

FORD DAMS' BELIZE FOR ELECTRICITY PROPOSAL

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Abstract:

The Hollywood hunk has given a big thumbs-down to a dam project on the Upper Macal River in Belize that would destroy the habitat of the world's rarest animals and birds.

The Belize government has OK'd the deal, but [HARRISON FORD] and top environmentalists say it will ruin the only known breeding ground of a subspecies of scarlet macaw, the Aramacca cyanoptera.

ANIMAL LOVER: Actor Harrison Ford is lobbying Belize to KO a dam project that would wipe out rare animals and birds. N.Y. Post: David Rentas

Full Text:

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HARRISON FORD has joined the fight against a project he says would destroy one of the world's most precious rainforests.

The Hollywood hunk has given a big thumbs-down to a dam project on the Upper Macal River in Belize that would destroy the habitat of the world's rarest animals and birds.

The river is home to scarlet macaws, Morelet's crocodiles, river otters and tapirs, a distant relative of the horse that has hardly changed in 20 million years.

The dam project - proposed by the Belize Electricity Co. to boost the nation's energy sources - calls for more than 1,000 acres of rainforest to be flooded.

The Belize government has OK'd the deal, but Ford and top environmentalists say it will ruin the only known breeding ground of a subspecies of scarlet macaw, the Aramacca cyanoptera.

There are fewer than 200 of the birds in the world.

The dam would also destroy the feeding grounds of jaguars from a nearby jaguar reserve - the only one in the world. And tapirs have been recognized internationally as an endangered species.

In addition, the plan threatens a group of Mayan ruins connected to the lost city of Caracol, dating from the fifth century.

Ford - a board member of Conservation International, a nonprofit watchdog group - says his group will actively fight the plan.

Activists want the former British colony to rethink its support and consider alternative sources of energy such as burning bagasse, a byproduct of sugar production, or buying electricity from Mexico.

Sharon Matola, director of the Belize Zoo in Belize City, said, "To destroy this for a dam that will only last 50 years would be an environmental crime."