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Drought impact on forest carbon dynamics and fluxes in Amazonia

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Running title – Impact of drought on Amazonia

Key words: Drought, Amazon, GPP, NPP, tropical forests, allocation

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Abstract – In 2005 and 2010, the Amazon basin experienced two strong droughts[1], driven by shifts in the tropical hydrological regime[2] possibly associated with global climate change[3] as predicted by some global models[3]. Tree mortality increased following the 2005 drought[4] and regional atmospheric inversion modelling showed basin-wide decreases in CO_2 uptake in 2010 compared to 2011[5]. But the response of tropical forest carbon cycling to these droughts is not fully understood and there has not been a detailed multi-site investigation *in situ*. Here we use several years of data from a network of 13 one hectare forest plots spread throughout South America, where each component of net primary production (NPP), autotrophic (R_a) and heterotrophic respiration (R_h) is measured separately, to develop a better mechanistic understanding of the impact of the 2010 drought on the Amazon forest. We find surprisingly that total NPP remained constant throughout the drought. However, towards the end of the drought, autotrophic respiration, especially in roots and stems, declined significantly compared to measurements in 2009 made in the absence of drought, with extended decreases in autotrophic respiration in the three driest plots. In the year following the drought, total NPP continued to remain constant but the allocation of carbon shifts towards canopy NPP and away from fine root NPP. Both leaf-level and plot-level measurements indicate that drought suppresses photosynthesis. Scaling these measurements to the entire Amazon basin using rainfall data, we estimate that drought suppressed Amazon-wide photosynthesis in 2010 by 0.38 Pg C (0.23 - 0.53 Pg C). Overall, we find that during episodic drought, instead of reducing total NPP trees prioritized growth by reducing autotrophic respiration. This suggests that trees reduce investment in tissue maintenance and defence, in line with eco-evolutionary theories which hypothesize that trees are competitively disadvantaged in the absence of growth[6]. We propose that weakened maintenance and defence investment may, in turn, cause the increase in tree mortality following drought observed at our plots.

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How does drought affect tropical forests? This question has been studied in long-term experimental drought studies [7,8], long-term biomass plots that have tracked forest dynamics through drought events [4], and through remote sensing [9-11]. Increased mortality of trees using a large network of 1 ha plot censuses was observed following the 2005 Amazonian drought, turning the forest from an estimated net biomass carbon (C) sink of $\approx$0.71 Mg C ha^{-1} yr^{-1} [12] to a temporary net source of CO_2 to the atmosphere of twice this, with a total impact (i.e., committed source minus baseline sink) of 1.2-1.6 Pg C [4]. This increase in drought-induced tree mortality has also been seen in two multi-year experimentally droughted plots in Amazonia, dominated by a sustained increase in large tree mortality[7]. Remote sensing of canopy backscatter following the 2005 drought indicated that, in some parts of Amazonia, the drought caused a change in structure and water content associated with the forest upper canopy. This suggests a slow recovery (>4 y) of forest canopy structure after the severe drought in 2005[10].

Since future droughts in tropical regions may increase in frequency and severity[1-3], a better understanding of whether net CO_2 fluxes to the atmosphere from tropical forests increase or decrease during drought periods is urgently required. Drought could either suppress gross primary productivity (GPP), which would lead to an immediate reduction of CO_2 uptake, or it could reduce heterotrophic respiration thereby reducing the CO_2 source to the atmosphere, or both[13]. The Amazon basin in 2010 was drier than in 2011, but not warmer, enabling the separation of the influences of temperature and precipitation[5]. A recent atmospheric inversion study in the Amazon basin found that forests took up 0.25$\pm$0.14 Pg C less CO_2 in 2010 (the year of the drought) than 2011 after accounting for the effect of increased fires during the drought[5]. A previous study using isotopic techniques found a similar result, with the basin turning from a potential sink to a source following the dry El Niño year of 1997[14]. These results indicate that annual Amazon droughts apparently suppress photosynthesis more than respiration, but such a relative decrease has not been directly verified with on the ground measurements.

To be able to understand long term carbon storage in the tropics, top-down estimates of GPP and net respiration CO_2 fluxes to the atmosphere alone are insufficient. It is also important to understand how the products of photosynthesis are allocated between plant metabolism and biomass growth (net primary productivity, NPP) and how that growth is allocated amongst different organs of the tree[15]. Total autotrophic respiration plus total NPP should approximately equal total GPP over long (multi-year) timescales. However, over shorter timescales the two may differ as forests may store 'old' carbon in the form of non-structural carbohydrates (NSC), which may be abundant in tropical forests (~16 Mg C ha^{-1}, more than enough carbon to rebuild the entire leaf canopy)[16]. These

85   NSCs may function as a reserve that enables continuation of high rates of growth during periods of

86   reduced carbon income from photosynthesis[16-18].

