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## Ecuador oil spill pollutes river, protected Amazon area: Ministry

*Ecuador's environment ministry says pipeline spill is 'major' event and requests company measure its full impact.*



Nearly two hectares of a protected area of the Cayambe-Coca National Park have been contaminated after heavy rains caused a mudslide in the eastern Napo province on Friday and ruptured a pipeline [Nicolas Mainville/Amazon Frontlines/Handout via Reuters]

31 Jan 2022



An oil spill in eastern Ecuador has reached a protected area of the nation's Amazon rainforest and contaminated a river that supplies water to Indigenous communities, Ecuador's environment ministry said.

Nearly two hectares (five acres) of a protected area of the Cayambe-Coca National Park have been contaminated, as well as the Coca River – one of the biggest in the Ecuadorian Amazon, the ministry said in a statement on Monday.

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The park of some 400,000 hectares (988,420 acres) is home to a wide variety of animals, including red brocket deer and various amphibians, and holds important water reserves.

Heavy rains caused a mudslide in the eastern Napo province on Friday, during which a rock struck and ruptured a pipeline owned by private company OCP Ecuador.

Neither the government nor OCP Ecuador has quantified the extent of the spill, but the environmental authority has described it as a “major” pollution event.







A rockfall following rains in the Piedra Fina zone caused a part of the OCP heavy crude pipeline to split late on Friday, causing the pipeline spill [Nicolas Mainville/Amazon Frontlines/Handout via Reuters]

“Our staff are monitoring 210 kilometres (130 miles) of the Coca River and its tributaries and coordinating containment and remediation where traces of hydrocarbon are identified,” the ministry said.

Operator OCP Ecuador said on Saturday that it had stopped pumping crude, and the next day it said it had contracted three specialist companies to carry out cleaning and remediation work.

“Once again we have been polluted and we are fighting about it with OCP,” Patricia Vargas, who heads the Panduyaku Indigenous community in Ecuador’s Sucumbios province, told the Reuters news agency.

“The oil is already coating the banks of the Coca River and we call for immediate action,” she said.

The development comes amid rising concerns that crude oil, illegal logging and other human activities are wreaking havoc on the region’s rainforests, which in turn have harmed the environment.

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Activists have been calling on governments to do more to protect endangered wildlife as well as Indigenous communities who rely on the land and water resources for their survival.

The pipeline spill also follows a gigantic [oil leak](#) in Peru earlier this month that saw approximately 11,900 barrels of oil seep into the ocean. Officials said the “[catastrophe](#)” – linked to a volcanic eruption on Tonga – would take weeks to clean up.

‘Catastrophe’: Peru oil spill clean-up to take weeks



Back in Ecuador, since 2020, regressive erosion advancing along the Coca River has caused problems for both the privately-operated OCP pipeline and a state-owned SOTE pipeline.

In December, both pipelines suspended pumping due to the issue, leading the government to declare force majeure over the majority of the country's oil exports and production contracts.

OCP's pipelines can transport up to 450,000 barrels a day from the Amazon to ports on the country's Pacific coast, although the company only extracted 160,000 barrels between January and November 2021.

In May 2020, a mudslide damaged pipelines, resulting in 15,000 barrels of oil polluting three Amazon basin rivers, affecting several riverside communities.

Meanwhile, the government has started legal and administrative actions against OCP Ecuador, the ministry said on Monday, adding it has requested the company carry out a detailed investigation to measure the spill's impact.

Oil has been found on the Coca River's banks, according to communities living in the area. Indigenous organisations and environmental NGOs are also

...ing the indigenous organizations and environmental NGOs are also calling for more information about what happened.

“We demand to know the number of barrels spilled and what the process of delivery of water and food will be for the communities,” the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE) said on Twitter.

“It is clear that the river water cannot be used or consumed,” the group added.

SOURCE: NEWS AGENCIES

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