

MEGA-CANAL PROJECT COULD DEVASTATE NICARAGUA'S ECOLOGY

It'd be like watching a slow-motion train wreck. That's one's impression when reading about the plan to build a vast mega-canal linking the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans across Nicaragua.



Like the Panama Canal only bigger... (photo by William Laurance)

A German ecologist who has long worked in Nicaragua, Axel Meyer, writes to ALERT with a copy of his [recent commentary](#)

in Nature, highlighting the myriad risks of this proposed \$40 billion project.

The project's risks, which would involve not just a 300 kilometer-long waterway but also major associated infrastructure including railroads and pipelines, are enormous. Just as the Panama Canal and associated developments have cut a **swathe of forest destruction across Panama**, so too would the mega-canal **carve up Nicaragua**.

Among the project's likely impacts:

- the destruction of 400,000 square kilometers of rainforest and wetland
- major environmental impacts on **Lake Nicaragua**, which harbors many endemic fish species
- potentially major degradation of the **MesoAmerican Biological Corridor**, the vital ecological linkage between the Americas that runs directly across the canal's path
- large effects on several indigenous groups in Nicaragua





Deforestation driver... in the Panama Canal watershed, all but 15% of the original forest has vanished (photo by William Laurance)

Astoundingly, the only environmental assessment that is planned will be commissioned by the Chinese corporation that's been awarded a 50-year concession to build and run the canal.

A [coalition of local groups in Nicaragua](#), led by the president of the Nicaraguan Academy of Sciences, is raising serious concerns about the project.

If they fail, expect to hear thunderous crashing sounds as the mega-project advances...