

# Executive Summary

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## INTRODUCTION

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### **The AquaRAP Program**

The Rapid Assessment of Freshwater Aquatic Ecosystems Program (AquaRAP) was created in 1990 by Conservation International (CI) with the objective of rapidly collecting the biological information necessary to accelerate conservation actions and protection of biodiversity. Groups of researchers, international as well as local, with specialty in fresh water and terrestrial biology undertake field work for 2-4 weeks) with the objective of evaluating said biodiversity. These teams provide recommendations for conservation based on the biological diversity of the area, the level of endemism, the uniqueness of the ecosystems and the risk of extinction for some species at the national to the global scale.

The scientists that make up the RAP teams evaluate the diversity of the groups of organisms selected as indicators, analyzing this information together with social, environmental and other appropriate data sources, with the objective of contributing realistic and practical recommendations for institutions and individuals responsible for making decisions. Within the Rapid Assessment Program (RAP), AquaRAP was created in association with the Chicago Field Museum as a multinational and multidisciplinary program, directed at identifying priorities for conservation and opportunities for sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems in Latin America. The mission of AquaRAP is to evaluate the biological diversity and its conservation in tropical freshwater ecosystems through undertaking rapid inventories. AquaRAP teams have evaluated the aquatic biodiversity of different watersheds in Bolivia, Brasil, Paraguay, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Guyana and recently, Suriname. Moreover, CI's AquaRAP Program has undertaken surveys of aquatic biodiversity in Africa (Okavango Delta, Botswana, 2000) and Central America (Petén, Guatemala, 1999).

The results of AquaRAP have served as scientific support for the establishment of national parks in Bolivia and Peru, providing the biological baseline information of little explored tropical ecosystems. Furthermore, the AquaRAP program has identified threats and proposed recommendations for the conservation of freshwater and estuary ecosystems. The results of AquaRAP surveys are practically immediately available for all parties interested in conservation planning.

### **Specific objectives of the 2008 Upper Cuyuní RAP survey**

- Inventory species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, crustaceans, mollusks and other aquatic invertebrates (especially insects) and riparian plants.
- Describe the vegetation types present in the sampling areas.
- Determine the physicochemical parameters for water of the Cuyuní and Uey rivers and their tributaries, to determine the level of perturbation of the rivers, river branches, and streams; and generate a baseline of geochemical information for the water that is needed for the conservation and management of the basin.