MAAP #45: Threats to El Sira Communal Reserve in central Peruvian Amazon

September 21, 2016

El Sira Communal Reserve, located in the central Peruvian Amazon (regions of Pasco, Huánuco and Ucayali), aims to protect the biological diversity of the El Sira Mountain Range in benefit of the native communities of the area (Ashaninka, Yanesha, and Shipibo-Conibo indigenous groups).

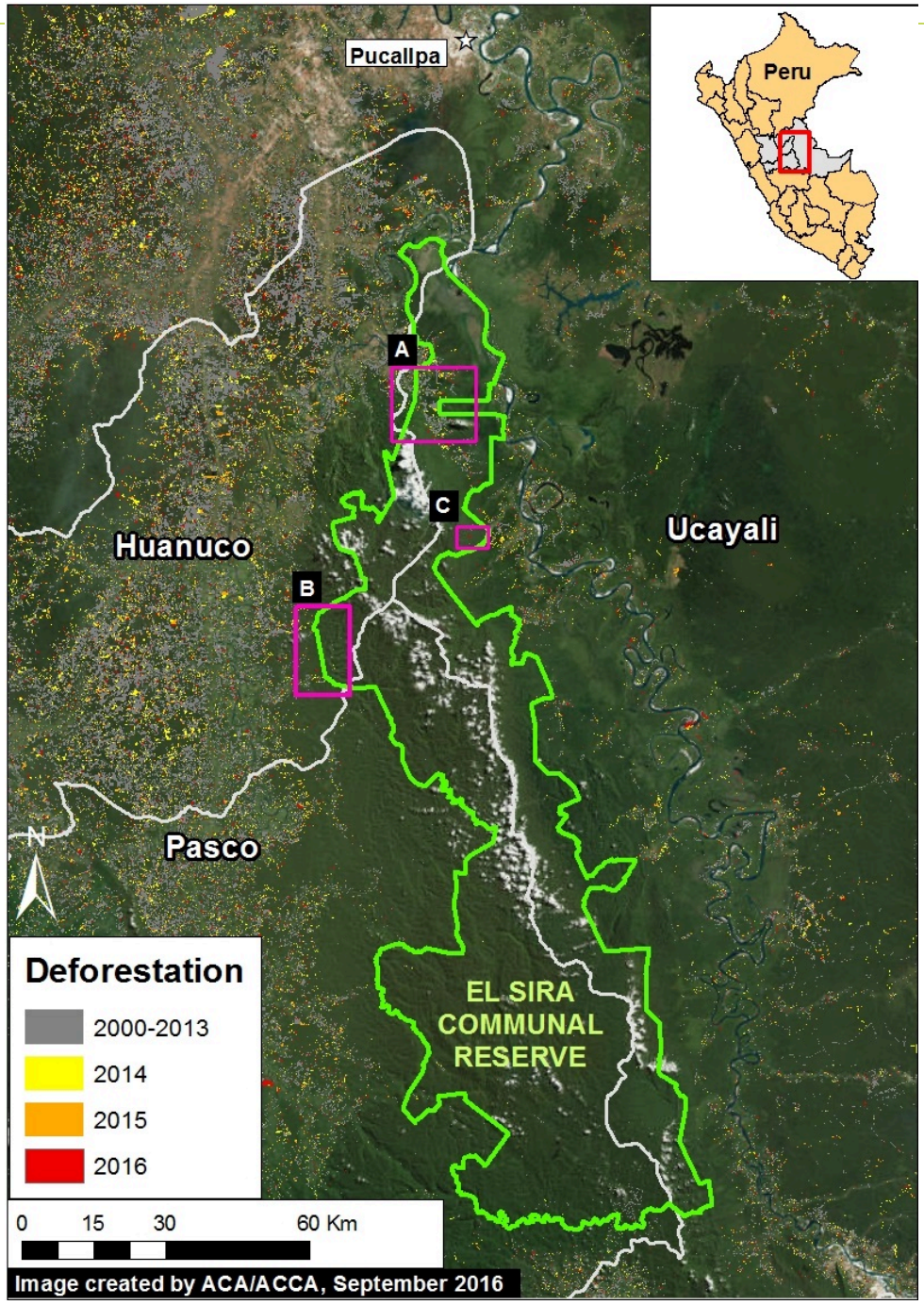
This report presents an initial threat assessment for this large national protected area, which covers more than 615,000 hectares (1.5 million acres).

