

Document Profile: "Acciones de desarrollo y áreas naturales protegidas en el Ecuador"

Title: Acciones de desarrollo y áreas naturales protegidas en El Ecuador: Reserva de producción faunística cuyabeno

Contributor: El Programa de Conservación de Fundación Natura al Centro de Educación y Promoción Popular

Publisher: Quito, Ecuador: Fundación Natura

Date: 1992

Description and Contents Summary:

Reserva de producción faunística cuyabeno is the ninth of thirteen pamphlets in the series *Acciones de desarrollo y áreas naturales protegidas en el Ecuador* published by Fundación Natura. The pamphlet explains how tourist and oil company activity in protected areas in Ecuador, namely the Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve in the Amazon region, has affected the environment. Specifically Petroecuador, the national oil company of Ecuador and a part of OPEC (Organization of Petroleum of Exporting Countries), has caused considerable destruction in the Reserve by creating continuous oil spills that have contaminated the water and degraded the soil.

Fundación Natura, the author of this source, is an organization that allocates funds to protecting natural areas and increasing global environmental awareness among world leaders. They inform and educate their audience (worldwide Spanish-speaking lower or middle-class workers, environmentalists, and multinational corporations interested in utilizing the Amazon), while participating in projects with capacity building activities. They attempt to expand the knowledge and engagement of workers relating to environmentally protected areas of Ecuador and increase communication among those workers in building alternatives to the obstacles indigenous communities face.

The pamphlet discusses how the construction of roads for oil exploitation facilitates disorderly colonization processes and hinders tourism as the ecosystem loses scenic resources necessary for this activity. Tourist activities without sufficient control mechanisms publicize the Reserve nationally and internationally and arouse interest in different organizations to support protection. These organizations, including Fundación Natura, the World Wildlife Fund, the German Society for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), and the Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería (MAG) collaborated with the Reserve to improve environmental conditions. A management plan was created in 1992 to improve cooperation between the Ecuadorian government and the institutions related to the management of natural and cultural resources.

While the indigenous communities had traditional methods of utilizing the land, since the 1970s colonizers transformed the forest into pastures, agricultural land, and human settlements. This resource shift has degraded the natural environment with unpredictable consequences, created a system of exploitation of natural resources, and influenced the customs of indigenous communities. Due to a lack of their own land, different climates, and hopes for economic success, the settlers wanted the Reserve for themselves at the expense of the native population.

The oil boom in the Oriente region of the Amazon basin began in 1967 when Texaco and Gulf Oil successfully drilled in the Sucumbíos Province (Rochlin 14). This Texaco-Gulf consortium oil find “was heralded as the salvation of Ecuador’s economy, the product that would pull the nation out of chronic poverty and ‘underdevelopment’ at last” (Kimerling 445-446). As a result, the indigenous Amazonian population experienced destruction more than progress. What they called home was now being invaded by foreigners with their vast technological, military, and economic power (Kimerling 446).

The lives of indigenous Amazonians quickly changed, and the oil companies eventually arrived in the Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve.

The colonization process in the Reserve began in 1972 with the opening of new roads to service the oil wells. The main impetus for writing this pamphlet, however, seems to be the ruthlessness of oil companies such as Petroecuador and the resulting negative environmental consequences. These companies in Latin America have consistently disregarded protections for indigenous peoples because states wanted easy and resource-based solutions for their economies (Martínez Domínguez and Scandrett 162).

The pamphlet uses multiple methods, one being statistics, to clarify its perspective. For example, it states that 25,883 hectares of the Reserve have been cut down since colonization began in the area (10% of the total Reserve territory), showing widespread deforestation in Ecuador. Additionally, the pamphlet points out that the human population of the Reserve increased from 6,066 in 1982 to 8,334 in 1990. These staggering numbers were effective in raising awareness around the Reserve. Along with statistics, diagrams and illustrations are useful tools for informing the audience of the issues and their severity. For example, the pamphlet includes a map of the Reserve with different zones representing how dangerous each project is in that area and the oil concessions located in those zones. The pamphlet additionally includes images explaining developing social projects, which allow the audience a new way of understanding its importance.

Significance:

The pamphlet comes across as informative and urgent, emphasizing that oil corporations abuse the indigenous communities' land, steal their resources, and overpower their own cultural and spiritual ways of life. Indigenous lifeways and the environment are mere externalities in calculating the cost of oil (Martínez Domínguez and Scandrett 175). The pamphlet also presents certain political ideologies in that it explains how different lifestyles created new demands to integrate the market economy and shift the usage of natural resources, causing negative unforeseen environmental impacts.

Despite its wide audience, there are missing voices in the pamphlet. Neither the voices of the settlers nor those of the indigenous people are directly represented. However, the purpose of the pamphlet is to raise awareness of the environmental damage and exploitation occurring in Ecuador. It may, therefore, seem biased toward the indigenous. Some communities in Ecuador oppose the expropriation of land and have demanded a moratorium on all oil activities, whereas others view the industry as respecting indigenous culture. This demonstrates that both sides agree preservation and cultural autonomy is key (Martínez Domínguez and Scandrett (168-169).

The pamphlet *Reserva de producción faunística cuyabeno* helps answer the question of how the arrival of oil companies and their subsequent drilling of oil in Ecuador and, specifically the Cuyabeno Faunística Reserve, led to the destruction of the environment. Additionally, the pamphlet answers the question of how the arrival of these oil companies contributed to the colonization of the Reserve and the greater region and, in turn, the suffering of the indigenous population.

Page Count: 42

Dimensions (in centimeters): 20.8 cm

Geographical Subject: Ecuador

Subject: Amazon; Cuyabeno; indigenous; oil; Petroecuador; Reserve

Language: Spanish

Libraries Reporting Copies in WorldCat: Total number: 5; Number in the United States: 4

Works Cited

- Domínguez, María Teresa Martínez, and Eurig Scandrett. "The Politics of Environmental Justice: Community Development in Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazonia." *Politics, Power and Community Development*, edited by Rosie R. Meade, Mae Shaw, and Sarah Banks, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 159–178. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1332/policypress/9781447317364.003.0009.
- Kimerling, Judith. "Transnational Operations, Bi-National Injustice: Chevrontexaco and Indigenous Huarani and Kichwa in the Amazon Rainforest in Ecuador." *American Indian Law Review*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2006, pp. 445-508. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20070795. Accessed 19 March, 2020.
- Rochlin, James. "Development, the Environment and Ecuador's Oil Patch: The Context and Nuances of the Case against Texaco." *Journal of Third World Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2011, pp. 11–39. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/45198644. Accessed 19 Mar. 2020.

Document profile prepared by Ellie Keating '23 and Alex May '23 as part of the course "Arts of Extraction: Latin American Representations of Ecological Injustice" taught by D. Bret Leraul, Visiting Assistant Professor and Writing Fellow (2019-20) with the assistance of Margaret Schaus, Lead Research and Instruction Librarian, and Charlie Espinosa '15, Archivist.