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New solutions to underreporting of PPAs in Latin America emerge in a recent study in *Conservation Biology*

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There is no shortage of enthusiasm for protecting land and water in Latin America and the Caribbean. The World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) shows that nearly a quarter of both terrestrial and marine area in the region is protected, and about 40 percent of that area is privately protected, largely by individual landowners and Indigenous peoples. But the WDPA's numbers, though part of one of the most comprehensive and authoritative sources of global protected area data, are only estimates. Accurate, up-to-date data on privately protected areas (PPAs) around the world [is incomplete](#).

In Latin America, private landowners or groups have insufficient incentives and support for providing data on privately protected areas and other area-based conservation measures. As a result, data on PPAs in countries in the region can differ significantly among sources. In Argentina—which has one of Latin America's oldest and most well-established systems of protected areas—the WDPA's report on protected land area is half of what is officially reported by the government. Similarly, only about half of Brazil's private conservation areas have been reported to the WDPA.

A 2023 journal article, published in *Conservation Biology*, is among the first to dig into this issue. The authors of "A legal assessment of private land conservation in South America" examine challenges in the region's legal framework for protected area reporting that lead to underreporting and, perhaps most importantly, lay out recommendations for improvement for recognizing the critical contribution of private landowners and groups to terrestrial conservation targets.

The assessment finds that the commitment landowners are bound to when they formally report conserved areas outweighs the support government provides in return. It proposes that PPAs be clearly defined in a country's legal framework; that the minimum commitment for a PPA should be 10 years; that laws should specify which low-impact economic activities are permitted in PPAs; and that governments support PPAs through a robust set of financial and nonfinancial mechanisms to incentivize sustained participation.

To learn more about gaps in reporting and solutions that will be instrumental for Latin American countries to meet their commitments to international biodiversity goals, read the full journal article [here](#) and its coverage by Mongabay at news.mongabay.com.

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