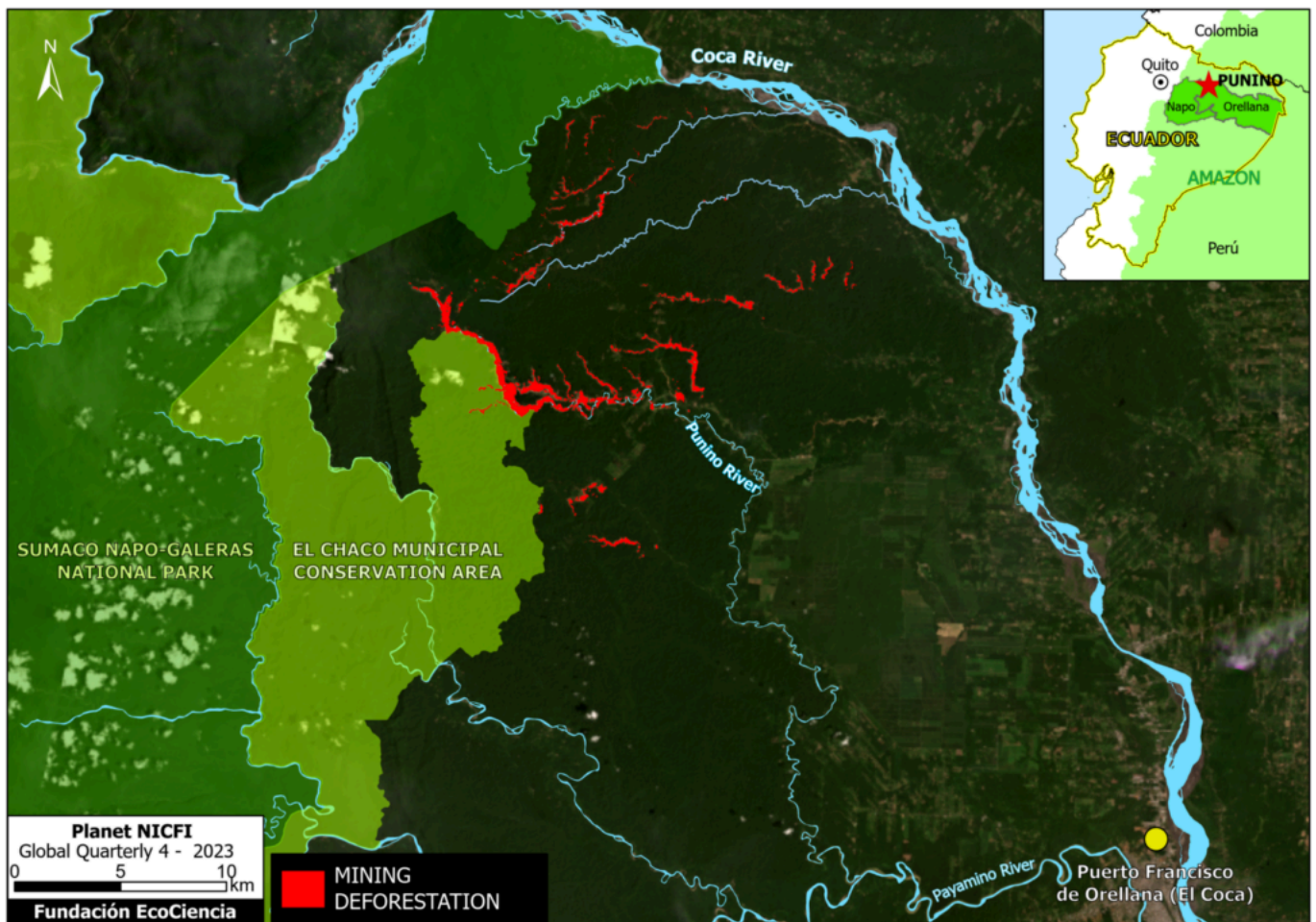


MAAP #206: Rapid expansion of illegal mining in Ecuadorian Amazon

February 5, 2024



(<http://www.maaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/maaproject.org-maap-206-rapid-expansion-of-illegal-mining-in-ecuadorian-amazon-Mapa-Base-ENG-1.png>)

Base Map. Mining in the Punino area. Data: Planet-NICFI, EcoCiencia.

