



67

May  
2016

the small world foundation

## **TWO DAYS ON PATROL WITH THE SAN MARTIN ENVIRONMENTAL GUARD: DAY 1**

Awaiting the decision by the Colombian government about the application for the recognition of the ancestral lands of the Tikuna indigenous community of San Martin de Amacayacu as an indigenous reserve, the community works to protect nature in this area.

An environmental guard was created with the Darrell Posey Small Grant of the International Society of Ethnobiology. On March 14, three members of this guard went on patrol with two members of the Amacayacu National Park. The to be inspected area of the ancestral land was the Amacayacu river edge as well as the hindlands, at between 5 to 8 kilometers north of the community as the bird flies. Local fishermen had reported the noise of chainsaws. The boat left early in the morning and very soon the logging location was found. A man from the community was sawing high quality timber planks (1) for a tourist lodge outside the community. The patrol members informed the man that commercial logging is not allowed in the area and that even for very small quantities of timber destined for locations outside San Martin there should at least be some form of application to contemplate its permission in the future. Very soon, he will risk the seizure of the timber and his equipment... A little further on the river the patrol members found an improvised tent (2), probably indicating passing traffic, this being people who cross the ancestral lands on foot, often carrying drugs. Very soon, the patrol members had to leave the boat behind and climb over tree trunks and bushes to explore the rainforest further (3,4). They passed an area where there used to be a lot of logging and they saw hundreds of new trees growing (5), which will later produce really nice timber. Eventually they reached another spot where trees were logged recently without any permit, but destined for San Martin itself, to build a house (6).







### DAY 2

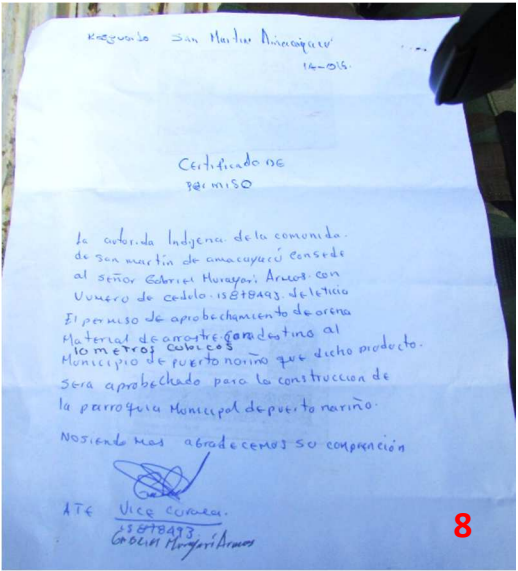
The San Martin environmental guard came into action again on April 14<sup>th</sup> because, after having been absent for a long time, there were boats coming past the community again carrying sand without there having been any dialogue. At about 20 kilometers distance from the community as the bird flies, people from Puerto Nariño were indeed busy shoveling sand (7). The sand was destined for the church of Puerto Nariño, a village of about 5000 mostly not indigenous inhabitants on the edge of the Amazon river. The supposed permit shown to the guard members was nothing more than a scribble on a piece of paper, written by and given out to the same inhabitant of San Martin (not Tikuna, not born in this community) (8). Patiently, it was explained again that commercial use of natural resources is not allowed in the ancestral lands and that measures will be taken soon in this kind of situations.

Much further into the rainforest, a Tikuna family from San Martin was cutting planks from a tree for their house (9). It was confirmed by the guard members that this tree had fallen over by itself about 10 years ago and soon it would not be suitable anymore. Around this tree, many small trees of the same high quality species were already growing.



On the way downriver, the environmental guards' boat had to avoid a wooden boat going upriver (10), which was stopped and inspected. It were four young men from another indigenous community, who wanted to try their luck hunting. They were impressed by the guard and admitted that they had not thought about stopping in San Martin de Amacayacu to inform about their plan. Without any hesitation, they each gave their information for registration and promised to inform in San Martin about their plans next time.

A few environmental guard observations:  
Basically nobody follows any procedure for logging or sand collection. This is normal and it will take a while before this procedure will be fully adopted.  
Thanks to the environmental patrol, only very few people come from outside the community to use natural resources. When they come, it seems on invitation of not indigenous people living in San Martin. This is very interesting. For these people, it seems harder to understand that if you take away all the sand today, there will be not much left for the future generations (so also their own children!). And if they understand, it seems not to be so important. Maybe they do not have a cultural or emotional connection to nature in this area, because they were not born here? There seems some work to be done here!