We identified **3 threatened sectors** of the Reserve, as indicated in **Image 45a** (see Insets A-C).

We found that the principal drivers of deforestation in these three sectors are **agriculture & cattle pasture** (Insets A and C) and **illegal gold mining** (Inset B).

It is important to note that the deforestation for agriculture & cattle pasture continues to rapidly increase – **1,600 hectares** (3,950 acres) since 2013 – while the deforestation for gold mining has been limited due to regular interventions by the Peruvian government.

Below, we show **high-resolution satellite images** of the recent deforestation in all three threatened sectors. *Click each image to enlarge*.



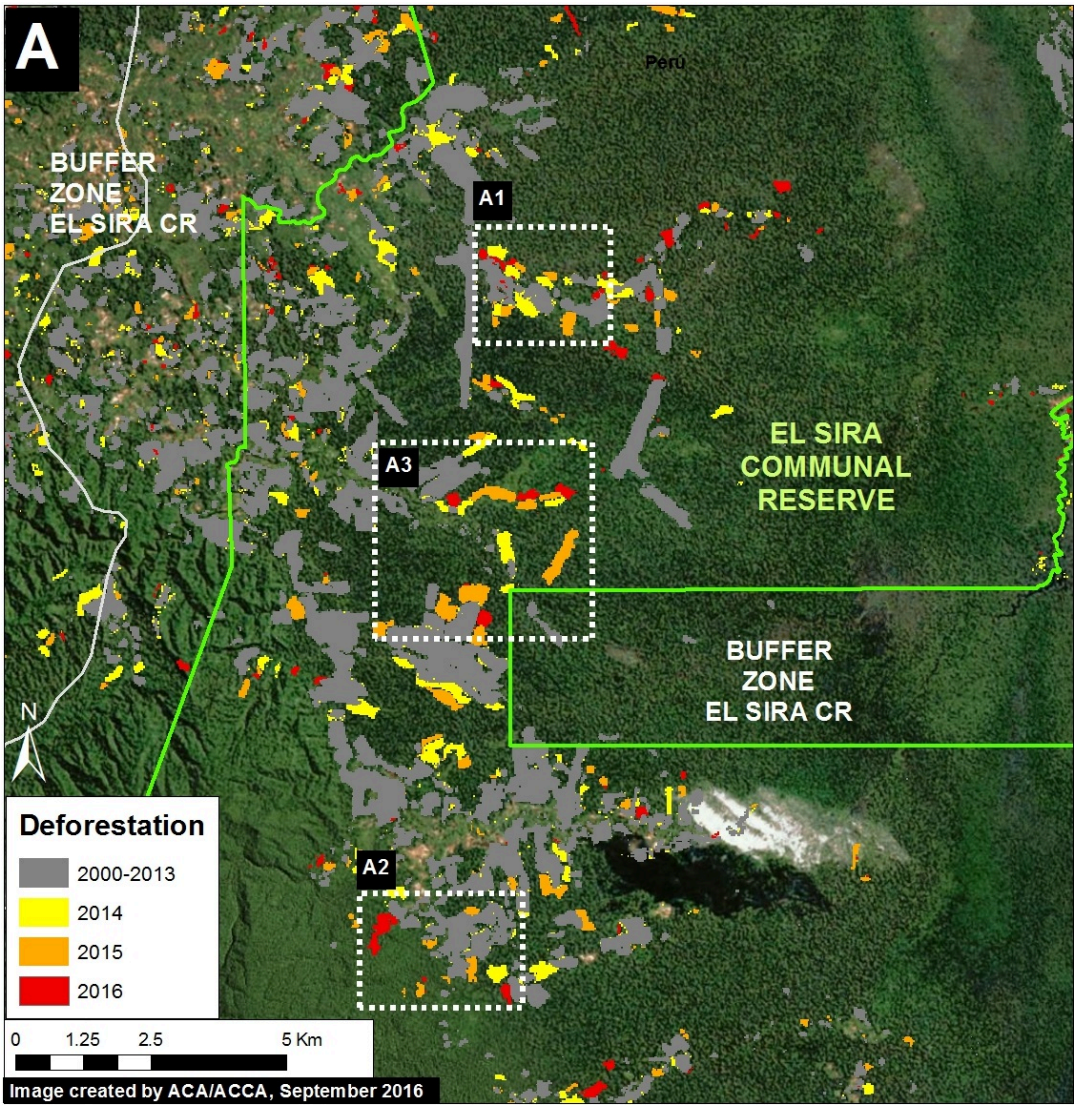
(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ESira_Recovery_o_v2_en.jpg)

