed member of the Puerto Maldonado police should be stationed there to protect the guards and enforce the protected area laws. Working together, the guards at this post and those at the new post in Monte Salvado should be able to enforce the law and remove illegal loggers from the upper Piedras—and allow the uncontacteds to live in peace. See section 6 for detailed recommendations.
5.5 The Tahuamanu River: The Eastern Region

The Tahuamanu River was not visited during the investigation. The following summary is based on conversations with INRENA personnel and NGO workers familiar with the river.

The Tahuamanu River is located in the eastern part of the park, roughly parallel and north of the Las Piedras. Like the Las Piedras, the Tahuamanu suffered heavy logging activity during the boom years of 2000 to 2005. However, unlike the Las Piedras, the Tahuamanu River can be accessed by the road that connects Puerto Maldonado with Iñapari at the Brazil border. The road is currently being paved as part of the Interoceanic highway, a project that will undoubtedly bring more people and threats to the Tahuamanu River.

The two largest loggers in the area are the Espinoza Sawmill and Maderera Tahuamanu, this latter being a subsidiary of the Newman Lumber Corporation from the United States. Together, Espinoza and Maderera Tahuamanu have significantly affected the region, having built approximately 200 kilometers of roads through the forest. The roads are used to bring heavy logging machinery into the forests near the river and to extract the logs.

In late 2006, a control post was built on the river to protect the park and the Territorial Reserve for People in Voluntary Isolation of Madre de Dios. However, since the rainy season began in early 2007, the guards stationed at the post have been unable to stop various teams of loggers from entering the protected areas to retrieve cached wood or to cut additional trees. While the post is strategically located at the border of the reserve for uncontacteds, without the right to bear arms the guards will be unable to protect the reserve, the park, or themselves from illegal loggers. As with the other posts in equally remote locations, the guards need to be supported by armed policeman if they are to be expected to prevent continued logging upstream.

5.6 The Yurúa River: the Northwest Region

Introduction
The Yurúa River begins near the border of the Alto Purús National Park and flows in a northwesterly direction through the Murunahua Territorial Reserve—most of which is also categorized as the park’s buffer zone—and into an area of 10 titled indigenous communities before crossing into Brazil. The town of Puerto Breu serves as the region’s economic hub. Located among the indigenous communities approximately 50 kilometers upstream from the Brazil border, the town has a small army base and a grass landing strip. There are no roads connecting Puerto Breu from the rest of Peru and the handful of small stores in Puerto Breu sell products flown in from the city of Pucallpa or transported via river from Brazil. The region has population of approximately 1500, a mixture of indigenous people, mestizo Peruvians, and Brazilians. The indigenous communities range in size from 70 to 150 people and are a mixture of Yaminahua and Amahuaca people who are native to the region, and Ashaninka and Asheninka people originally from Peru’s central Amazon region. These community lands are surrounded by forestry concessions.
and other state lands not under any formal categorization. At least two uncontacted tribes are known to migrate between the forests surrounding the communities and the reserve and park located upstream.

Methods
The investigation was conducted between December 19th and the 23rd. We used a 10-meter boat and 16 HP motor to travel from Puerto Breu to the community of Dulce Gloria near the border of the Murunahua reserve for uncontacteds. One Amahuaca man served as our guide and boat driver. In addition, we traveled with a representative from the Interethnic Association of Development of the Peruvian Forest (AIDESEP), Peru’s umbrella organization for indigenous matters, who works with the Yurúa communities. Interviews were conducted with leaders of several communities, and a meeting was held with the community of Dulce Gloria to discuss their problems with logging and community needs. We conducted two overflights of the region, concentrating on areas of reported logging activities inside the uncontacted reserve and park.

Key findings

- Loggers are using tractors to create an extensive network of roads connecting the Yurúa River with the Ucayali River. The roads cross through the protected Murunahua reserve for uncontacteds and are used to extract mahogany and cedar from the community lands along the Yurúa.

