MAAP #178: Gold Mining Deforestation Across the Amazon

March 2, 2023

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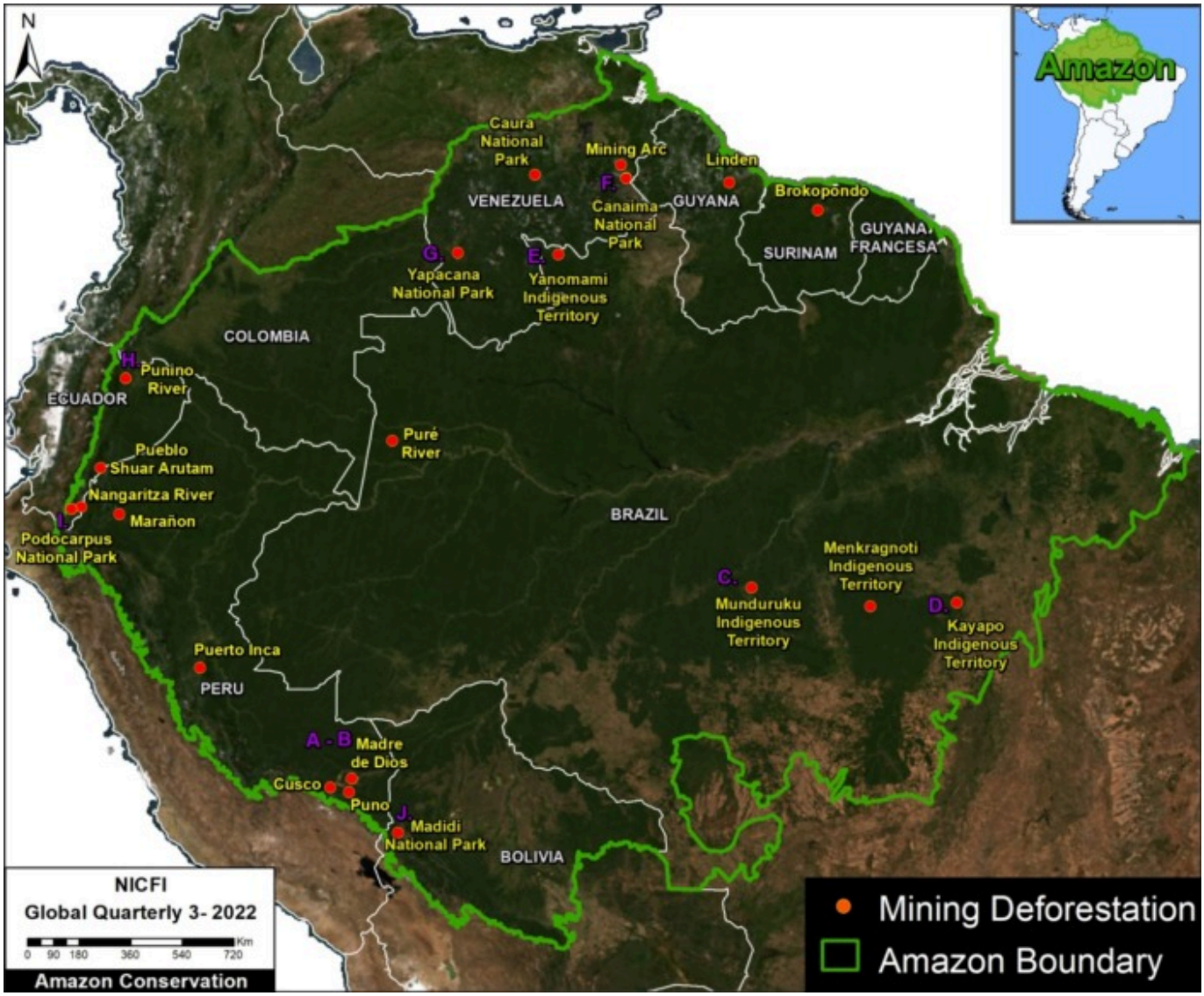


(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/maaproject.org-maap-178-gold-mining-deforestation-across-the-amazon-BaseMap-AmazonMining-22-v8.jpg)

Base Map. Mining deforestation hotspots across the Amazon. Letters A-J indicate locations of case studies below. Click image to enlarge.