Image 45a. Data: ESRI, SERNANP

Inset A: Increasing Deforestation in the Northern Sector

Image 45b illustrates the increasing deforestation in the northern sector of the El Sira Communal Reserve.

We documented the deforestation of **285 hectares** (700 acres) within the Reserve thus far in 2016 (as of late August). Over 90% of this loss comes from small-scale deforestation events (less than 5 hectares).



(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ESira_Recovery_A_v3_en.jpg)

Image 45b. Data: UMD/GLAD, Hansen/UMD/Google/USGS/NASA, USGS/NASA, SERNANP

We calculated an additional deforestation of **1,320 hectares** (3,260 acres) within the Reserve between 2013 and 2015.

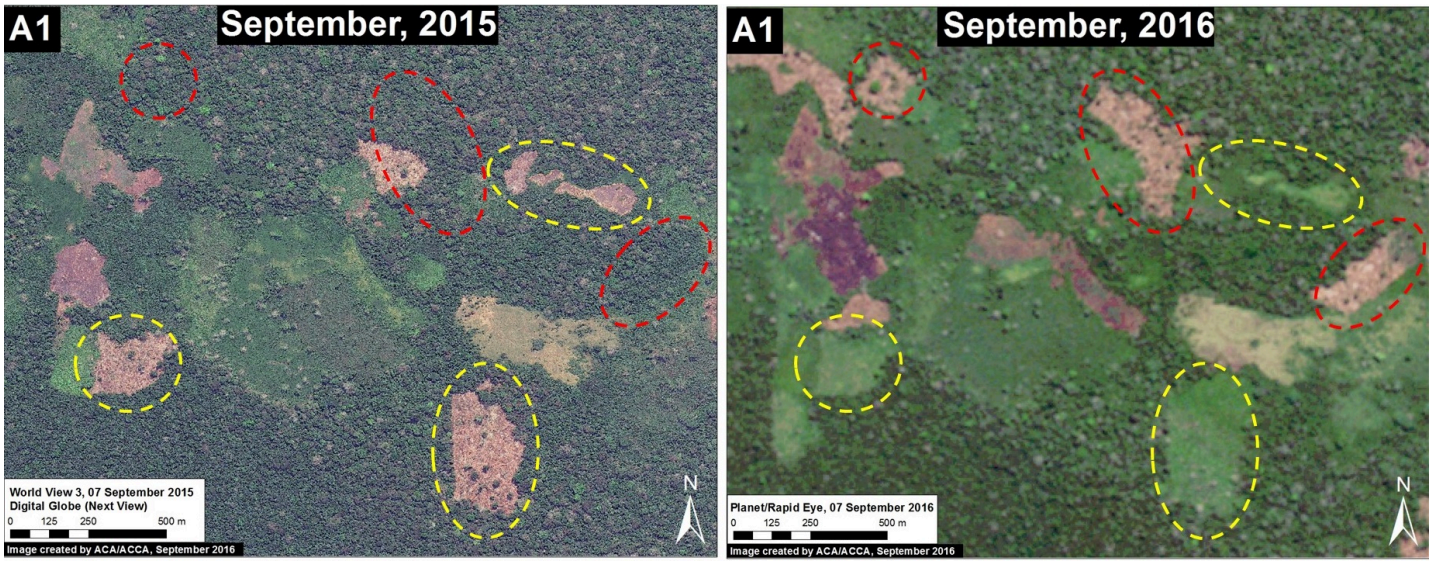
Thus, we documented a total deforestation of **1,600 hectares** (3,950 acres) within the northern sector of the Reserve since 2013.

