

LA AMISTAD INTERNATIONAL PARK. HYDROELECTRIC DAM THREATENS NATURAL RESERVE.

## Forest, in danger

UNESCO requested that Panama and Costa Rica provide a status report on the Parque Internacional La Amistad.

ANAM approves EIA Category I for a road in the area. The Ministry of Public Works said that it should be re-categorized.

### JOSÉ ARCIA-LA PRENSA

The construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Changuinola River, in Bocas del Toro, threatens a forest reserve which is a World Heritage site, and the environmental impact study (EIA) for an access road for the project has generated differences between the Ministry of Public Works (MOP) and the National Environmental Authority (ANAM).

AES Changuinola (a subsidiary of U.S.-based AES Corporation), which is realizing the project, presented a Category I EIA, which was approved by ANAM, despite the fact that MOP requested that it be re-categorized (to require a more comprehensive EIA) because it involves the construction of 6 kilometers of road inside the Palo Seco Protected Forest which is the buffer zone for the Parque Internacional La Amistad.

The Center for Biological Diversity and 37 other environmental organizations have asked the United Nations Environmental, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

to include the park on the List of Natural Reserves in Danger (World Heritage List in Danger), arguing that hydroelectric projects are being constructed on the rivers within the area.

UNESCO has requested that the governments of Panama and Costa Rica provide a report on the conservation status of the Park, including the implications from the hydroelectric projects and the harms which they could cause to aquatic biodiversity.

Ligia Castro, administrator for ANAM, said she understands the concerns of the environmentalists, but explained that the approvals of the EIAs were done in accordance with the rules.

Humberto González, of AES Changuinola, said that the company had complied with all of the environmental requirements.

LA PRENSA/GABRIEL RODRÍGUEZ



THREATENED. AES Changuinola hopes to install a hydroelectric dam with a production capacity of 223 megawatts. Environmentalists oppose multi-million dollar project.