Gold Mining is one of the major deforestation drivers across the **Amazon**.

Although not typically at the scale of agricultural deforestation, gold mining has the potential to severely impact critical areas such as **protected areas & indigenous territories.**

Relatedly, gold mining often targets remote areas, thus impacting largely intact and carbon-rich **primary forests**.

Here, for the first time, we present a **large-scale overview** of the major gold mining deforestation hotspots across the entire Amazon biome.

We found that gold mining is actively causing deforestation in nearly all nine countries of the Amazon (see **Base Map**).

In this report, we focus on five countries: **Peru, Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia**, featuring case studies of the most severe active gold mining fronts.

In most cases, this mining is likely **illegal** given that it is occurring in protected areas and indigenous territories.

Note that we focus on mining activity that is causing deforestation of primary forests. There are additional critical gold mining areas that are occurring in rivers, such as in northern Peru and southern Colombia, that are not included in this report.

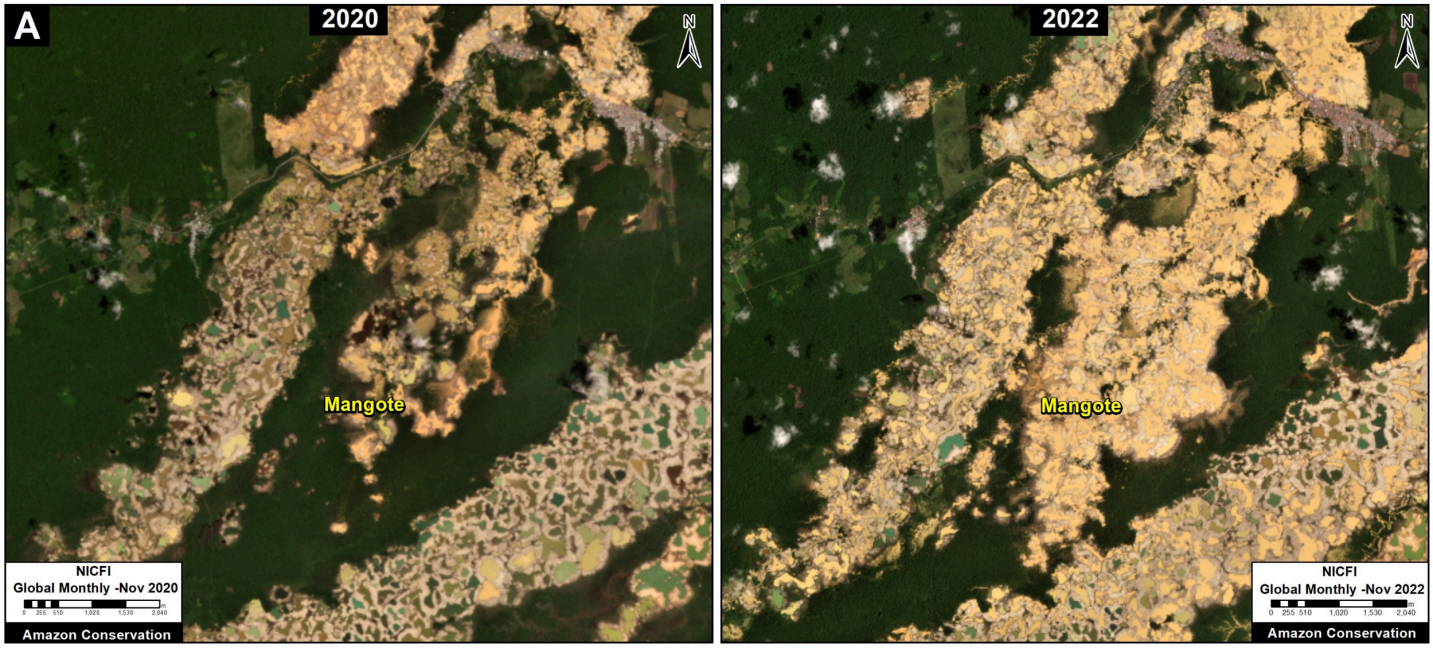
Below, we show a series **high-resolution satellite images** of the Amazon case studies. Each example highlights recent gold mining deforestation; that is comparing 2020 (left panel) with 2022 (right panel).

