

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING CONSERVATION OF CRITICAL ECOSYSTEMS AND RESEARCH SITES IN CENTRAL AMAZONIA

WHEREAS the forests of central Amazonia are of exceptional conservation significance, and sustain among the highest species diversities of trees, birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates in the world; and

WHEREAS the Biological Dynamics of Forest Fragments Project (BDFFP) in central Amazonia is one of the world's largest and longest-running ecological experiments, and is internationally renowned for its scientific importance and productivity; and

WHEREAS the BDFFP is a leading center for training Brazilian and international scientists, students, and environmental decision-makers, and has resulted to date in more than 120 M.Sc. and Ph.D. theses by Brazilian graduate students; and

WHEREAS the BDFFP study area, which spans about 1,000 km², is now being seriously imperiled by ill-conceived forest-colonization projects sponsored by the Brazilian Superintendancy for the Free Agricultural Area of Amazonas (SUFRAMA); and

WHEREAS, SUFRAMA plans to markedly increase forest-colonization projects in the Free Agricultural Area of Amazonas, including at least six colonization projects within the BDFFP study area; and

WHEREAS, several other important scientific study areas in central Amazonia, including key sites operated by Brazil's National Institute for Amazonian Research (INPA) and other organizations, are also threatened by ongoing or planned SUFRAMA-sponsored colonization projects; and

WHEREAS, the Central Amazonian Conservation Corridor, one of the most important networks of protected and indigenous lands in the Amazon, will also certainly suffer as a direct result of SUFRAMA-sponsored forest-colonization activities; and

WHEREAS the economic benefits of settling small-scale farmers in the central Amazon is extremely limited, given the notoriously poor and acidic soils in the region; and

WHEREAS small-scale farmers in central Amazonia are barely able to eke out a living given the low agricultural productivity and remoteness of the region, and frequently live in disease-ridden areas far from medical facilities, schools, stores, public transportation, and other important services; and

WHEREAS in 2005 SUFRAMA sponsored a detailed Ecological and Economic Zoning (ZEE) plan of the extensive region in central Amazonia under its control, but has failed to

release this document for public use and comment, despite the fact that it was paid for using public funds; and

WHEREAS many of the SUFRAMA-sponsored colonization projects are almost certainly in contravention of the unreleased ZEE plan, given that it was designed to rationalize land-use in the central-Amazonian region and to protect key scientific and conservation sites;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation, urges SUFRAMA to:

- 1) declare an immediate moratorium, of at least three years duration, on its ongoing and planned forest-colonization projects; and
- 2) release the critical ZEE report immediately, for formal public comment and consultation; and
- 3) consult closely with leading scientific and resource-management organizations in central Amazonia, including INPA, Brazil's national environmental agency (IBAMA), and the environmental-planning department of the Amazonas state government (SDS), regarding its planned forest-colonization activities; and
- 4) recommence forest-colonization projects only after the Brazilian public, and relevant scientific and resource-management organizations in Amazonia, have had an opportunity to comment fully on its proposed development plans, in light of the ZEE report; and
- 5) more generally, commit to operate in the future in an open and transparent manner, whereby the general Brazilian public and key scientific and environmental stakeholders in Amazonia are thoroughly consulted before any significant land-use decisions are made or implemented.