



## Trade in Bigleaf Mahogany: The Need for Strict Implementation of CITES

For a detailed report by the Natural Resources Defense Council and Defenders of Wildlife on the bigleaf mahogany trade visit [http://docs.nrdc.org/international/int\\_06062601B.pdf](http://docs.nrdc.org/international/int_06062601B.pdf)

September 2006

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With the world price for bigleaf mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) at an all-time high, the remaining wild stands of this Appendix II listed species are under great pressure from the timber trade. Currently, mahogany from Peru, the largest exporter, is plagued by illegal and unsustainable trade. Export permits are granted without valid non-detriment or legal acquisition findings. As a species on the brink of Appendix I, full compliance with CITES is essential to protect mahogany populations and the human victims of illegal logging operations. Under current conditions, this can only be achieved through a suspension of imports.

### A Pattern of Depletion

Bigleaf mahogany is the last of three genuine mahogany species that survives in significant concentrations. The high demand for this wood has rendered two other species commercially extinct, and bigleaf mahogany is now depleted or commercially extinct throughout much of its range. Mahogany exploitation has followed a

pattern of local boom and bust, moving from one country to the next as populations are depleted. Peru, one of the last countries with significant wild populations of mahogany, is now following this pattern, under pressure from a powerful timber lobby. Experts estimate that at current levels, bigleaf mahogany will be commercially extinct within a decade.

## Trade in Bigleaf Mahogany

### No Valid Non-detriment Finding

Peru's Scientific Authority has repeatedly said that it lacks the information on local or national mahogany population levels necessary to make a legitimate non-detriment finding. Peru's Management Authority has attempted to circumvent the non-detriment finding by issuing quotas for mahogany exports. However, these quotas lack a scientific basis and are established as a sum of existing commercial harvests—most from unmanaged and illegal sources. Peru's current level of export is unsustainable and detrimental to the species.

### No Valid Legal Acquisition Finding

Peruvian officials report that more than 80 percent of mahogany is logged illegally. While Peru has established a forestry management concession system, none of these concessions are inspected *before* the export of the mahogany purported to be there. Ad-hoc post-export inspections reveal that the majority of concessions are operating illegally and that few contain mahogany. Instead, loggers enter natural protected areas and indigenous reserves to extract the wood. Peru lacks controls to differentiate between legal and illegal wood. Without adequate management and enforcement regimes, the legality of all mahogany from Peru is suspect.

### What CITES Parties Can Do

Importing countries are obligated under CITES not to allow the import of illegally and unsustainably harvested mahogany. Peru's efforts to end illegal logging are undermined by timber traders who cheat the system by falsifying permits and documents, manipulating the national forestry database, and exporting mahogany under permits for concessions where there are none. Parties should not authorize the import of mahogany from Peru until such a time when it can be verified in-situ that the provisions of the Convention are being fully implemented. An import suspension is necessary to ensure that the continued trade in the species will not be detrimental to its survival and role in the ecosystem.

### The Critical Role of CITES: Ensuring Legal and Sustainable Trade

Strict regulation is needed to prevent the further decline of this species. Parties to CITES recognized this need and decided to include bigleaf mahogany on Appendix II in November 2002. Four years later, Peruvian exports of bigleaf mahogany continue to be traded in violation of Article IV, paragraphs (a) and (b) of the Convention.

### Significant Trade Review

Given the serious questions of compliance with CITES throughout its range, the trade in bigleaf mahogany should be subject to a review of significant trade. Once an import suspension is in place, a Review of Significant Trade can help support efforts by Peru and other range states to develop effective management and enforcement procedures to regulate the mahogany trade.

### Consequences of inaction

The consequences of further delay in enforcing the provisions of the Convention are devastating for the species and for the most vulnerable members of Peruvian society. Armed loggers invade remote regions and threaten the survival of the last remaining families of isolated indigenous peoples such as the Mascho Piro, Yora, Matsigenka, and Amahuaca. The loggers themselves are victims of the timber trade. According to a report by the International Labor Organization thousands of loggers in Peru work in conditions of indentured servitude or outright slavery.

### The time to act is now.

#### Importers of Peruvian Mahogany in 2005

Importer	Volume (M <sup>3</sup> )
United States*	20,843.98
Dominican Republic*	1,770.58
Germany*	263.88
Puerto Rico*	244.51
Sweden*	175.36
Spain*	86.35
England*	65.94
Norway*	33.16
Denmark	31.17
Switzerland	30.22
France	29.18
United Kingdom	28.46
Mexico	17.63
Italy	0.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,620.57</b>

Source: CITES permits/ INRENA - IFFS – DCB

\*Countries/territories that imported wood in 2005 from concessions found or suspected by Peru to be operating illegally.