Protecting the Amazon’s Lungs Protects Human Lungs

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The Amazon rainforest climate regulates the health of our entire planet. Stretching across six million square kilometres, this immense tropical biome absorbs billions of tonnes of carbon dioxide to stabilise global weather patterns. Furthermore, the sprawling canopy provides a vital home to 10% of all known Amazon rainforest animals, from jaguars to harpy eagles. The trees release massive rivers of water vapour into the atmosphere, which subsequently form rain clouds that cool the Earth and nourish ecosystems thousands of miles away. Consequently, the respiratory health of this vast forest directly sustains life across the globe.

However, corporate greed is actively destroying this critical ecosystem. Industrial palm oil and soy monocultures and cattle ranching drive relentless Amazon rainforest deforestation, where corporations intentionally burn the forest to clear land. This slash-and-burn destruction releases massive quantities of toxic fine particulate matter into the air. A landmark University of Bonn study found that Amazon rainforest protection measures drastically reduced this airborne smoke. Read on to discover how stopping the corporate destruction of the forest

prevented severe respiratory illnesses and saves an estimated 680 human lives every single year.

#Research study finds that stronger #rainforest protection means lower air #pollution particulate matter in the #Amazon resulting in saving an estimated 680 human lives each year. Resist when you shop, be #vegan and #Boycottpalmoil #Boycott4Wildlife @palmoildetect.bsky.social https://wp.me/pcFhgU-9bw

Research: The #Amazon #rainforest known as the iconic lungs of the earth also preserves human lungs by protecting against air #pollution. Fight #palmoil and #meat #deforestation, be #vegan and #Boycottpalmoil #Boycott4Wildlife @palmoildetect.bsky.social https://wp.me/pcFhgU-9bw

Yannic Damm, Jan Börner, Nicolas Gerber, Britaldo Soares-Filho. Health benefits of reduced deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon. *Communications Earth & Environment*, 2024; 5 (1) DOI: 10.1038/s43247-024-01840-7

Key Takeaways

- Protecting the Amazon rainforest climate significantly improves human respiratory health by reducing air pollution.
- Research shows that stronger rainforest protection can save an estimated 680 lives annually due to better air quality.
- Deforestation leads to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases through smoke emitted from slash-and-burn agriculture.
- Rainforest conservation benefits biodiversity, climate, and the health of nearby populations.