Based on the analysis of high-resolution imagery, we found that the principal driver of this deforestation was **agriculture & cattle pasture**.

Note that this sector is near the deforestation hotspot described in MAAP #37 (https://www.maapprogram.org/2016/hotspot-huanuco/), where we determined that cattle pasture was the principal driver of deforestation.

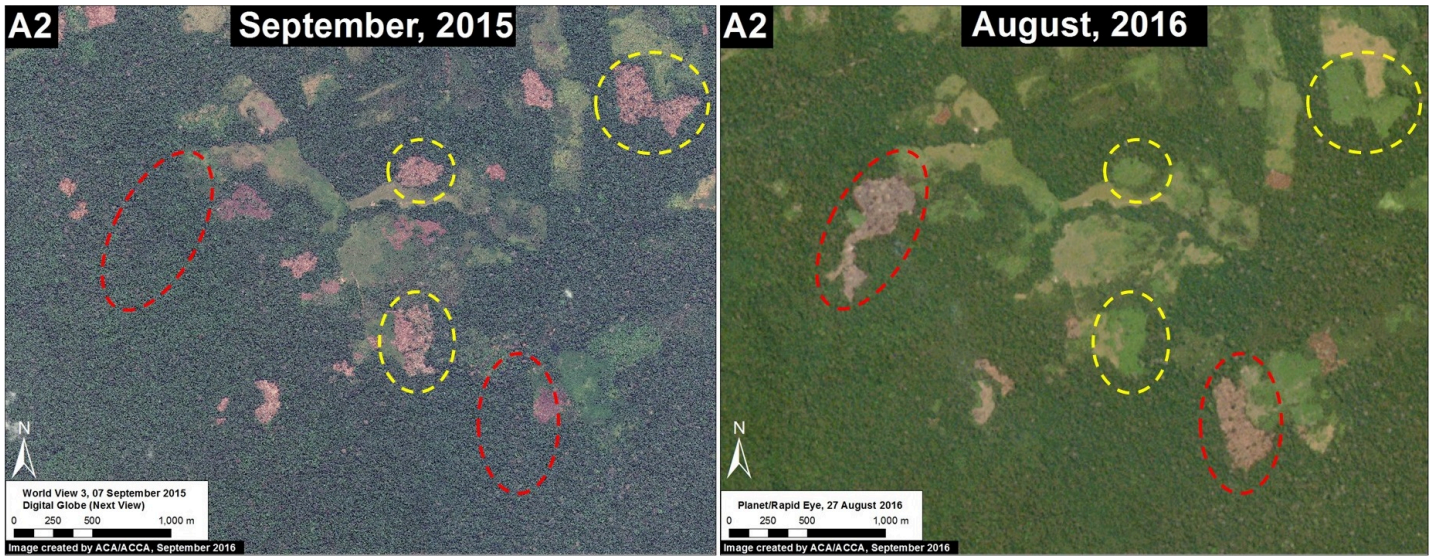
Insets A1 – A3 indicate the location of the high-resolution zooms described below.

Images 45c-45d show examples of deforestation between September 2015 (left panel) and August/September 2016 (right panel). The **red circles** indicate newly deforested areas in 2016. The **yellow circles** indicate areas deforested in 2015 and subsequently converted to cattle pasture in 2016.



(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ESira_Recovery_A1_m_v1_en.jpg)

