

Forest Stewardship and International Partnership with the Amazon basin

By Derk Loeks

1. The Scandinavian Connection

2. Economic and Ecological Justifications for the establishment of a full “off limits” reserve within the Amazon Basin.

Introduction through Scandinavia

Scandinavia, and much of Northern Europe is made habitable by the stabilizing warmth provided by the Gulf Stream.

This warmth is conveyed by means of an extraordinary current that thunders off the North Atlantic shelf in a huge sub surface waterfall of extra saline, extra heavy seawater. This seawater is made extra salty by virtue of the formation of sea ice that removes and locks up fresh water from the ocean. The current then courses along the mid Atlantic seafloor down along the coast of South America where the mighty Amazon River dumps a staggeringly huge amount of fresh water into the ocean, effectively diluting and warming this extra salty water and facilitating its rise to the surface where it is further warmed on its way back to the North Atlantic. The power of this current to retain, and convey heat is graphically portrayed by the presence of coconut palms growing on the coast of Northern Scotland, where this current contributes both the coconut seeds brought up from the south, and the warmth for these seeds to grow

into full trees. But even more dramatic is the fact that all of northern Europe, and Scandinavia in particular would be virtually uninhabitable without this warmth. Therefore, the health and maintenance of the Amazon basin is of direct, visceral importance to the people of Scandinavia. How Northern European ingenuity makes use of planetary resources, how this ingenuity influences other cultures in the use of resources, is of direct impact on Amazon, and on the maintenance of this planetary current.

Not only does the Gulf Stream need the warming, fresh water contribution of the Amazon to keep cycling, it also needs the freezing, freshwater isolating conditions of the north Atlantic to launch and power this current in its sub oceanic journey to the south. This North Atlantic power source is being compromised by global warming, a warming that is melting the glaciers in Greenland and reducing the sea ice, thereby diluting the current with freshwater where it should be the most salty.

Ok, so we are linking Amazon into the whole system economic social map of Scandinavia. I met with several representatives of a Scandinavian based rainforest action group to look at stewardship issues of the Amazon basin in relationship to Scandinavian culture, and specifically in relationship to the forest stewardship model being developed by the Earth Island Project.

We propose to focus in particular on the issue of complete tribal sovereignty of certain tribes in the Amazon, including the right to exclude scientific, cultural and tourist observations of the sectors of the forest under these tribes stewardship.

Applying the forest stewardship model being developed, we are proposing a series of over flights of selected tribal lands to map out a three layered

Organization of forest stewardship that would have an outer layer of sustainable economic use and tourism, a middle layer of scientific observation and study, and an inner layer of completely undisturbed forest open only to the indigenous stewards, closed to all forms of intervention, ironically even to over flights.

The economic and scientific justification of this is derived from the earth island stewardship model developed in the last two years.

Here is the proposed application:

Towards the development of Economic and Ecological Justifications for the establishment of a full “off limits” reserve within the Amazon Basin.

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Executive Summary

A living forest with an intrinsic and intact stewardship culture needs an “off limits” reserve which serves as a source of informational and biological relationships.

This reserve can then be advantageously surrounded by a buffer zone that is exclusive for scientific and cultural observation and learning. This is further surrounded another zone that is for eco-tourism and transcultural exchange.

Finally there is a third zone for sustainable forestry and forest resource harvesting.

When government, industry and special interest groups are exposed to the idea a complete indigenous reserve within a valuable resource area, they often respond as if it will be a loss or sacrifice of resources, territory, opportunity, and access.

I want to describe how a complete, no access reserve can actually create a net increase of value and profit on a local, regional and national, and geo political level.

Creating a no access or total reserve as a core resource is a way of optimizing a far larger territory than the reserve itself.

In terms of a bioregion, a core reserve is a critical source of information as biological relationships, genetic stock (seed, potential mating pairs) research and discovery opportunities and more.

A core reserve, whether defacto or established by policy makes an irreplaceable contribution to the larger bioregion.

A core reserve is undisturbed, unobserved, unexploited by individuals from outside its system because such exploitation, even in the form of research or observation, changes the system.

To understand the larger living forest system, to understand sustainable forestry, and to understand more fully our own impact on historically settled land we need undisturbed core resource sites. This means a reserve surrounded by a buffer zone with no penetration by any external groups, no aerial observation, and no over flights.