The environmental guard is happy to see a quick recovery of the rainforest in the areas where logging was frequent recently or a while ago. All observations together show a nice result of the environmental guard. It is clear where they have to focus their attention and where progress has been made.



## ENVIRONMENTAL GUARD PATROL MAP

(compare map Newsletter 58)

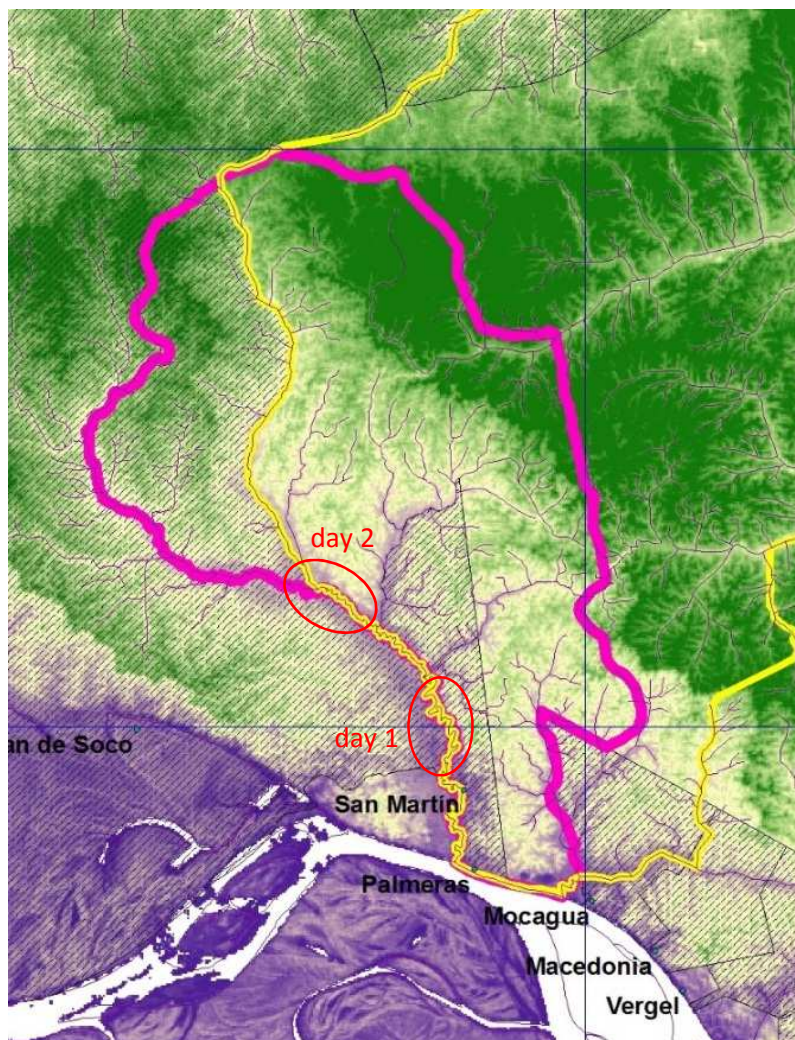
— Amacayacu National Park

— Ancestral lands of San Martin de Amacayacu

Purple diagonally striped areas:  
Indigenous reserves.

Dark green and white areas:  
Not floodable highland.

Purple areas:  
Floodable land.



---

**Would you like to support the Tikuna indigenous community of San Martin together with the Small World Foundation, and stay in touch about the local developments in this remote corner of Colombia?**

Please transfer 15 euro yearly (or more!) to the following bank account in the Netherlands:

Account name: Stichting SMALL WORLD FOUNDATION

SWIFT/BIC Code: RABONL2U

IBAN code: NL28 RABO 0132 7262 03

Or check out the online contribution module on: [www.smallworldfoundation.org/?page\\_id=68](http://www.smallworldfoundation.org/?page_id=68)

Please DON'T FORGET TO INFORM US ABOUT YOUR NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS!!

([heike\\_van\\_gils@hotmail.com](mailto:heike_van_gils@hotmail.com))

The contributions will be spent exclusively on the development and realization of local initiatives in San Martin de Amacayacu in the Colombian Amazon. No wages are being paid to anyone. The expenses will be mentioned as much as possible in the newsletters. For alternative contributions, please contact Heike van Gils at: [heike\\_van\\_gils@hotmail.com](mailto:heike_van_gils@hotmail.com).

For more information about this initiative, please check the website:

**[www.smallworldfoundation.org](http://www.smallworldfoundation.org).**