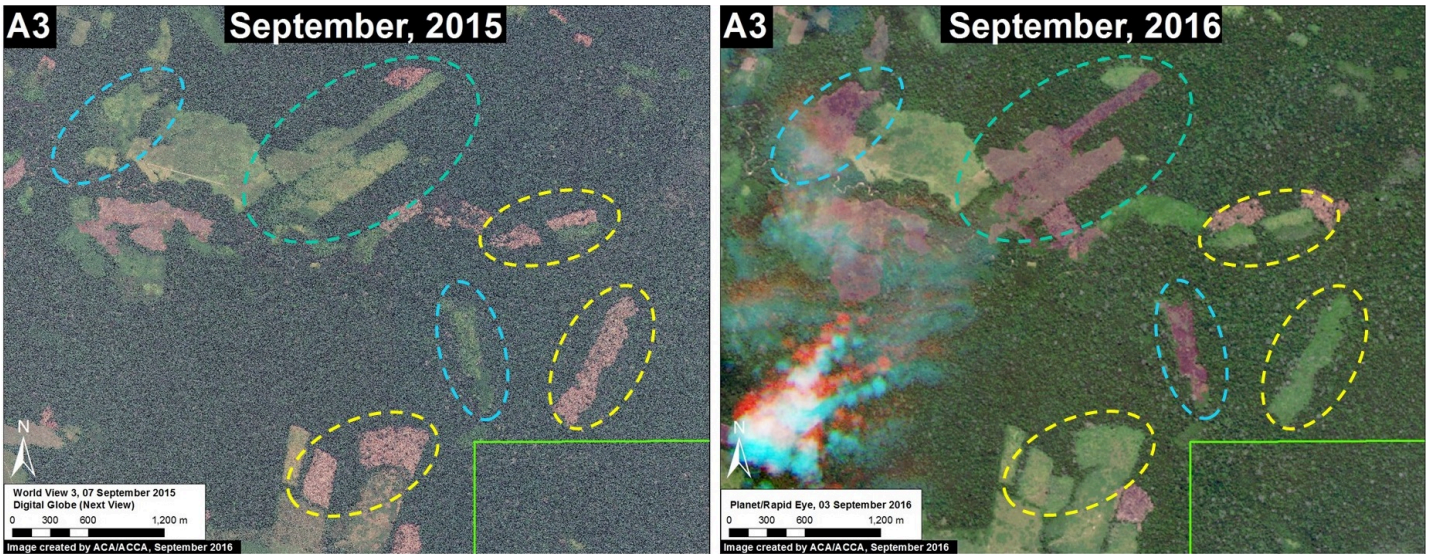
Image 45c. Data: Digital Globe (Next View), Planet



(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ESira_Recovery_A2_m_v1_en.jpg)

Image 45d. Data: Digital Globe (Next View), Planet

Image 45e shows examples of deforestation between September 2015 (left panel) and August/September 2016 (right panel). The **yellow circles** indicate areas deforested in 2015 and subsequently converted to cattle pasture in 2016. The **blue circles** indicate recently burned areas (note the smoke in the right) panel. This type of annual burning pattern is characteristic of cattle-grazing areas.



(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ESira_Recovery_A3_m_v1_en.jpg)

