



Merging global data and personal stories: data driven storytelling.

Rolien Sallons (R) conducting an interview with Joseph Dennert (L) alias 'Oom Seppi'. Joseph Dennert is a Matawai story teller who agreed to share his rich experiences and the history of Matawai with the team of ACT that was making the Matawai Oral Histories documentary

partner engagement

ACT Suriname

The last of the wild places program: ACT works with Indigenous Peoples to protect rainforests & traditional culture in the northeast amazon. The program strives for healthy communities in a healthy forest, focussing on land rights, sustainable livelihood and governance strategies.

World Resource Institute & Resource Watch

Resource Watch is a data platform that aims to improve access to sustainable development data, engage with users that need data most, and innovate new data and applications. The goal is to bring radical transparency to real-world challenges for conservation and human well being.

Felipe Samper, project manager of ACT- Suriname and Kristine Lister of Resource Watch give us an update on the ongoing partner engagement.

Felipe Samper, of the Amazon Conservation Team Suriname (ACT-S): "We work with indigenous and local communities to protect tropical forests and strengthen their traditional culture. Our goal is to improve the decision making process of these local communities, allowing them autonomous and sustainable management of their territories.

A key issue is to facilitate that local communities can capture, digitize and utilize traditional knowledge about their ancestral lands, medicinal plants and tangible and intangible cultural heritage, that are passed on from generation to generation through oral stories. We want to combine this information with our geo-spatial data, collected by the Amazon Conservation Rangers." This is what ACT Suriname and Resource Watch are exploring in their ongoing partner engagement.

Visualizing the stories

Resource Watch is a powerful tool for data-driven storytelling. Felipe explains: "We make use of storytelling to record, recover and communicate oral histories of the communities, and look for ways to use it in protection of the ancestral territories. The combination of information from the oral stories with the geo-spatial data maps the ancestral territories – we visualize the stories."

"This visualization, the map itself, serves many purposes. It helps communities in the discussion about ownership, and it creates consensus within the communities about the use of the land. A map shows boundaries, rivers, mountains where hunting and fishing grounds are located. It also shows the location of sacred places and where to find various medicinal plants. The mapping process itself, where the stories of the elderly are combined with the geo-spatial data collected by the younger generation, also strengthens the bond between generations."

Kristine Lister of Resource Watch: "One of the biggest goals of My Resource Watch is to remove the technical barrier of Geographic Information System (GIS) software. Anyone who can use a computer, can use My Resource Watch to map data. This collaboration with ACT -Suriname brings a new community of users to Resource Watch and we are learning a lot about how Resource Watch can support the protection of indigenous lands. So far we have already identified specific user needs from an indigenous perspective, including an option for data to be private, the tool to be mobile friendly with an intuitive interface and multi-lingual options.



Rolien Sallons (L), Niradj Hanoeman (M) and Tina Henkie (R) in Washington DC, Smithsonian Institute while presenting the first (oral histories) map of the ancestral lands of the Matawai folks.



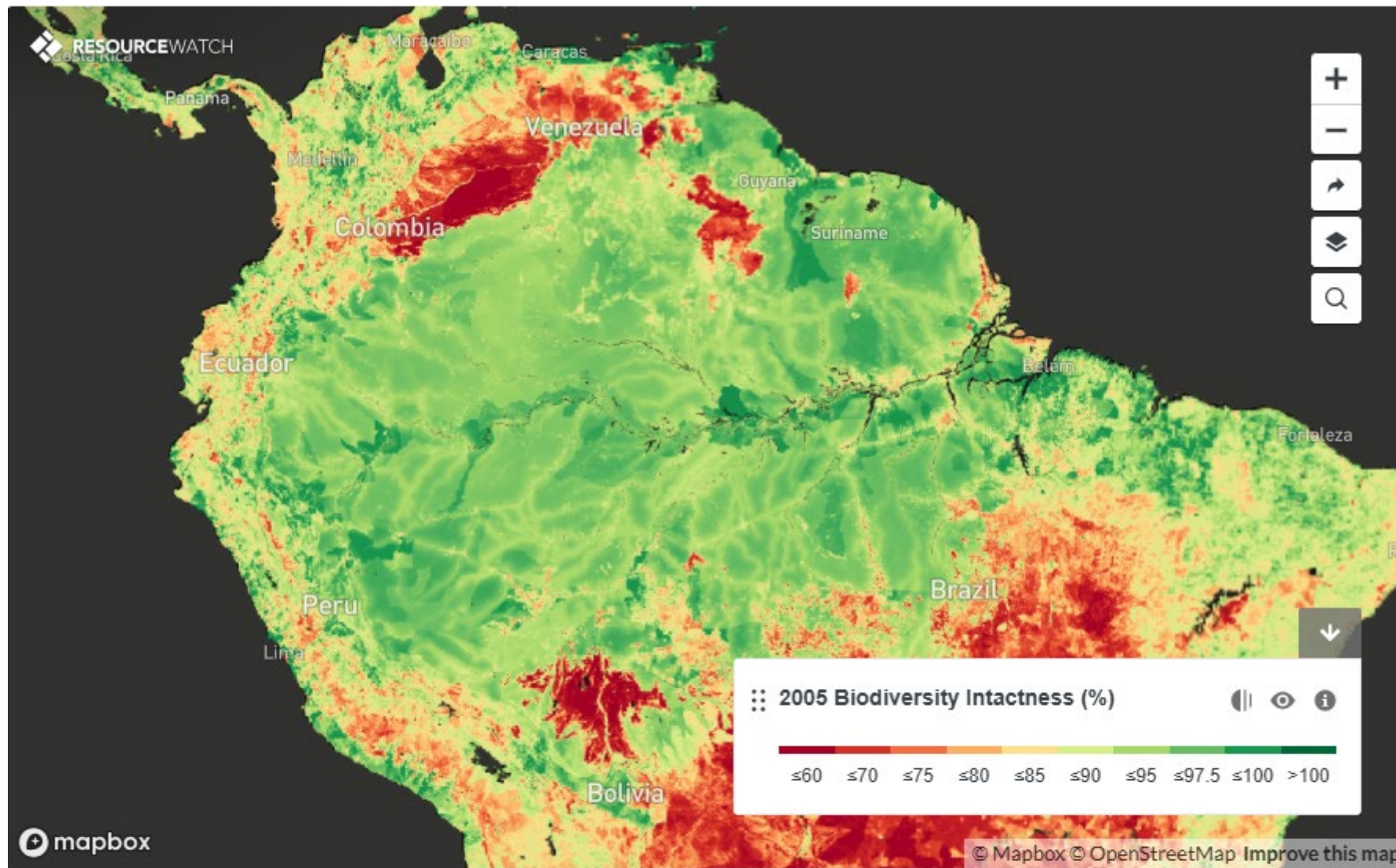
LEFT - Rusa Seniu (Janio) & Shawewe John both ACRs from Sipaliwini Savanne practicing (forest monitoring) data entry on computers as part of their GFW (Global Forest Watchers training)



MIDDLE - Rusa Seniu (Janio) ACR from Sipaliwini Savanne conducting monitoring measurements as part of the Forest Watcher training (to adequately monitor the health of the forest)



RIGHT - Raan Tawadi (L) Upirassi Koeki (M); ACRs from Sipaliwini Savanne conducting monitoring measurements as part of the Forest Watcher training



Click on the image to go to the interactive map

Local, national and global data

ACT-Suriname was using regional and national datasets, for mining and forestry concessions for instance. Resource Watch allows them to add global data to the locally collected data. Adding a layer of global data provides new insights and puts the local data in a new perspective. This is helpful in the communication with local and national governments.