

Illegal Logging Harms Communities and Our Climate

Help Promote Fair Trade – Not Forest Destruction

Tropical forests provide homes for an incredible array of wildlife and other species. Orchids drip from a tree that stretches high into the canopy, absorbing sun and softening rainfall. Birds chatter in the branches as an orangutan mother shows her child how to use a stick to forage. Their rainforest home contains not only a wealth of biodiversity and a livelihood for local people, but may prove integral to solving the global warming crisis.

Forests hold massive amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂) within their plant life. When forests are eliminated, this CO₂ is released back into the atmosphere where it contributes to global warming.¹ Scientists estimate that one quarter of the reductions in CO₂ emissions necessary to stabilize the atmosphere can be achieved simply by preserving the world's forests and managing land use sustainably.² Currently, 30% of the global warming pollution released into the atmosphere each year is a result of deforestation.³

Well managed, sustainable forestry can help to conserve wildlife and other species while providing timber products that we use. Unfortunately, most commercial logging in developing countries is illegal, often focusing on rare or endangered species such as bigleaf mahogany⁴, merbau⁵, and ramin⁶ which fetch high prices in the market.

The True Cost of Illegal Logging

- Illegal logging does not generate revenue necessary for countries to pay off debt or provide basic services. The World Bank estimates that developing countries lose \$15 billion annually to illegal logging.⁷
- The economies of developed countries suffer when domestic timber industries are undercut by cheap imports. The U.S. timber industry estimates annual losses of \$1 billion due to decreased exports and depressed prices.⁸
- Indigenous communities and farmers are forced to work for logging companies⁹ and, in some cases, have received death threats from timber companies¹⁰. In the Peruvian mahogany industry alone, an estimated 33,000 individuals work under forced labor conditions.¹¹
- The illegal timber trade may be used to smuggle narcotics and launder drug money¹², while profits from these illegal sales are used to finance criminal regimes or perpetuate regional conflict.¹³
- Deforested areas are extremely vulnerable to mudslides from heavy rains, floods, or waves.¹⁴ The President of the Philippines banned domestic logging after hundreds of people died in mudslides triggered by a typhoon.¹⁵

What is the Connection to Global Trade?

Without continued consumption of illegal products, illegal logging will cease to be profitable.¹⁶ As the world's largest consumer of wood products, the United States must be a leader in stopping this illegal trade¹⁷.

Unfortunately, the U.S. has or is in the process of negotiating trade agreements with countries harboring some of the worst offenders of illegal logging in the world. For example, the U.S. imports 93% of Peru's mahogany¹⁸, most of which is harvested illegally¹⁹, yet has proposed no language within the U.S.-Peru Free Trade Agreement to address this²⁰. Similarly, shipments of illegal Indonesian timber through Singapore have increased by 62% since the implementation of a free trade agreement between the U.S. and Singapore.²¹

The Bush Administration has done little to address the illegal logging crisis. The environmental provisions in our trade agreements are filled with nice sounding yet non-binding rhetoric. The European Union (EU), on the other hand, has signed an agreement with Indonesia to ensure the EU only purchases legally harvested timber²².

We have no time to lose in setting a forward-looking trade policy that would include meaningful and binding provisions to protect the global treasure of wildlife, promote sustainable practices and help curb global warming. New trade agreements should contain a definitive ban on trade in illegally harvested timber.

Use Your Purchasing Power! Motivate companies to source legal and sustainable timber.²³

Ask your local stores if the wood products you are buying were legally and responsibly harvested.



Look for products with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) label²⁴
and if you cannot find any, ask the store to stock them.

Also, ask your employer to use FSC certified paper and wood products.

Trade done right can help lift living standards while also protecting our precious natural resources.

Contact your Member of Congress and tell them that Free Trade should not mean illegal trade and that our agreements must contain environmental safeguards and prohibitions against illegal logging.

For more information on the Sierra Club's Responsible Trade Campaign contact responsible.trade@sierraclub.org or visit www.sierraclub.org/trade.

