

Project Update: August 2014

During July and August 2014 we continued last year's work of identifying what kind of research is of relevance to local stakeholders in the Madidi region of Bolivia. We continued with the creation of 'community norms'¹ for two indigenous communities that have played host to dozens of research projects over the past decade. These communities feel that their relationships in the past with researchers have generally been very one-sided, with the researchers taking information and leaving little behind, and they hope that these norms will help them to negotiate mutually beneficial research relationships in the future.

Follow-up workshops (from 2013) with park rangers from Madidi National Park supported the view that research should have a more direct impact for natural resources management, and in July 2014 we discussed with the rangers how they might share their suggestions to link with policy-making institutions at the national level. One idea that emerged was to document some of their perspectives through video, and so during this trip we began the process of filming the daily work of the park rangers, including their activities related to the scientific monitoring of biological and hydrological indicators in the protected area.

In addition, we filmed interviews with other local actors, such as indigenous leaders, in order to promote their unique perspectives on scientific research to national and international audiences. This footage will be made into a short documentary to be given back to stakeholders, with the aim of encouraging more local debate about the role of scientific research in the Madidi region. In August 2014 we also held a meeting in La Paz with a group of Bolivian scientists from a variety of disciplines in order to discuss some of the initial findings of this project, as well as to create a list of best research practices to be circulated among academic institutions in Bolivia.

Photo 1: Creation of community norm to regulate research in Tacana community of San Miguel



¹ The community norms referred to above are sets of guidelines developed with each community to regulate how research will be carried out on their lands. These norms outline the protocol for obtaining permission from community leaders, the responsibilities of both researcher and the community, as well as sanctions if the norms are not respected. More will be shared on this in the final report.

Photo 2: Celín Quenevo, previous president of the Tacana indigenous council, discussing past experiences with researchers for the documentary



Photo 3: Madidi park guard Alex Nae recording water levels