- Loggers are intimately involved in local politics, particularly the company Forestal Venao. According to various sources, Forestal Venao is helping groups of newcomers from the central Amazon gain title to lands in exchange for rights to the mahogany in those lands.
Background
The Yurúa region is similar to the Alto Purus River region in that neither is connected to the rest of Peru by roads or rivers. Its inaccessibility has prevented loggers from entering the region and has kept the forests intact and pristine until recently. The grass airstrip in Puerto Breu cannot support large planes used to transport wood. The loggers’ solution has been to build roads from the Ucayali River to the communities on the Yurúa River. Each company has their own road network, with some of the roads crossing through forest protected as part of the Murunahua territorial reserve for uncontacted.

The arrival of loggers
The arrival of the loggers has caused confusion among the indigenous communities as the loggers scramble to secure logging rights to their trees. The community of Dulce Gloria, for example, was approached by a logging company and agreed to cut 80 trees from their communal lands. However, once the wood was cut the loggers told the community that they wouldn’t be paid until 2009, so they decided not to hand over the wood. In a community meeting, leaders complained of insufficient health care and education for their children. Ironically, 80 mahogany trees worth tens of thousands of dollars lie rotting at the edge of the community buildings.

A proposed communal reserve
Loggers are involved in a bitter debate over a proposal to create a communal reserve in nearby state lands, which has divided and caused resentment among the communities. Several communities and AIDESEP, Peru’s primary indigenous rights group, support a proposal to create a communal reserve to be used by all the titled communities for hunting, fishing, and collection of non-timber forest products. It would also serve as a
buffer between the communities and the Murunahau uncontacted reserve. Another group of communities with ties to the timber company Forestal Venao is supporting a proposal to give the land to a small group of people now living in Puerto Breu. These people were brought to the region from the central Amazon by Forestal Venao, in a shrewd scheme to gain timber rights to virgin forest. The area being considered for the communal reserve is home to at least one group of uncontacted people.

**Squatters in the Murunahua Territorial Reserve**

There are at least two untitled, illegal communities located upstream in the uncontacted reserve. According to local people and AIDESEP, the communities were brought there by loggers with the purpose of accessing mahogany-rich forest.

**Forestal Venao**

Forestal Venao has a business agreement with the community of Nueva Victoria, and has cleared a road to connect the community with the Ucayali River in order to facilitate the transport of logs. Despite the business relationship, there are no indications that the community is benefiting, let alone prospering, from the sale of their trees. In fact, in an interview, the vice president of Nueva Victoria complained that the town lacked a health post with medicines or adequate schools, saying, “we have nothing here.” He said that the community will offer Forestal Venao mahogany trees in return for the company clearing 5000 hectares of forest for pasture to raise cows.

At the time of the investigation, the Rainforest Alliance’s SmartWood program was considering certifying Forestal Venao in recognition of socially and environmentally responsible forestry. Our opinion that Venao is entirely unworthy for certification is corroborated by University of Texas’ researcher David Salisbury, an expert on illegal logging in the borderlands between Brazil and Peru. In an email to the Rainforest Alliance he argues against certification:

“Forrestal Venao is infamous in Ucayali, Peru for their indifference to laws, indigenous people, and the rainforest environment. They have built an illegal, non-state sanctioned logging road from the banks of the Ucayali to the Yurúa basin on the Brazilian border. This is no small skid trail, but a network of roads whose main trunk extends over 120 kilometers” (Salisbury 2006).
An illegal logging road and cache of mahogany trees deep within the Murunahua Territorial Reserve for uncontacteds, also protected as part of the park’s buffer zone.

Conclusion
The indigenous communities located on the Yurúa River are having difficulties dealing with newly arrived loggers. Despite providing the loggers with expensive mahogany, the people still suffer from poor health care and education and a lack of income opportunities. Investments of funds and training are needed to assist AIDESEP in educating local people about the dangers of unsustainable logging and how to protect themselves and their resources from unscrupulous loggers. Logging companies like Forestal Venao should be removed from local politics and their logging practices scrutinized and monitored to ensure it is legal, sustainable, and respectful of human rights. The proposed communal reserve would provide an important buffer between the communities and the Murunahua Reserve, and would provide the uncontacted groups with precious additional land protected from loggers’ chainsaws. See section 6 for detailed recommendations.

5.7 Uncontacted Indigenous Groups

Introduction
The Alto Purús region is one of the last places on earth with uncontacted indigenous people. It is not known how many different groups there are, or the number of individuals in each group. However, we believe that there are at least three distinct groups who spend
most of the year inside the park. Their migratory routes probably overlap and include the adjacent territorial reserves set aside for them, as well as the more remote forestry concessions and community lands.