¹ "UNEP Launches Campaign to Plant a Billion Trees: Fast Facts", November 2006, United Nations Environment Program, <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=485&ArticleID=5417&l=en>

² Micheal Totten, "Weathering Climate Change," Conservation Frontlines Summer 2004, Conservation International, http://www.conservation.org/ImageCache/frontlines/content/downloads/ci_5ffl_5f08_2epdf/v1/ci_5ffl_5f08.pdf.

³ Christopher Matthews, "Deforestation Causes Global Warming", September 2006, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2006/1000385/index.html>

⁴ "Tahuamanu Rainforest," Natural Resources Defense Council, <http://www.savebiogems.org/tahuamanu/>

⁵ Merbau's Last Stand, April 2007, Greenpeace, <http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/australia/resources/reports/deforestation/merbaus-last-stand-briefing.pdf>

⁶ State of the Forest: Indonesia, February 2002, World Resources Institute, http://www.wri.org/biodiv/pubs_description.cfm?pid=3147

⁷ Strengthening Forest Law Enforcement and Governance, August 2006, World Bank, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTFORESTS/Resources/ForestLawFINAL_HI_RES_9_27_06_FINAL_web.pdf

⁸ America's Free Trade for Illegal Timber, June 2006, Environmental Investigation Agency, <http://www.eia-international.org/files/reports/118-1.pdf>

⁹ A Global Alliance Against Forced Labour, 2005, International Labor Organization, http://www.ilo.org/dyn/declaris/DECLARATIONWEB.DOWNLOAD_BLOB?Var_DocumentID=5059

¹⁰ Without Remedy: Human Rights Abuse and Indonesia's Pulp and Paper Industry, January 2003, Human Rights Watch, http://hrw.org/reports/2003/indon0103/Indon0103-04.htm#P536_145313

¹¹ Forced Labor in the Extraction of Timber in the Peruvian Amazon, March 2005, International Labor Organization, http://www.ilo.org/dyn/declaris/DECLARATIONWEB.DOWNLOAD_BLOB?Var_DocumentID=4748

¹² The Illegal Logging Crisis in Honduras, October 2005, Environmental Investigation Agency, <http://www.eia-international.org/files/reports112-1.pdf>

¹³ The Logs of War, January 2002, Global Witness, http://www.globalwitness.org/media_library_detail.php/89/en/the_logs_of_war

¹⁴ "Illegal Logging Blamed for Sumatra Floods, Landslides," December 2006, Jakarta Post, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/Archives/ArchivesDet2.asp?FileID=20061229.@02>

¹⁵ "Logging Suspended in Philippines," December 2004, BBC, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4068477.stm>

¹⁶ Last Stand of the Orangutan, February 2007, United Nations Environment Program, http://www.unep-wcmc.org/resources/PDFs/LastStand/full_orangutanreport.pdf

¹⁷ China and the Global Market for Forest Products, March 2006, Forest Trends, <http://www.forest-trends.org/documents/publications/China%20and%20the%20Global%20Forest%20Market-Forest%20Trends.pdf>

¹⁸ Calculated by dividing US mahogany imports from Peru by Peru's export quota for mahogany, 2005 data.

¹⁹ "Federal border agencies allowing illegal mahogany imports, say native Peruvians and US conservation group," June 2006, Natural Resources Defense Council, http://www.illegal-logging.info/item_single.php?item=news&item_id=1493&approach_id=15

²⁰ "Oppose the United States – Peru Free Trade Agreement," March 2006, Letter to Congress, http://www.citizen.org/documents/Peru_FTA_Enviro_Letter.pdf

²¹ America's Free Trade for Illegal Timber, June 2006, Environmental Investigation Agency, <http://www.eia-international.org/files/reports118-1.pdf>

²² "EC – Indonesia FLEGT Support Project," April 2007, http://www.eu-indonesia-flegt.org/newsroom_detail.php?pkid=860&lang=en

²³ "Responsible Forestry: Global Forest & Trade Network," April 2007, WWF, http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/what_we_do/forests/our_solutions/responsible_forestry/gftn/index.cfm

²⁴ Forest Stewardship Council, <http://www.fsc.org>