Curbing deforestation benefits Amazon animals and people

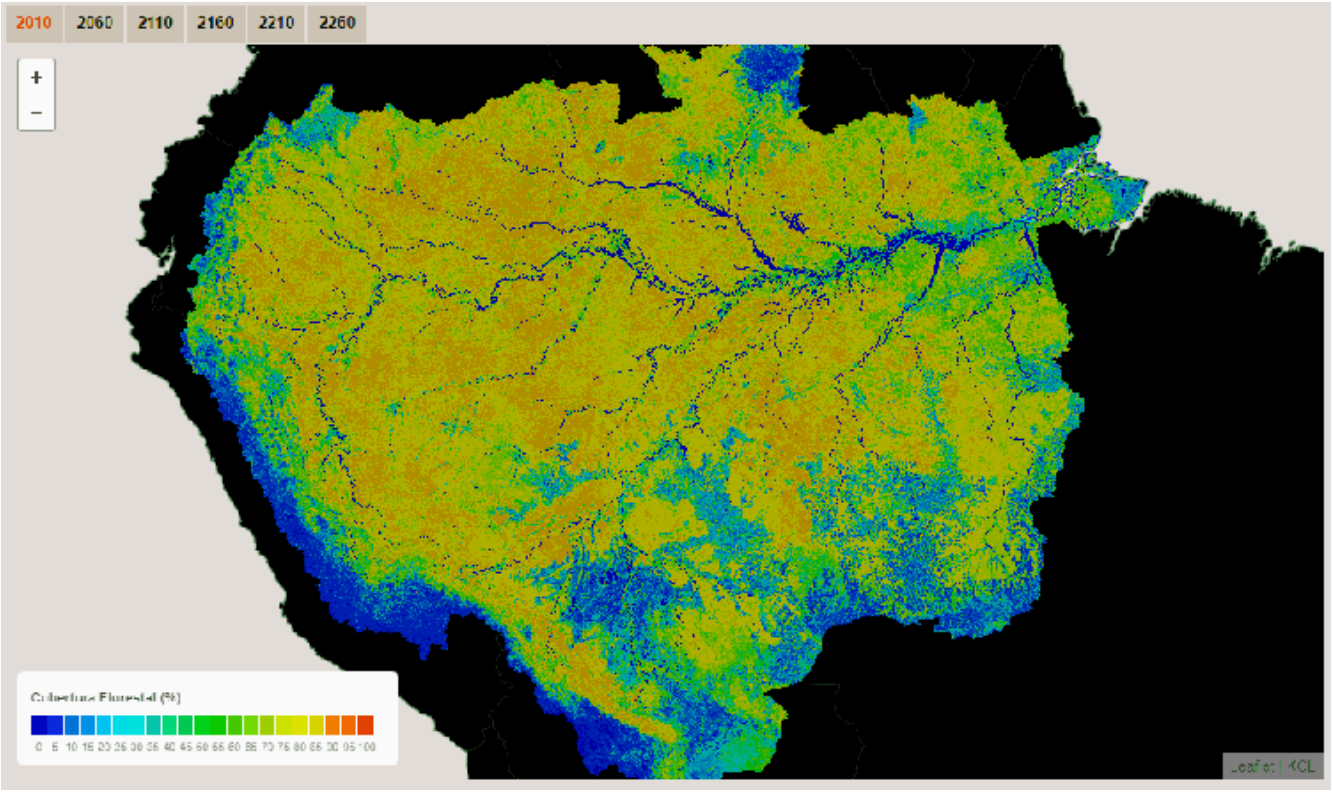
> “Our study has two messages. Namely, firstly, that the destruction of the rainforest can be successfully curbed. And, secondly, that this benefits not only the diversity of species and the global climate but also very specifically and very quickly the local population. This is an aspect that is still given too little consideration when assessing protective measures.”
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> *ILR researcher Prof. Dr. Jan Börner. Member of Transdisciplinary Research Area (TRA) Sustainable Futures and the Cluster of Excellence “PhenoRob” at the University of Bonn.*

Protecting rainforests not only preserves biodiversity and combats climate change but also significantly enhances human health in nearby regions. A recent study by the University of Bonn and the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais in Brazil reveals that measures aimed at reducing slash-and-burn practices lead to a notable decrease in airborne particulate matter, subsequently lowering hospital admissions and deaths related to respiratory diseases.

Where there's smoke there's lung disease: Amazon rainforest deforestation

In 2019, approximately 70,000 square kilometers of the Amazon rainforest—an area comparable to the size of Bavaria—were lost to fires. While natural fires are uncommon in the Amazon's humid environment, large-scale landowners and landgrabbers often resort to burning vast tracts to create pastures or agricultural fields. This deforestation not only destroys habitats and accelerates climate change but also produces smoke that triggers respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses.

Yannic Damm, a researcher at the University of Bonn's Institute for Food and Resource Economics (ILR), along with colleagues Dr. Nicolas Gerber and Prof. Dr. Britaldo Soares-Filho, investigated the impact of forest protection measures on public health. They focused on three initiatives implemented between 2006 and 2010 within the Amazon biome, including the Soy Moratorium, where major trading companies agreed to cease purchasing soy from newly deforested areas. These measures led to a measurable reduction in deforestation pressure.



The Amazon rainforest over time

Rainforest protection estimated to save 680 lives annually due to improved air quality

The researchers compared municipalities along the biome border with adjacent regions outside the protected area to assess the health effects of these conservation efforts. They found that after 2006, the concentration of fine particulate matter in the air decreased across all studied regions, with a nearly 7% greater reduction within the protected municipalities. This decline corresponded with fewer hospital treatments and deaths due to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. For the approximately four million residents in these areas, the study estimates that around 680 lives were saved annually due to improved air quality.

Amazon rainforest protection benefits animals, people and environment

Prof. Dr. Jan Börner of the ILR emphasised the dual benefits of rainforest conservation: “Namely, firstly, that the destruction of the rainforest can be successfully curbed. And, secondly, that this benefits not only the diversity of species and the global climate but also very specifically and very quickly the local population.”

This research underscores the immediate and tangible health advantages of forest protection, highlighting the importance of integrating environmental and public health policies.

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