

Cultural costs of building dams

April 11 2016, by Evelyn Perez



A dam on the Pastaza River, Ecuador alters river flow on an Andean tributary of the Amazon. Credit: Elizabeth Anderson

People must be a consideration when building dams, according to FIU researchers.

The world's [tropical regions](#) are in the midst of a boom in hydropower dam development. Assessing the impacts of building dams on [local communities](#) typically focuses on economic, political and [environmental issues](#) such as loss of land or fisheries, community displacement and [food security](#). In a letter recently published in *Science*, researchers in the School of Environment, Arts and Society call for the consideration of cultural costs when building dams or developing sources of water power in the tropics. The letter was penned by Elizabeth Anderson, director of international research programs, and Jennifer Veilleux, researcher in the Institute of Water and Environment.

"Communities of people living alongside rivers stand to lose much more than land, food and income when dams interrupt natural river flows," Anderson said. "Free-flowing rivers hold special significance in indigenous cultures."

To read the researchers' take on the cultural costs of building dams, visit [Science](#).

More information: E. P. Anderson et al. Cultural costs of tropical dams, *Science* (2016). [DOI: 10.1126/science.352.6282.159](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.352.6282.159)

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