The largest group is commonly referred to as the Mashco-Piro. They are part of the Pano linguistic group and number approximately 500 people. They migrate between the headwaters of the Cujar, Las Piedras, and Manu Rivers in the southern section of the Alto Purús National Park and northern Manu National Park. The second group is believed to live in the eastern part of the Alto Purús Park around the upper Alto Purús, Yaco, Tahuamanu, and Chandless Rivers. It is not evident whether this is a subgroup of the Mashco-Piro people or a distinct tribe. The third group is known as the Curanjeños because their territory is believed to be centered around the Curanja River in the northwestern section of the park. They belong to the Mastanahua linguistic group and probably migrate to the north towards the Yurúa River and Brazil.

An shelter on the Cujar River (upper Alto Purús River) presumably made by the Mashco-Piro. (Photo from 2004 investigation)

The majority of uncontacted sightings occurs during the driest parts of the year (primarily in June and July) on the banks of the rivers. It is believed that they leave the more remote parts of the forest to collect the eggs of the Taricaya turtle (*Podocnemis unifilis*), which are laid on the exposed beaches of the larger rivers when water levels are low.
Over the past few years as loggers have infiltrated the more remote areas of the park, encounters with the uncontacteds have increased. These encounters can be lethal to the uncontacteds, whose immune systems are susceptible to unfamiliar viruses brought by outsiders. Loggers also deplete local animal populations, which are the primary protein sources for the uncontacted people.

Methods
We informally asked local people throughout the region about reports of encounters with uncontacteds. We compared the current situation with reports of uncontacted encounters in previous studies.

Key findings
- Encounters with uncontacteds have become more violent over the last decade.
- The rise in the violence of the encounters coincides with the arrival of loggers in the more remote sections of the region’s rivers.

Background
In a 2003 study of encounters in the Alto Purús, Michael and Beier found that in at least 10 encounters before 2001, the Mashco-Piro showed no signs of aggression (Michael and Beier 2003). In another study that year, Shulte-Herbruggen and Rossiter reported 18 separate encounters between loggers along the Las Piedras River in 2001 and 2002, with 17% of the loggers working in the 176 illegal camps reporting seeing uncontacteds (Schulte-Herbruggen and Rossiter 2003). We documented four encounters between local people and uncontacteds on the upper Alto Purús and Sepahua Rivers during 2001 and 2002 in which four uncontacteds were killed (see Fagan and Shoobridge 2005). Since 2004, there have been four violent encounters on the Las Piedras River (see section 5.4). While it is not entirely clear if uncontacteds were involved in all four of these encounters, local people living throughout the region agree that the uncontacteds have a new willingness to fight instead of flee, as was the norm in the past. The local people blame the supposed change in the uncontacteds behavior on the arrival of loggers. They claim that the uncontacteds have become more aggressive to protect their shrinking territory and avenge murders by loggers.

As loggers move further into the park, the uncontacted groups are forced to share a shrinking amount of forest. This has the effect of causing increased warfare between the different groups and the changing of migratory routes to avoid each other and the loggers. The recently contacted Curanjeño, Hipa, told us that his people were constantly hunted by a larger and more aggressive group. During the peak years for logging activity on the Las Piedras, researchers in Manu National Park encountered uncontacteds near their station for the first time in thirty years. It seems likely that the uncontacteds moved further south to avoid the loggers on the Las Piedras. The same thing may be happening in the park’s northern section, where loggers on the Yurúa and Envira Rivers are thought to be causing uncontacteds to leave Peru and find refuge on the Brazil side of the border (Survival International 2007).
The case of Hipa
The case of Hipa and his three wives leaving the forests of the Curanja River for a more settled life on the river is a rare occurrence (see end of section 5.2). However with the increased presence of loggers and missionaries in the region, the amount of forest available for their nomadic way of life is shrinking, and it is likely that other people will choose to leave the forest at some point in the future. This will bring new challenges to the region and officials need to be prepared to react quickly when it happens. To begin, they need to be given proper health care including inoculations against common illnesses for which they have no natural defenses. Furthermore, they must be protected from people intent on exploiting them. For example, Hipa is already being asked by local people to find them mahogany trees. Hipa and his wives also should be protected from missionaries intent on removing their culture and traditions as they are hastened into the civilized world.