Case Studies, in High-resolution

Peruvian Amazon

Southern Peru (specifically, the region of Madre de Dios) is one of the most severe and emblematic examples of gold mining deforestation in the Amazon, clearing thousands of hectares of primary forest (see MAAP #154 (https://www.maapprogram.org/2022/gold-mining-peru-update/)). The active mining fronts have evolved substantially over the past 20+ years. Most recently, gold mining has impacted areas such as Mangote and Pariamanu.

A. Mangote



(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/maaproject.org-maap-178-mining-deforestation-across-the-amazon-AM-Panel-A-Mangote-v2.jpg)

B. Pariamanu

(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/maaproject.org-maap-178-mining-deforestation-across-the-amazon-AM-Panel-B-Pariamanu-v2.jpg)

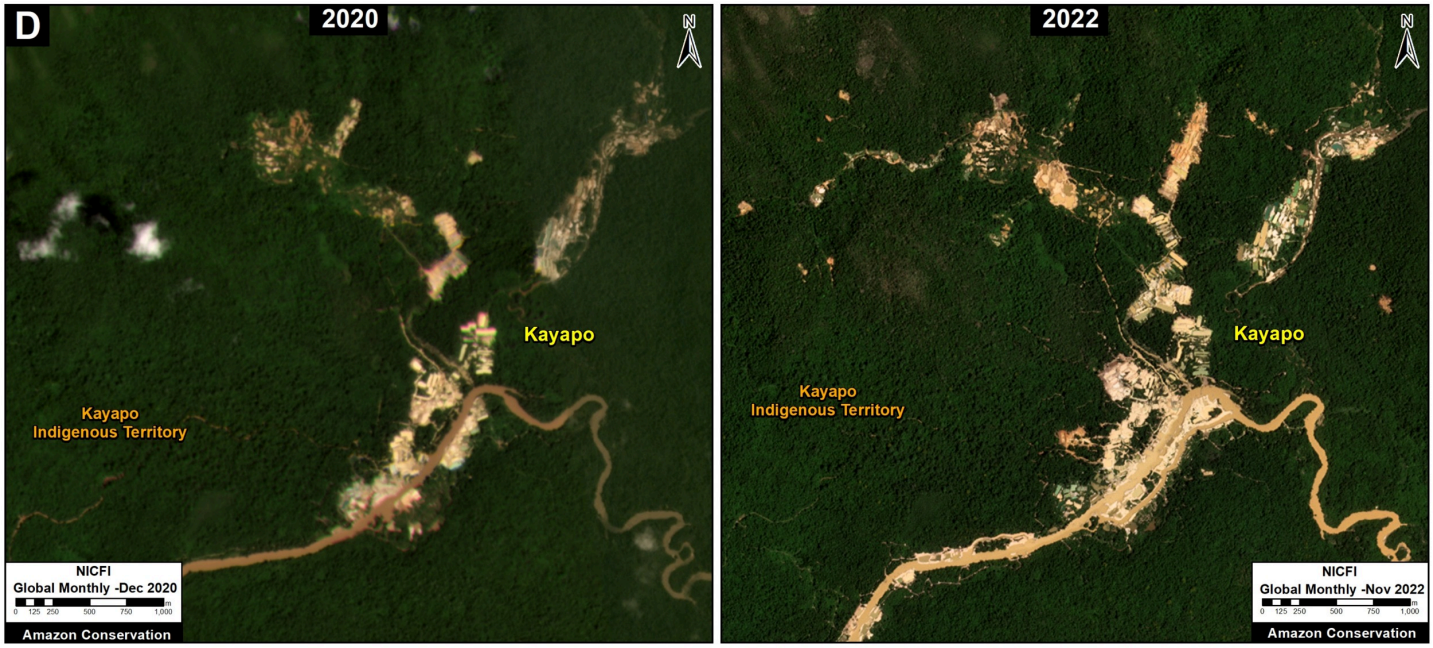
Brazilian Amazon

In the vast Brazilian Amazon, illegal gold mining deforestation is most severe across a number of indigenous territories, most notably: Munduruku (Pará state), Kayapó (Pará), and Yanomami (Roraima).

