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Paul Hanrahan
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August 23, 2007

Dear Mr. Hanrahan:

Over the past several years, the Center for Biological Diversity has been working with groups in the United States, Panama, and Costa Rica to protect La Amistad International Park World Heritage site (PILA) within the La Amistad Biosphere Reserve. The impending construction of four hydroelectric dams adjacent to the Panamanian portion of PILA, three of which are owned by AES Corporation, is seriously threatening its integrity as a World Heritage site, its extraordinary biodiversity, and the livelihoods and future of indigenous Naso and Ngobe groups inhabiting its border. The Center and the international coalition fighting to protect this outstanding ecological jewel urge AES and its partners to terminate all involvement with these dams.

The three dams being funded by AES would be operated by its subsidiary, AES Changuinola, S.A. These dams, Chan 75, Chan 140, and Chan 220, would be built on the Changuinola River and its tributaries. Stream monitoring studies have found that the construction of the dams would result in the extirpation of eight to 11 species of fish and shrimp inhabiting the river system. These species are all diadromous, meaning they migrate between the headwaters of the Changuinola River inside PILA and the sea. They exhibit different migration patterns, and thus mitigation is impossible. With dams blocking the river, the alteration of the watershed would have further negative cascading effects on biodiversity above and below the dams.

Additionally, the creation of reservoirs above the dams would flood important indigenous territories, displacing thousands of Ngobe people. The huge social cost to displaced people has been documented around the world for similar hydroelectric projects, and along with the environmental consequences of these dams, this issue carries massive human-rights implications. For instance, relocation discussions have not been conducted following the cultural norms or the native language of the Ngobe; rather discussions have occurred in Spanish, a language many Ngobe do not speak. Furthermore, the Ngobe do not know to where they would be relocated. If they are moved to a city, many do not have the education required to obtain adequate employment to make a living wage. Alternatively, some Ngobe might decide to move onto land inside PILA, thereby increasing the threat of causing harm to its biodiversity. As such, it must be emphasized that the dams' impacts on the human populations along the Changuinola River and the animal populations throughout the region would be catastrophic.

For these reasons the Center, in association with indigenous communities, Panamanian organizations, and other non-governmental organizations from around the globe, asks that AES and its partners terminate their involvement in the three Changuinola hydroelectric projects. The dams would put at risk an internationally renowned World Heritage site and would negatively impact indigenous communities, future tourism in Panama, and many threatened and endangered species.

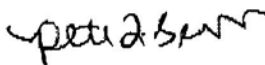
As part of our effort to raise awareness about these threats and to find solutions, the Center and more than 30 other groups filed a Petition to the World Heritage Committee to list PILA as a World Heritage site “in Danger” on April 23, 2007. The Committee reviewed and agreed with the threats assessment presented therein, and decided on June 26, 2007 to request a joint invitation from Panama and Costa Rica for a World Heritage Centre and World Conservation Union (IUCN) mission to investigate these threats. In its decision, the Committee states that it regrets that Panama did not report the existence of the proposed hydroelectric projects to the World Heritage Centre as required under the World Heritage Convention. This decision will increase global attention to the area, to World Heritage sites threatened by dam construction, and to the companies responsible for constructing these dams.

The international coalition of environmental and indigenous groups remains deeply concerned about, and dedicated to, improving the current situation. Our goal is to ensure adequate protection and longevity to the integrity of PILA, fair treatment of indigenous communities, and to inform the global public about what has been going on in and around this extraordinary region.

In light of the above, the Center, in partnership with Ngobe and Naso community leaders, and on behalf of the groups supporting this letter, reiterates its strong recommendation that AES end its involvement in these projects. With the recent World Heritage decision, international pressure is mounting to protect PILA from these destructive projects. In addition, ongoing research has also demonstrated that large reservoirs associated with hydroelectric projects likely are very significant contributors to global warming, due to methane emissions.

Given the devastating consequences to the area’s biodiversity should construction continue, and the opposition by indigenous Ngobe to any relocation that would be caused by the dams’ reservoirs, the continued involvement of AES and its partners with these projects is not in accord with AES’s own code of business conduct and ethics. The Center for Biological Diversity and the Panamanian and international coalition ([see attached letters](#)) urge AES to live up to its “commitment to be environmentally responsible” and to terminate its involvement with the Changuinola dams. Please direct any questions or comments to the address or phone number listed above.

Sincerely,



Peter Galvin
Conservation Director

Copies sent to:

1 – E. Pihl & Søn A.S – Danish Contractor
1 – MT Højgaard a/s – Danish Contractor
1 – Vattenfall AB – Swedish Contractor
1 – Alstom – French Contractor
1 – Alstom Brazil – Brazilian Contractor
1 – Union Fenosa Edemet-Edechi – Spanish/Panamanian Distributor
1 – MWH – American Contractor
1 – MWH Panama, S.A. – Panamanian Contractor
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1 – Select Sector SPDR Fund-Utilities – AES Shareholder
1 – Fidelity Balanced Fund – AES Shareholder
1 – Fidelity Equity-Income Fund – AES Shareholder
1 – Vanguard Total Stock Market Index Fund – AES Shareholder
1 – Vanguard Institutional Index Fund-Institutional Index FD – AES Shareholder
1 – Fidelity Mid-Cap Stock Fund – AES Shareholder
1 – California Public Employees’ Retirement System
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1 – New York State and Local Retirement System
1 – Florida Department of Management Services, Division of Retirement
1 – State Employees’ Retirement System of Illinois
1 – Pennsylvania State Employee’s Retirement System
1 – Massachusetts Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission
1 – National Association of State Retirement Administrators
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1 – Andres Gluski – Executive VP and COO, AES Corporation
1 – Jonathan Coles – Executive VP and President Latin America, AES Corporation
1 – Brian Miller – Executive VP and General Counsel, AES Corporation
1 – Javier Giorgio – General Manager, AES Panama
1 – Humberto Gonzalez – Project Director (AES Changuinola S.A.), AES Panamá
1 – Ligia Castro de Doens – Administradora General, ANAM
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1 – Eduardo Reyes – Subadministrador General, ANAM
1 – Hilda Candanedo – Directora Gestión Integrada de Cuencas Hidrográficas, ANAM
1 – Natalia Young – Directora Nacional de Protección de la Calidad Ambiental, ANAM
1 – Ruben Blades – Ministro de Turismo, Instituto Panameño de Turismo
1 – Francesco Bandarin – Director, World Heritage Centre
1 – Kishore Rao – Deputy Director, World Heritage Centre
1 – Marc Patry – Programme Specialist, World Heritage Centre
1 – Pueblo Ngobe, Provincia de Bocas del Toro, Panama
1 – Valentin Santana – King, Naso Tjer Di Kingdom, Panama

**Groups endorsing this campaign to protect the Changuinola River and La Amistad
Biosphere Reserve**

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