In a series of previous reports, we warned about the emergence of alluvial **mining in the Ecuadorian Amazon**, specifically in the area around the **Punino River**, located between the provinces of Napo and Orellana (MAAP #151 (<https://www.maaprogram.org/mining-ecuador/>), MAAP #182 (<https://www.maaprogram.org/mining-ecuador-amazon/>)).

Here, we highlight the rapid growth of mining activity in the Punino area: **784 hectares in 2023**, which represents a striking increase of 261%.

This mining activity is mainly dedicated to the extraction of gold.

The vast majority of the detected activity is **illegal mining**, as it is outside the limits of the areas authorized for mining. For example, note the threat that illegal mining represents for the newly created El Chaco Municipal Conservation Area (see **Base Map**).

Rapid expansion of mining deforestation in 2023

Image 1 emphasizes the rapid expansion of mining deforestation in the Punino area in **2023 (red)**, relative to the previous three years (yellow).

The yellow indicates the mining deforestation of 217 hectares between November 2019 and December 2022, while the red shows the rapid expansion of **784 hectares (1,937 acres)** from January to December 2023.

Thus, in total, the forest area affected by mining activity is **1,001 hectares (2,474 acres)**, from 2019 to the present.

Moreover, Image 1 clearly shows that the majority of mining deforestation is located outside the limits of authorized mining areas (purple). Specifically, we estimate that **90.4%** of the total affected area (904 hectares, or 2,234 acres) represent **illegal mining**.