Conclusion
Uncontacted reserves must be better marked and protected or else conflict will only increase between these rare people and the loggers illegally seeking mahogany. If uncontacteds voluntarily leave the forest, local officials should have an agreed upon plan about where they will live.
6. Recommendations

Our recommendations focus on strengthening protection of the Alto Purús National Park and adjacent reserves for uncontacted people and preventing the continued illegal logging in the region. We hope that improved protection will be bolstered by renewed efforts by Peru and importing countries to uphold CITES laws intended to protect mahogany. We also recommend measures to engage local indigenous people in conservation efforts and protect them from unscrupulous loggers. Variations of some of the following recommendations were previously outlined in our 2005 report (Fagan and Shoobridge 2005). The 2005 recommendations as well as those included in the Master Plans for the Alto Purús National Park and Purús Communal Reserve (INRENA 2005a, INRENA 2005b) are still relevant and should be considered in the development of conservation investments in the region.

1. Strengthen protection of the park by stationing park guards in control posts in the following locations.

Alto Purús River:
A new control post is needed at the border of the park and Purús Communal Reserve to ensure adequate protection of the park. Of secondary importance is an additional post at the border of the communal reserve and the community of Monterrey. This post should be staffed by members of the local indigenous federation, FECONAPU, to ensure legal use of the communal reserve. The abandoned INRENA forestry research station, Caobal, is a good site for this second post.

Curanja River:
A new post is currently being built on the border of the park and communal reserve. As with the Alto Purús River, if funding allows, a second post is needed on the border of the communal reserve and community lands of Balta, to be staffed by FECONAPU guards.

Las Piedras River:
Construction of a new post in the community of Monte Salvado was finished in January 2007. As discussed in section 5.4, the post has not been effective at stopping logging in upstream in the Territorial Reserve for Isolated People of Madre de Dios or the park and, as a result, INRENA park guards recently moved upstream to an abandoned post near the border of the reserve and the last forestry concession. This post should be made permanent in order to improve protection of both the park and uncontacted reserve. The post in Monte Salvado should be staffed by guards from the community and the local indigenous federation, FENAMAD, and used for monitoring illegal logging in nearby forestry concessions and community lands.

Sepahua River:
There is a control post staffed by INRENA forestry engineers responsible for monitoring activities in the forestry concessions. However, the post is located downstream, several days trip from the concessions that the loggers use to access the park. This distance
prevents adequate monitoring of these borderlands. A new post is needed upstream near the Union or Zungaro stream, to be staffed with INRENA park guards responsible for protecting the park’s border and assisting the forestry engineers with monitoring adjacent concessions.

**Inuya River:**
As with the Sepahua, the existing forestry control post is located too far downstream to prevent illegal logging in the park and Murunahua uncontacted reserve. A new post should be built upstream near the network of logging trails used to access the park. INRENA park guards staffed at the new post will also be responsible for monitoring the upper Mapuya River, a tributary of the Inuya, currently being used by loggers to access the uncontacted reserve.

**Tahuamanu River:**
Construction of a new post was finished in late 2006. It is properly situated to protect the park and Territorial Reserve for Isolated People of Madre de Dios but suffers from an insufficient budget. It should be better funded.

**Yurúa River:**
At present a post is not needed on the Yurúa because loggers are not using it to access the Murunahua uncontacted reserve and park. Rather, loggers are using the Inuya and Mapuya Rivers to access this region. However, an office is needed in Puerto Breu to serve as a headquarters for a local vigilance committee responsible for monitoring the logging activities in the indigenous communities and forestry concessions, and to report any future logging in the Murunahua reserve or park.

2. **Create an “Alto Purús Protection Fund” to support park guards.**

The funds will be divided among the posts depending on need. Priority uses will be supporting monitoring of park borders (i.e., boats, gasoline, and supplies) and facilitating collaboration between guards and ecological police (or navy or army) to apprehend illegal loggers. In addition, funds should be used to hire armed policemen or professional security guards for the more dangerous posts to ensure the safety of park guards. The fund will be managed by a committee made up of 1) the park’s general coordinator, 2) ECOPURÚS, a local indigenous organization based in Puerto Esperanza created to help manage the Alto Purús Park and Purús Communal Reserve, and 3) an NGO, to be determined.