87   For several years, we have measured the main components of total NPP (including one to

88   three month records of fine root, woody, and leaf flush NPP) and autotrophic respiration (including

89   rhizosphere, stem wood, and canopy leaf respiration) at 13 one-hectare rainforest plots in three South

90   American countries, covering contrasting climatic and soil conditions and also across a 2800m

91   elevation range in the Andes (ED tables 1-3). Initial results from these measurements have been

92   described in a series of companion papers [19-23] presenting complete mean annual sums and mean

93   seasonal cycles of NPP and autotrophic respiration (R_a). This methodology has shown close

94   agreement with independent eddy covariance data on seasonal and annual timescales (ED Figure 1 –

95   slope is within the error of a one-to-one line - $3.0 \pm 7.8\%$ (95% confidence interval)) [24]. Here, we

96   synthesize and further analyse these results to focus specifically on the basin-wide trends before,

97   during and after the 2010 drought, constrained by concurrent measurements in a larger network

98   measuring woody NPP and mortality[4] and inversion studies monitoring changes in atmospheric CO_2

99   concentrations[5]. Of the 13 plots, six experienced drought in 2010 (ED Figure 2). Of these six, three

100   can be considered lowland humid forest more typical of Amazonia (based on species composition and

101   maximum cumulative water deficit (MCWD)) and three are drier forests at the Amazon forests'

102   southern margins.

103   Throughout the two year period of study, the eight non-drought plots showed steady NPP, R_a,

104   and total plant carbon expenditure (PCE - the sum of NPP and R_a or the carbon expended by the

105   autotrophic metabolism of the ecosystem; green line Figure 1). Total NPP was surprisingly invariant

106   throughout the drought period at all of our plots (Figure 1c). Among the six drought-affected plots,

107   there were differences between those in the dry lowlands (red lines, N=3) and those in the more

108   humid areas (black lines, N=3).   PCE in the humid lowland plots was constant at the start of the

109   drought, but then both PCE and R_a decreased significantly (P<0.05 and P<0.01 respectively, paired T-

110   test, N=3 plots) through early 2011 relative to the 2009 baseline. The humid plots recovered to the

111   2009 baseline within a few months after the drought but decreases in R_a at the three dry lowland plots

112   persisted for a year after the 2010 drought (Figure 1b). This short-term decrease in R_a (dominated by

113   changes in rhizosphere and stem respiration - ED figure 7) is in contrast to the results from multi-

114   annual experimental drought where R_a increased (dominated by changes in leaf respiration)[19].

115   PCE should approximately equal total photosynthesis in an ecosystem over annual to multi-

116   annual time scales, with any discrepancy between the two on shorter (monthly) timescales caused by

117   changes in unmeasured carbon pools such as non-structural carbohydrate reserves. Therefore, a

118   decrease in PCE must equal an equivalent decrease in GPP during a prior period. At our humid

119   drought sites, PCE decreased by 1.90 ± 1.04 Mg C ha^{-1} yr^{-1} (95% C.I.) following the drought period

120   compared to the 2009 baseline (yellow region of Figure 1a). *In situ* measurements of light saturated

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121   maximum photosynthesis made at a subset of our plots indicate that photosynthesis did decrease

122   significantly (P<0.001, T-test, N=20 trees) during the drought period compared to non-drought

123   conditions, pointing to the drought as the cause of the drop in PCE (ED Figure 3). This measured

124   decrease in photosynthesis is of a similar magnitude to modelled decreases in photosynthesis from

125   drought in Eastern Amazonia[25]. We hypothesize that the asynchrony between the decrease in PCE

126   and the start of the drought indicates that the forests relied on non-structural carbohydrate reserves to

127   initially maintain constant growth and respiration during the drought period (ED Figure 4). Towards

128   the middle of the drought period, R_a decreased in the rhizosphere and stems, while NPP and growth

129   continued to remain relatively constant. Since autotrophic respiration consists of maintenance (non-

130   growth) respiration and the respiratory costs associated with growth, this suggests that maintenance

131   respiration must have declined. The decrease in R_a continued following the end of the drought period,

132   potentially allowing the replenishment of the NSC stores once normal photosynthesis resumed (ED

133   Figure 4). Drought reduced PCE by a larger amount in dry zone plots than in humid zone plots, with

134   total PCE continuing to decline through 2011. The greater total decline in PCE is indicative of a

135   larger percentage decrease in total photosynthesis during the drought at the drier plots, a plot-scale

136   observation which matches our *in situ*, leaf level measurements (ED Figure 3). Our data show little

137   change to net heterotrophic respiration in the humid plots (supplementary results and Figure 1d black

138   line), and this suggests that the drought forest plots were first a net C source in 2010 due to

139   suppressed photosynthesis, and then a net C sink in early 2011 as photosynthesis returned to normal,

140   whilst R_a in the stems and rhizosphere remained slightly suppressed compared to previous periods

141   (ED Figure 4 and 7).

