

Defining the Institutional Arrangement and Identifying Relevant Stakeholders to Form the Advisory Council of Paru State Forest, Brazilian Amazon

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Public participation through an Advisory Council to manage and represent all interests in directing State Forests (and other Conservation Units) is a need - and a privilege - required by law. The great challenge is creating councils that are both active and representative, considering the various views and interests involved.

Paru State Forest is a special case; it is the largest Conservation Unit for sustainable use in Brazil with 3.6 million hectares and is located in a remote region (long boat or expensive air trips are the main transportation options). Therefore, the time and costs involved to assemble potential members of an Advisory Council on a regular basis is a major challenge to forming an effective, and even economically viable, council.

Our team conducted surveys, literature reviews and consultations with key informants to design a strategy to form the council for Paru and other State Forests in the Amazon. Three important lessons learned will be important for future projects: (1) socio-economic assessments are important to identify potential counselors, institutions, and interests; (2) it is vital to survey and identify potential conflicts and take corrective measures before establishing the council; and (3) criteria to identify potential stakeholders should take into account not only the institutional roles in the particular region, but also the availability and institutional interest in contributing to the process.

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