



AMAZON PROGRAMME:

biodiversity, indigenous peoples and the source of the Amazon River

Model Experience

Pastaza: the largest wetland complex in the Peruvian Amazon

One of the most distinctive features of the Amazon biome is its abundance of water; this is evident in the Pastaza River Wetland Complex, located in Loreto. Here, the rivers and lakes extend through flooded forests and aguaje palm swamps over more than 3,8 millions hectares, turning this complex – also called Abanico del Pastaza – into the largest Ramsar Site



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Management and conservation of freshwater ecosystems

Conserving the aquatic ecosystems in the Amazon is a top priority. The Amazon River is approximately 6400 kilometers long and its basin transports one fifth of the water that flows through the rivers of the world. The Peruvian tributaries provide 15% of the total water carried by the Amazon and the freshwater ecosystems in the Peruvian Amazon are some of the most diverse and productive in the world, although in many cases overexploitation and contamination produced by oil activities have affected them greatly. WWF Peru fosters its recovery and conservation through fishing management and community surveillance.

(wetland of international importance) in the entire Amazon and into one of its most productive aquatic ecosystems, where WWF works alongside local communities, promoting its conservation.

Wetlands as a source of resources

This region is home to the Achuar, Kandozi, Quechua, Urarinas and Cocama - Cocamilla indigenous peoples who have made responsible use of valuable fish species such as the paiche or arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*) - over 3 meters long - during centuries. However, the water pollution generated by inappropriate oil operations; pressure from activities such as illegal logging and poaching; and overfishing have seriously endangered these wetlands during the past decades.

WWF began to work here in 1999, promoting the establishment of this wetland as a Ramsar Site, achieved in 2002. Shortly after, WWF centered its efforts towards recovering the aquatic ecosystems and improving the local livelihoods through sustainable fishing in areas such as the Rimachi Lake, which is the largest in the Peruvian Amazon (7900 ha) and the main food source for over 30 communities.

Returning life to the wetlands

The fishermen association YUNGANI was formed as part of a joint effort with the population. This was the first step in a process that allowed the communities to protect their lake from foreign fishermen, organize their own fishing activities while establishing fish minimum sizes, improved practices – such as the use of nets – and fishing seasons and, finally, create the first indigenous fishing plan approved by the Government.

Since then, populations of fish – and others such as the tariyaca turtles (*Podocnemis unifilis*) – have recovered and the fishermen have doubled their revenues per kilo of sold fish, strengthening their links with important Peruvian Amazon markets in the cities of Yurimaguas and Tarapoto and proving how the sustainable



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management of resources is the best path for their development. Additionally, the support of WWF has prompted the communities to assert their rights when facing oil companies, which have led to the companies adopting improved environmental practices that do not contaminate these ecosystems. Moreover, communities now constantly monitor the water quality, further consolidating the protection of the largest wetland complex in the Peruvian Amazon.

Key facts:

- Thanks to the technical support provided by WWF Peru, the Abanico del Pastaza Wetland Complex was declared a Ramsar Site in 2002, becoming the largest wetland with this international classification in the Amazon.
- The largest lake in the Peruvian Amazon, the Rimachi, has recovered its fish populations thanks to the first indigenous fishing plan approved by the Peruvian Government.

We work with: Shinai, Fundación Solsticio Perú, Racimos de Ungurahui, Coordinadora Regional de Pueblos Indígenas (CORPI), Federación de Comunidades Nativas del Río Corrientes (FECONACO), Federación de Indígenas Quechua del Pastaza (FEDIQUEP), Federación de Comunidades Nativas Candoshi del Distrito de Pastaza (FECONACADIP), Red de Salud de Yurimaguas and the Regional Production Bureau of Loreto.

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