C. Munduruku Indigenous Territory

(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/maaproject.org-maap-178-mining-deforestation-across-the-amazon-AM-Panel-C-Munduruku-versionNorte.jpg)

D. Kayapó Indigenous Territory



(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/maaproject.org-maap-178-mining-deforestation-across-the-amazon-AM-Panel-D-Kayapo-v2.jpg)

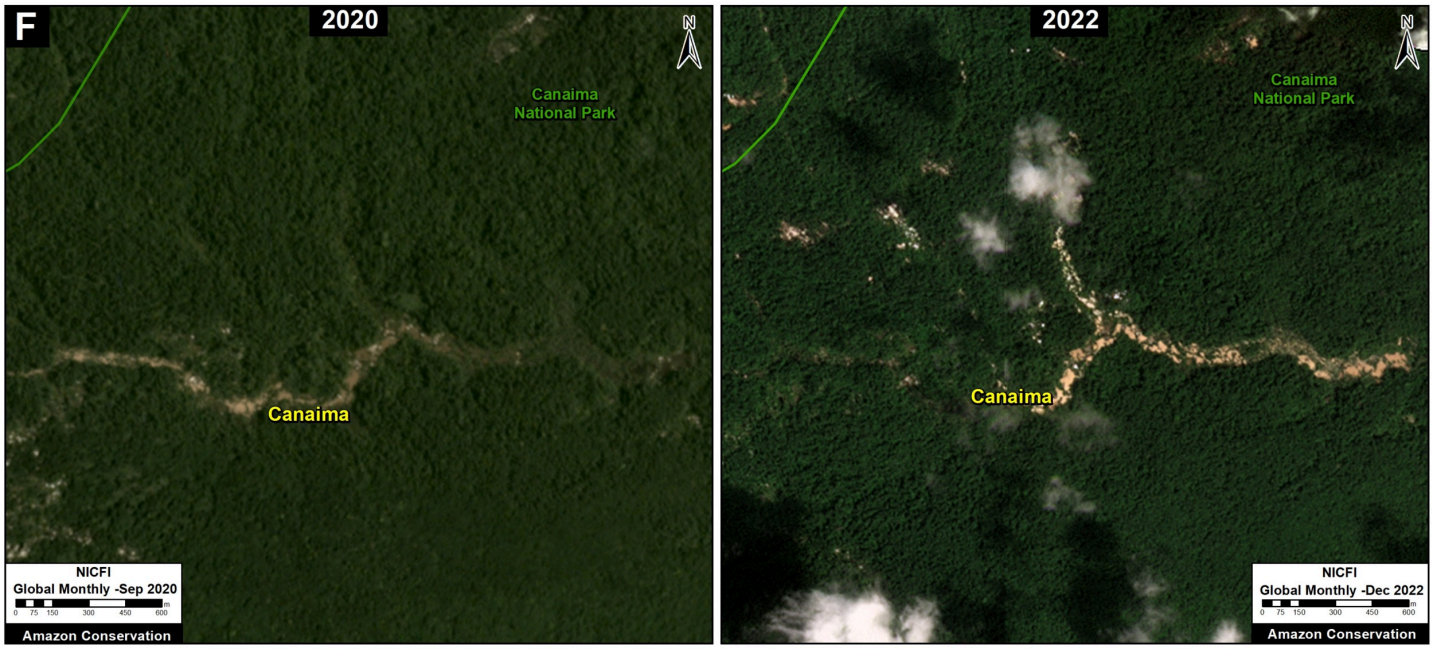
E. Yanomami Indigenous Territory

(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/maaproject.org-maap-178-gold-mining-deforestation-across-the-amazon-AM-Panel-E-Yanomami-A2.2.jpg)

Venezuelan Amazon

Mining is one of the major deforestation drivers in the Venezuelan Amazon (MAAP #155 (https://www.maapprogram.org/2022/deforestation-venezuela/)). This mining impact is occurring in the designated Orinoco Mining Arc, but also key protected areas such as Caura, Canaima, and Yapacana National Parks.

