Ecuador: Protective Forests in danger

Resolution nr 007 of INEFAN -the Ecuadorian Forestry Agency- shows that, surprising as it may seam, it is in the way to permitting mining activities in forests that are part of the State National Forest Heritage. According to the Forestry Law, mining is not included among the authorized activities to be developed within Protective Forests.

One example of the environmental impact of mining on forests is that of Rio Tinto Zinc (RTC) at Molleturo Protective Forest. The forest is located in an area that embraces 25 watersheds located in Molleturo and Mollepungo mountain chains in southeastern Ecuador. RTC has developed mining activities at the Podocarpus National Park and at Toisan mountain chain. Molleturo region has a population of 12,000 people, organized in 70 communities. The presence of RTC has generated social conflicts on land tenure and divison among the communities. Japanese firm Bishimetals is another mining company involved in destructive activities in Ecuador. The exploratory fase for mineral exploitation at the buffer zone of Cotacachi Ecological Reserve, in Imbabura Province, is polluting the Junin River, which has raised the opposition of local communities, which after being ignored by the company have taken direct actions against a mining camp. As a response, the Government of Imbabura has sued social leaders Polibio Perez and Luis Torres. On October 24, the WRM International Secretariat sent letters in support of those leaders to the provincial and national authorities.

Accion Ecologica is demanding the State to carry out its responsiblities in defense of the natural heritage and the rights of local communities in Ecuador.

Source: Lucia Gallardo, Forests Campaign, Accion Ecologica