

PERU:

Oil Development brings Death and Devastation to the Marañón

On April 14, UPI in Lima, Peru reported that the country's trans-Amazon pipeline had ruptured two weeks earlier, spilling crude from Occidental and Petroperu oil wells directly into the Marañón River in the Peruvian Amazon. Petroperu technicians stated that "10,000 barrels a day are spilling because of the rupture and that the figure could increase to 30,000".

Indigenous communities depend on the Marañón and its tributaries for fishing, drinking water, and transportation. Miqueas Mishari president of the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Amazon (AIDEPSEP) stated, "The government isn't worried about the effects of the spill on the Indian communities," and called upon President Fujimori to "listen to us, to take into account that we exist, to talk to the communities."

One week prior to the UPI article AIDEPSEP stated, in a report sent to international Indigenous and environmental organizations, "At this very moment, the Rio Marañón and Rio Napo are totally covered with oil from shore to shore and in the next several days it will reach the Amazonas River". They noted that eight people had died as a result of the spill and that "It is of the utmost urgency to investigate the

causes of the spill." AIDEPSEP also denounced that the local and national press had not covered the spill out of pressure from interests working to secure foreign investment.

Government Proposes Increases in Exploration and Extraction

On March 30, as oil gushed from decrepit pipes into the Marañón, Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori was present at the signing of a natural gas exploration contract between Petroperu and Maple Gas Corporation of Peru a



Spilled oil spreads quickly and devastates rivers and flooded forests in the Amazon

subsidiary of the Dallas based Maple Resources Corporation. This contract allows for drilling to evaluate the feasibility of gas exploitation along the Auaytia river near Ucayali in the central forest region. The previous week, the Peruvian government signed an agreement with Royal Dutch Shell for oil exploration in the areas of Kashiyari, San Martin and Mipaya. If discoveries are made, the company could land a 30 year

leasing contract for exploitation in the region. In all, these new contracts could cover areas in the regions of: Purus, Camisea, Aguaytia and Pucallpa. The Yine, Chipibo, Conibo, Amahuaca, Yaminahua, Sharanahua, Matsiguenga, Catacaibos, and Ashaninka peoples all inhabit these regions, with a combined population of approximately 27,000.

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Less than three weeks after the pipeline rupture, Petroperu chief Miguel Celi Rivera announced, at the newly opened Payacacu Amazon drilling site, that Peru's crude production would be increased from 132,000 barrels/day to approximately 300,000 barrels/day over the next two years as a result of increased foreign investment. Such an increase would place Peru's production on par with Ecuador (a former OPEC member), which also produces close to 300,000 barrels/day. Approximately 80% of new extraction is proposed for the Amazon region. The already deteriorating 24 year old Trans-Amazon pipeline would carry this additional burden as well.

AIDEPSEP Begins Mobilization

If the government's oil development program is allowed to proceed, AIDEPSEP foresees massive destruction of the environment and Indigenous people of the Peruvian Amazon. To this point, the Peruvian government has refused to allow Indigenous organizations a role in the decision-making process. AIDEPSEP is planning efforts to document the current situation and mobilize an Indigenous front in opposition to new drilling. Support is desperately needed for these efforts. This mobilization holds hope that the Indigenous people of Peru will be able to avoid the environmental catastrophes that have followed oil development in countries such as Ecuador. ♣

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