

MUSEUM OF COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY

The Agassiz Museum

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Mr. Carlos Zorilla
Defensa y Conservación Ecológica de Intag
Dir. Postal Casilla 144
Otavalo—Imbabura
Ecuador

Dear Mr. Zorilla:

Please forgive my long delay in making this response to your letter of August 12. I have taken the time to research, with the aid of Conservation International, more details on the status of the Ecuadorian western forests, of which Intag is an important part. I am now pleased to submit the following statement for use by the court in considering your suit to prevent the mining project now planned by Bushimetal Exploration Company with the agreement of the Ecuadorian government.

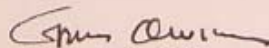
As I pointed out in my 1992 book *The Diversity of Life*, the forests of western Ecuador are among the hottest of the hot spots of the world, meaning that they are among the most endangered ecosystems—down to less than 10 percent their original extent, mostly destroyed in the past 40 years—and also contain exceptionally large numbers of plant and animal species found nowhere else in the world.

The extraordinary value of the Ecuadorian western forests, including the largest remaining remnant that includes Intag, is well known to biologists around the world and often cited in the scientific literature. After studying the data base provided me by Conservation International, derived from their 1992 field study, I am personally even more impressed by the uniqueness and the rich biodiversity in the remnant forests, and the potential value of their flora and fauna to Ecuador and the rest of the world. I have believed in the past, and am more convinced now, that these endangered habitats should be given the very highest priority in conservation worldwide. Their potential in future new medicinals and other products, their scientific importance, and their symbolic value as a national resource are beyond measure.

I am also alarmed by the poor reputation that Mitsubishi Corporation (of which the Bushimetal Exploration Company is a subsidiary) has for irresponsible natural resource extraction. It has been under a worldwide boycott since 1989 for its poor record in the timber industry, and for ignoring criticism of its extraction practices.

From all this information together, I strongly support your lawsuit to protect the Intag forest.

Sincerely yours,



Edward O. Wilson
Pellegrino University Professor Emeritus, and
Honorary Curator, Museum of Comparative Zoology

EOW:knh

cc: Dr. Peter Seligmann, Chairman, Conservation International
Ms. Claudia Sobrevilla, Senior Director, Andes Regional Program, CI