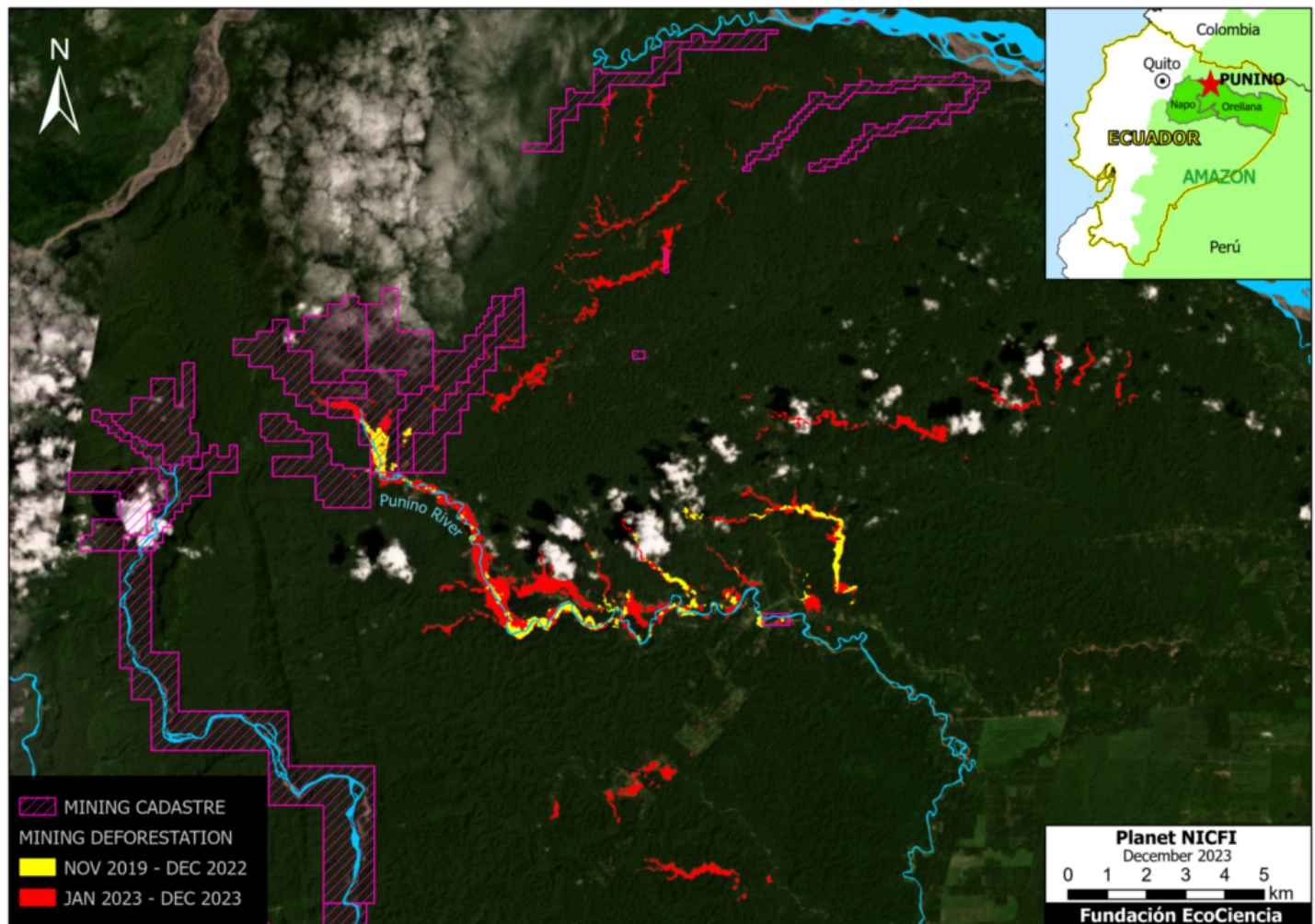
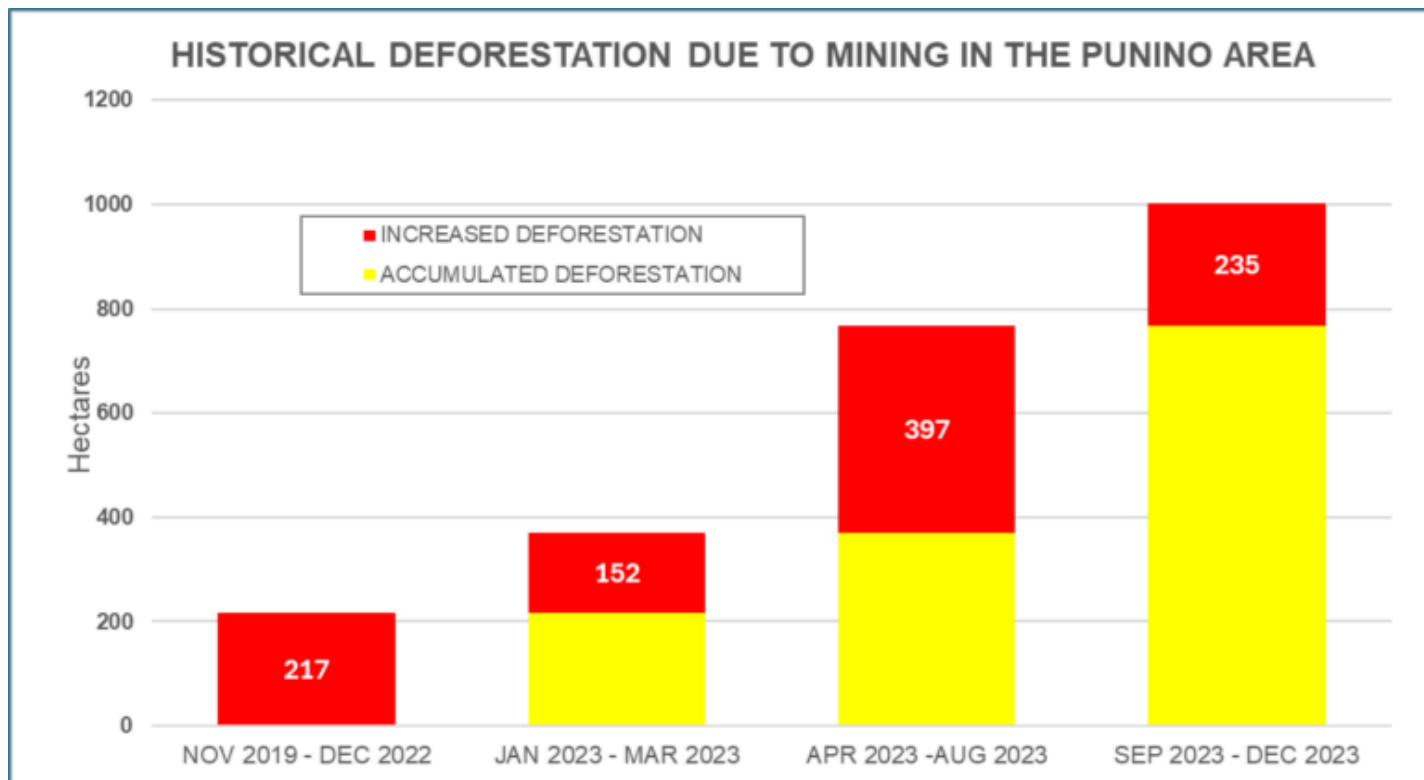