When core resource is allowed to remain intact within a "hands off" reserve we then have the equivalent of a computer database back up for the rest of the forest and bioregion.

The undisturbed, unobserved relationships within the forest reserve have an unquantifiable impact on the forest and bioregion as a whole.

We can think of this core reserve as occupying the top of an informational, bio-relational 'watershed' that is a source for innumerable, unquantifiable streams of information and resources, which can then be observed and studied within a scientific buffer zone established around the reserve.

To observe the reserve itself is to risk the opportunity to truly understand the forest system.

Penetration and observation introduce foreign bacteria, virus, spores etc that can place at risk species within the forest. In addition we know that just the act of observation itself can alter ecological relationships, which we may not be aware of, and alter them in ways that we cannot predict.

This is especially true when there are indigenous, native peoples who are an intrinsic part of the forest system.

In many ways, they represent one of the greatest resources within a living forest, as they are the repositories of a vast databank of co-evolutionary information, which extends 40 million years and more into the past.

They are also the most vulnerable part of the living forest system. Because of the transcultural resonance or 'sympatico' within the human species, any human, no matter how disparate the culture can be deeply moved, affected or disturbed by another human. Therefore transcultural contact with aboriginal culture within a living forest represents a

significant leverage, a significant impact on the living forest. It is like a huge wedge being driven into the living forest itself.

Therefore, the establishment of a scientific and cultural buffer zone around the forest reserve allows the aboriginal people to be in charge, in control, of how and when they interact with the dominant culture.

Aside from the fact that we ourselves insist on our own national and cultural self determination, and insist on controlling our own borders, there is another reason for extending this right to native peoples.

The aboriginal participant in the living forest represents the eyes and ears and communication of the forest. Giving these people the right to open and close their borders means the forest itself has the chance to open and invite us in at the right time. This represents an extraordinary opportunity for science, for we will be able to see and understand biological and ecological events that we would completely miss due to wrong timing.

This cultural self-determination results in a living forest biosystem self determination, which results in a healthier, stronger system, a system that can share itself more fully.

In other words this type of reserve results in an increase, not a decrease of informational exchange and useful observation of both the aboriginal culture, and the relationships of that culture to the living forest.

In summary, a living forest with an intrinsic and intact stewardship culture needs an “off limits” reserve which serves as a source of informational and biological relationships.

This reserve is surrounded by a buffer zone that is exclusive for scientific and cultural observation and learning. This is further surrounded another

zone that is for eco-tourism and transcultural exchange. Finally there is a third zone for sustainable forestry and forest resource harvesting.

These four distinct zones,

1. Secure reserve
2. Scientific
3. Cultural and ecotourism
4. Sustainable forestry

Are all supported and informed by the impenetrable reserve in unique ways that will likely require decades of study to fully understand and appreciate, yet which will create immediate increase in land and resource value on a regional, national and large bioregional level.

The special reserve at the core of the system dramatically increases the land and resource value of each of the surrounding three zones, a value which can be measured in research, tourism, sustainable resources, and international prestige, and investment to the host nation.

This increased value of the three zones surrounding the core surpasses any value that could be extracted from observation, intervention or harvesting of the core itself. Add to this the international prestige and political position, with its resulting financial opportunities that would be realized by the host country, then the act of establishing this type of reserve is one of sound scientific, financial and geopolitical judgment.

There is one final point.

In dealing with the complex human and environmental issues confronting each nation, individually and collectively, it is of utmost importance that we have human and planetary “data base backup” of the experiential, relational and genetic information, wisdom and skills that are of profound impact on our development as a species.

A living forest reserve that includes native peoples who maintain the continuum of forest use and forest wisdom is precisely that type of human- natural system data backup. It is of extraordinary value, and will make a contribution to both the host country and the international community as a whole.

Terms

Core resource: A resource that a critical supply of seed stock, genetic information, biological relationships, information and potentially much more.

Living forest: A working definition of a complex forest that has a full compliment of functional interactions such as predator prey, canopy, understory, soil complexity, migratory species, free flowing water etc.

Total or No access reserve: A forest or ecosystem preserve that is closed to all forms of penetration and exploitation, including exploration, tourism, scientific research, development etc.