The Tapajós National Forest is located in the Brazilian state of Pará along the eastern bank of the Tapajós River. The national rainforest was established in 1974 by the Brazilian government and encompasses approximately 600,000 hectares. Although populations have been recorded as far back as the 1800’s, it wasn’t until 1994 that legislation was passed to permit current residents to live within the national forest limits. The Tapajós National Forest was designated a sustainable use protected area, which permits logging and natural resource extraction in designated areas.

Funding for ProManejo, an Amazon-wide forest management project, span from 1999 to 2006. ProManejo targeted biodiversity conservation and carbon dioxide emissions caused by deforestation. The principal objective was to provide financial and technical support for sustainable forest management initiatives, including community-based microenterprises like ecotourism.

The Tapajós National Forest is most widely known for its beautiful sandy beaches, but it is also home to spectacular wildlife, giant old growth trees, and traditional and indigenous populations.

**Research Objectives**

Exploratory data analysis of household survey data from 1997 and 2006 raised many questions about tourism patterns and participation typology in the Tapajós National Forest.

Field study objectives were: 1) Explore reasons for the relatively little tourism in the Tapajós National Forest, and 2) Assess the degree of local participation and collaboration with the tourism sector and government agencies in attracting and engaging tourism development.

**Field Study**

In 2012, the Laarman International Gift Fund provided the funding to visit the Tapajós National Forest in Para, Brazil and its nearest cities of Alter do Chão and Santarém. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with tourism operators, NGOs, government officials, and community representatives from the national forest. Interview respondents were selected based on knowledge of tourism and availability during the two weeks that I was in the field. I visited three communities in the National Forest that are known to have differing tourism flows and attractions.
Preliminary Findings

Tourism operators and government agencies clearly steer tourists towards particular communities. The most commonly cited factor was distance from the main city. Santarém is the third largest port city along the Amazon River, but is not a tourist destination of its own. Jungle treks are more common outside of Manaus, in the state of Amazonas. Poor tourism infrastructure from Santarém to the Tapajós National Forest was another large tourist deterrent.

Results from research suggest that ecotourism is growing slowly, but has made significant strides since the first ecotourism trail opened in 2001. Homestay capabilities have been developed so tourists can spend the night in private guesthouses. Jewelry and latex product production has increased during the past 15 years, offering many aspiring artisans employment opportunities.

Opinions of the Tapajós National Forest community-based management strategies varied by respondent. Community representatives I spoke with felt positively about their roles within the community. The recent addition of cell phone capabilities in the Tapajós National Forest improved communication between government agencies and tourism operators. Other respondents criticized the community-based management system for nepotism and lack of representation for all residents. Another respondent praised the network as a way to build longstanding relationships within the tourism industry.

My thesis as a whole is concerned with forms of resident and community participation in ecotourism as well as assessing impacts due to participation. Interviews provided an inside look at the ecotourism participation structure. It is my hope that this research will make a contribution to understanding meaningful collaboration and participation in tourism.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Laarman International Gift Fund for helping to support my work in Brazil.