



TARAPOTO ENVIRONMENTAL PATROL

20 new uniforms have arrived for the environmental patrol at Lake Tarapoto, near Puerto Nariño and with this more official look, we are sure they will be able to perform their duties better! The main issues they deal with include illegal logging, hunting, and excessive fishing for commercial purposes.

Lake Tarapoto has been recognized as an [internationally protected wetland](#), yet for the environmental patrol and the surrounding communities, securing funding for conservation activities remains an uphill battle.

The town of Puerto Nariño has thousands of residents, all of whom enjoy eating fish. Unfortunately, fishing is becoming increasingly difficult due to the declining fish populations in the Amazon. Overfishing, pollution, and climate change are all possible causes of this global phenomenon. Protecting fish stocks in an ecosystem like Lake Tarapoto is particularly challenging because fish migrate extensively, meaning they can still be caught elsewhere. Their migration patterns depend on water levels and food availability at different locations throughout the year.

A similar phenomenon occurs in the Amacayacu River. Fishing there has also become nearly impossible as a sustainable livelihood for local families. Hunting provides some variation in food sources, but not everyone can afford to buy a hunting rifle and ammunition. Tourism offers locals a source of



income, which is why store-bought chicken is increasingly appearing on the menu.

Raising chickens locally presents the same challenges as fish farming: the cost of purchasing and transporting efficient animal feed makes production far more expensive than imported frozen chicken or fish.



Members of the environmental patrol typically receive only a minimal payment for their work—more of a recognition than a salary—because there is never much budget available for their activities. Unfortunately, some local residents use this as an argument to ignore the patrol's directives, saying, “You don’t feed my family.”

Therefore, patrol members in both San Martin de Amacayacu and Tarapoto must act with great diplomacy, incorporating elements of environmental education to foster regional understanding of their mission.

MEETINGS

In early December, a meeting took place in San Martin de Amacayacu between the administration of Amacayacu National Park, the Ministry of the Environment, and community leaders. The discussion focused on evaluating the agreement between these entities regarding the management of natural resources (2018).

The main obstacles to achieving the agreement’s goals exists on both sides. The community lacks individuals capable of leading such an important process on its behalf. There is insufficient vision, capacity, professionalism, knowledge of legislation, and substantial initiative to turn the agreement’s proposals into reality. Too much emphasis is placed on verbal participation in meetings, while real-world changes are slow to materialize.

Due to this overall lack of resources and leadership, it’s easy to see how practical power still largely remains with the national park, often sidelining community interests. This creates a classic chicken-and-egg scenario.



The minimal financial contributions provided by the agreement come with a long list of requirements, making project implementation difficult. There was even an instance where community members were instructed on how to retroactively issue receipts to justify expenses.

Additionally, there is still no transparency regarding the total amount and destination of funds allocated to Amacayacu National Park by third parties, nor how much of these funds actually benefit the community versus how much remains with the park administration. However, the community is often hesitant to challenge this situation directly, preferring to “avoid problems” rather than take concrete steps to demand transparency. Strengthening the agreement remains the goal, but such progress in this region tends to be slow.



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC BIRD BOOK READY FOR PRINT!

Over the past year, more than 20 versions of the bird book have been exchanged between project members and the editor. It was a complex task to refine the editor’s decorations and ensure the final text aligned properly with the illustrations.

An order has now been placed for 1,000 copies, which will be distributed to the communities and made available for sale.



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

You can transfer a yearly amount of 20 euros (or more...!) to:

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