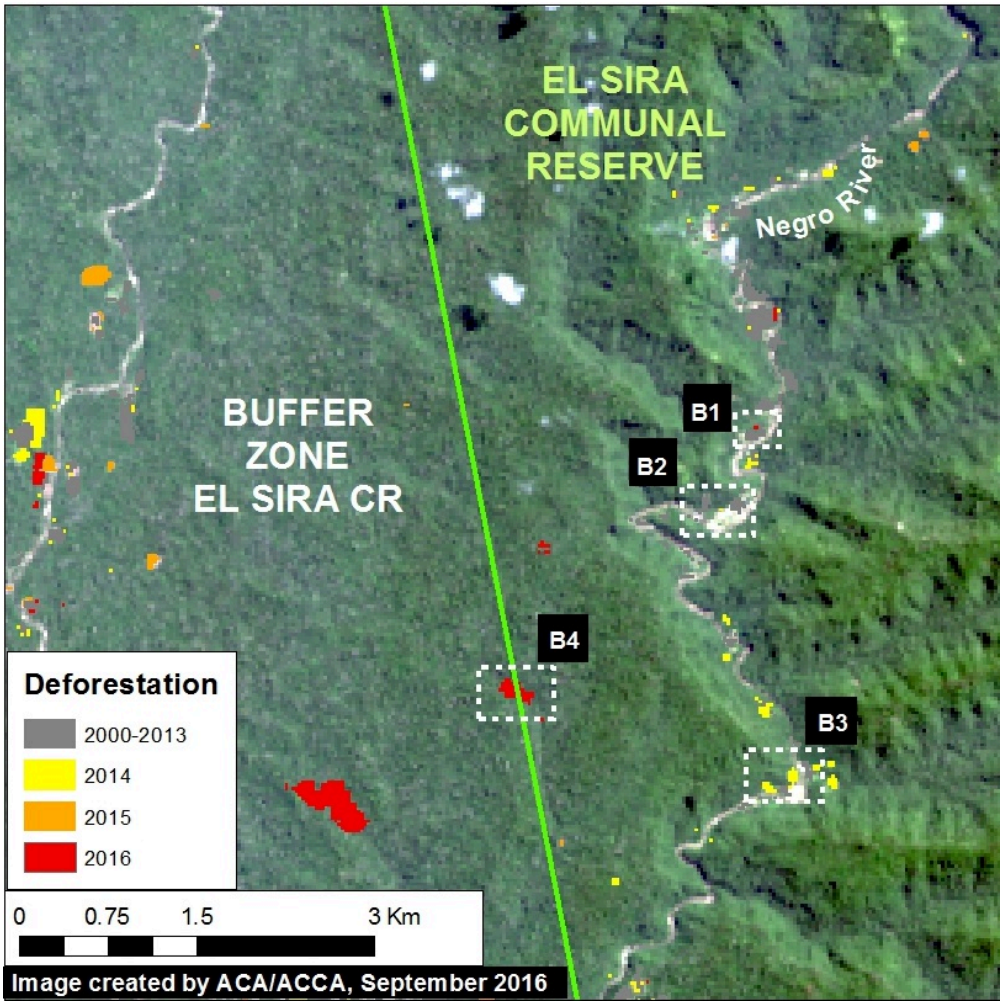
Image 45e. Data: Digital Globe (Next View), Planet

Inset B: Illegal Gold Mining Activity

Illegal gold mining currently threatens the upper Negro River, located in the northwest sector of the Reserve (see Inset B of Image 45a).

During 2015 (http://www.pcm.gob.pe/2015/04/destruyen-21-campamentos-y-maquinaria-usada-por-mineros-ilegales-en-la-reserva-comunal-el-sira-en-huanuco/) and 2016 (http://www.inforegion.pe/230708/huanuco-policia-detiene-mineria-ilegal-en-reserva-comunal-el-sira/), the Peruvian government has carried out several interventions against this illegal mining.

Image 45f shows the recent deforestation along the upper Negro River. **Insets B1-B3** indicate the areas detailed below in high resolution.



(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ESira_Recovery_B_v3_en.jpg)

Image 45f. Data: UMD/GLAD, Hansen/UMD/Google/USGS/NASA, USGS/NASA, SERNANP

Images 45g-h show recently deforested areas (indicated by yellow circles) between 2015 (left panel) and 2016 (right panel). These areas have been the target of recent government interventions; note that within the red circles the mining machinery has been eliminated

between August and September 2016.

(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ESira_Recovery_B1_a_m_v1_en.jpg)

Image 45g. Data: Digital Globe (NextView)

(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ESira_Recovery_B2_a_m_v1_en.jpg)

Image 45h. Data: Digital Globe (NextView)

Image 45i shows a mining area abandoned between 2015 and 2016.

(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ESira_Recovery_B3_a_m_v1_en.jpg)

Image 45i. Data: Digital Globe (NextView)

New Deforestation Zones

Image 45j shows the recent deforestation of 8.6 hectares (21 acres) between August (left panel) and September (right panel) 2016, within the area indicated by Inset B4 in Image 45f.

(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ESira_Recovery_B4_m_v1_en.jpg)

Image 45j. Data: Digital Globe (Nextview)

Image 45k shows the recent deforestation of 12 hectares (30 acres) within a remote area located in the northeast sector of the Reserve (see Inset C in Image 45a for context).

(https://www.maapprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ESira_Recovery_C_m_v1_en.jpg)

Image 45j. Data: Planet

Citation

Novoa S, Finer M, Snelgrove C (2016) Threats to Peru's El Sira Communal Reserve. MAAP: 45