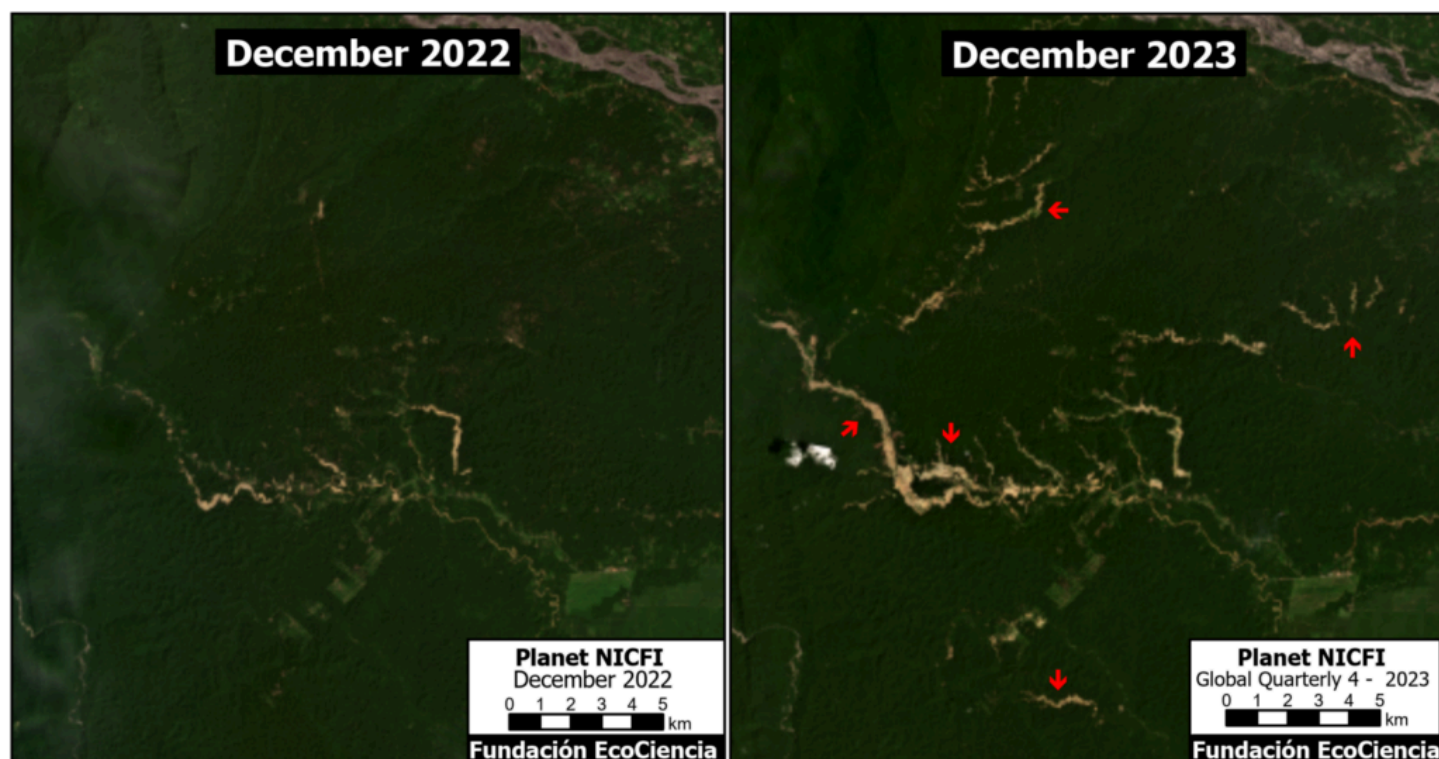
Image 1. Dynamics of mining activity between 2019 and 2023 in the Punino area. Data: Planet-NICFI, EcoCiencia.

Graph 1 shows the rapid escalation of mining deforestation in 2023 (bars 2, 3 and 4) relative to the previous three years (bar 1).



Graph 1. Deforestation due to mining in the Punino area between 2019 and 2023

Image 2 shows, with **high-resolution satellite images**, the expansion of mining deforestation in the Punino area between December 2022 (left panel) and December 2023 (right panel). The red arrows indicate the main areas of mining expansion.



Acknowledgments

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