3. **Construct and place signs on each access route to the park, its buffer zone, the communal reserve, and the two uncontacted reserves.**

The signs will indicate boundaries and state the legal and illegal activities for each area and punishments for offenders.
4. Develop and train a “Alto Purús - Curanja Vigilance Committee” made up of members of the communities along these two rivers to monitor use of the park and Purús Communal Reserve.

This would be the further development of a project already implemented by INRENA’s Indigenous Management of Protected Areas (PIMA) program. PIMA created a vigilance committee made up of men from several communities located closest to the park and communal reserve. In addition to needing funding for equipment, boats, motors, gasoline, and salaries, the committee would benefit from training workshops on local issues affecting the park and communal reserve, such as the overexploitation of Taricaya turtle eggs, regulations on commercial hunting in the park, and the presence of illegal loggers. The committee is an excellent way to engage the communities in the conservation and protection of the park, while also providing them with some much-needed income. Once developed, the committee could be replicated among communities on the Yurúa, Inuya, and Sepahua Rivers.

5. Develop a monitoring manual for the park to be used by INRENA park guards and members of the local vigilance committee.

6. Develop a committee to monitor logging activities in the forestry concessions and community lands that border the park and two uncontacted reserves.

Monitoring of these remote regions is needed to ensure that loggers are respecting protected area boundaries, implementing sound management plans, and that reported numbers of available mahogany trees are accurate. The team should be an independent entity to ensure objectivity, and include members of INRENA’s park and forestry sectors, local indigenous federations, and NGOs. Monitoring should focus first on the concessions and community lands on the Las Piedras, Sepahua, and Inuya (including the Mapuya) Rivers. The committee will work in collaboration with Peru’s Scientific Authority, which is charged with ensuring the legality of mahogany exports. Lessons learned can be put to use in other key areas where illegal logging is suspected.

7. Implement conservation and sustainable development projects in the communities along the Alto Purús and Curanja Rivers.

We recommend coupling any future conservation investments in the park with projects intended to directly benefit the local people living on these two rivers, an area referred to as the park’s “zone of influence” due to its proximity to the park. Through our research we have identified various projects which could provide income to the communities, reduce dependence on logging, and raise the standard of living.

One idea is to develop an indigenous cooperative store in Puerto Esperanza. A cooperative would provide the communities with a more reliable market for crops, meat, fish, and peccary hides and would help ensure that these products were sold to the mestizo storeowners at a fair and more consistent price. Other small-scale projects in which the people expressed interest, are integrating their gardens to include more
marketable fruits and vegetables, and training communities to raise chickens and hens for meat and eggs, both of which always demand a high price in Puerto Esperanza. Respondents also expressed a keen interest in a medicinal plant project. There are only a handful of shamans left, so a project would save a vast knowledge base which is critical to the health of inhabitants of those communities without access to medicines, and would help foster pride in their cultures and traditional ways.

8. **Organize logging workshops for community leaders on the Alto Purús, Curanja, and Yurúa Rivers.**

It is imperative that the community leaders became better educated on logging laws, their rights under these laws, basic wood measuring skills, and sustainable logging techniques. Community leaders on these three rivers need this knowledge to protect themselves against the loggers, ensure that the logging is profitable for them, and sustain their mahogany resources to benefit future generations.

9. **Develop and train a committee under the Indigenous Federation of the Alto Purús (FECONAPU) to monitor all logging activities in the communities along the Curanja and Alto Purús Rivers.**

Monitoring of all aspects of logging activity in these indigenous lands is needed immediately. This should include the oversight of permits, management plans, reforestation efforts, and payments and negotiations between the loggers and community members. The committee will work to ensure that logging in the communities is being done in a sustainable manner, with proper management plans and legal permits, and in accordance with Peruvian and international laws. The on-site monitoring should be conducted in collaboration with INRENA’s forestry sector and Peru’s Scientific Authority.

10. **Implement an aggressive publicity campaign to raise awareness of the illegality of Peru’s mahogany exports and the associated environmental and social impacts, and to pressure importing countries to reject Peru’s mahogany until Peru is in compliance with international law.**
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8. Literature Cited