F. Canaima National Park



(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/maaproject.org-maap-178-mining-deforestation-across-the-amazon-AM-Panel-F-Canaima-Area3.jpg)

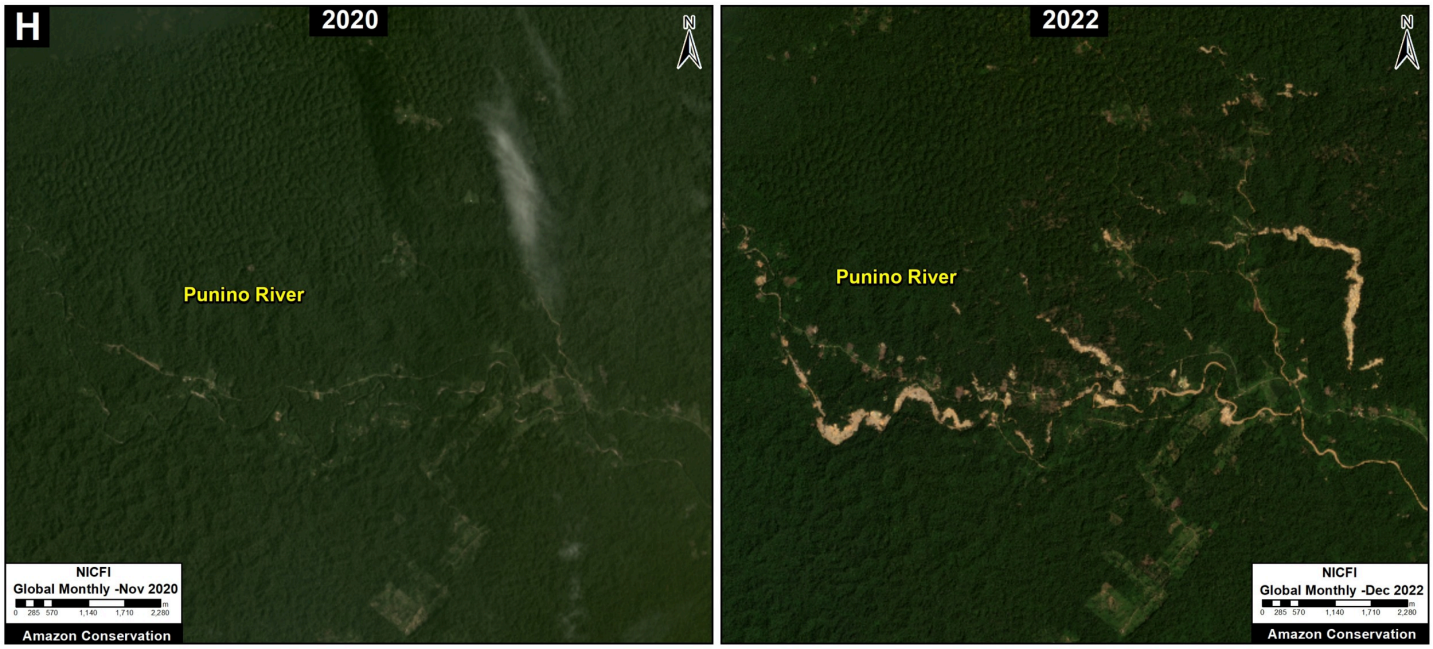
G. Yapacana National Park

(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/maaproject.org-maap-178-mining-deforestation-across-the-amazon-AM-Panel-G-Yapacana-v2.jpg)

Ecuadorian Amazon

We have been documenting the numerous mining deforestation hotspots in the Ecuadorian Amazon that appear to be intensifying in recent years. Two key examples are along the Punino River (Napo and Orellana provinces) and further south in Podocarpus National Park.

H. Punino River



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maap-178-mining-deforestation-across-the-amazon-AM-Panel-H-Punino-v2.jpg)

I. Podocarpus National Park

(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/maaproject.org-maap-178-mining-deforestation-across-the-amazon-AM-Panel-I-Podocarpus-v2.jpg)

Bolivian Amazon

One of the newest gold mining deforestation hotspots is along the Tuichi River in Madidi National Park.

J. Madidi National Park

(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/maaproject.org-maap-178-mining-deforestation-across-the-amazon-AM-Panel-J-Madidi-Area5.jpg)

Methodology

Mining deforestation hotspots were identified based on MAAP's ongoing monitoring efforts, and assisted by Amazon Mining Watch. (https://amazonminingwatch.org/en#3.9/-5/-70)

Acknowledgements

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(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/maaproject.org-maap-138-as-brazil-negotiates-with-world-amazon-deforestation-continues-in-2021-maaproject.org-norad-icfc-maap-notext.png)

Citation

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