142   There was strong seasonality in the components of NPP, with peaks in leaf growth

143   generally anti-correlated with the peaks in woody growth. Hence variation in seasonal growth rates

144   was driven more by shifts in allocation of NPP than by variation in its total magnitude[26]. NPP

145   allocation in the non-droughted plots did not change significantly between 2009 and 2010 (Figure 2

146   green). In the droughted plots there were no significant shifts in allocation patterns during the drought

147   period itself, but in the 6 months following the drought there was a significant shift in C allocation for

148   both the humid and dry lowland plots following the drought period away from fine root growth

149   (P<0.01, paired T-test, N=3) and towards canopy growth (a combination of LAI and litterfall – see

150   methods - P<0.05, paired T-test, N=3) (Figure 2 red and black). Droughts typically increase leaf fall,

151   a strategy thought to minimize drought-induced xylem embolisms, and can cause temperature-related

152   leaf damage as evaporative cooling decreases[8]. Therefore, preferential allocation of carbon towards

153   the canopy in the year following the drought is consistent with known physiological drought

154   responses, and likely represents additional carbon required to replenish lost and damaged leaves and

155   thereby rebuild photosynthetic capacity. The significant shift away from fine root growth was

156   surprising since it has often been assumed that fine root growth might increase during a drought, but

157   may simply be a reflection of the immediate priority of replacing lost canopy cover instead of a long

158   term shift away from root growth (for longer-term allocation patterns see ED Figure 5 and a
159   companion paper[26]).

160   Individual tree mortality rates approximately doubled at our droughted plots, showing a
161   marginally significant increase (P=0.06; paired 1-tailed T-test, N=5) from a long term mean of
162   1.6±0.6% (Tambopata, N=3) and 2.0 ± 0.4% (Kenia, N=2) to peaks of 3.6% (Tambopata) and 6.7%
163   (Kenia) following the drought (ED figure 6). Mortality remained relatively stable at the non-drought
164   plots. We tested mortality in a bigger subset of plots at Tambopata and Caxiuanã going back ~30
165   years at some plots (supplementary results) and found that biomass loss rates increased significantly
166   (P<0.05, Wilcoxon signed rank test) at Tambopata (drought, N=9) but not at Caxiuanã (no drought,
167   N=6). Committed carbon released due to mortality increased by ~1 and 3 fold in Kenia and
168   Tambopata respectively, compared to a 1.6 % yr^{-1} basin wide average (Figure 3e) [27]. Similar drought-
169   induced mortality was also seen across the wider basin following the 2005 drought[4]. The Bolivian
170   plots experienced more severe drought ($MCWD_{anom}$<-240 mm) and here, more trees died more
171   quickly than in the Peruvian plots which were less strongly droughted ($MCWD_{anom}$ = -51 mm). Our
172   data indicate that mortality rates peaked 1-2 years after the drought, consistent with the hypothesis
173   that trees were weakened during the drought from reduced maintenance but only succumbed later[19].

174   Plant carbon expenditure was significantly related (P<0.05, linear regression) and
175   autotrophic respiration was marginally significantly related (P=0.08, linear regression) to the anomaly
176   in MCWD for both annual sums (N=13 individual plots for 2009 minus 2010, PCE_{anom} =-1.0+0.011*
177    $MCWD_{anom}$, r^2 = 0.34, with a standard error on the slope of ±0.004, Figure 3a and b). The anomaly in
178   NPP, on the other hand, showed no significant relationship with the MCWD anomaly (Figure 3c,
179   P>0.10). We combine a TRMM (v7 years 1998-2012) based $MCWD_{anom}$ for each TRMM pixel in the
180   Amazon in 2010 and 2011 with the slope of the above equation (with an intercept of zero) to estimate
181   that mean net total photosynthesis decreased by 0.38 Pg C (0.23 - 0.53 Pg C) in 2010 compared to
182   2011, based on a mean South American tropical forested area of 6.77 × 10^6 km^2 (Figure 3d). For the
183   same period, an Amazonia-focussed atmospheric inversion modelling study estimated a decreased
184   flux of 0.25±0.14 Pg C in 2010 relative to 2011 from reduced photosynthesis, which is within our
185   error estimates[5].

186   Why would trees prioritize growth over maintenance or defence during and following a
187   drought? This strategy makes sense when viewed from an eco-evolutionary standpoint where any
188   decrease in growth of an individual tree puts that tree at a competitive disadvantage by increased risk
189   of loss of resources (light, water, or nutrients) to neighbours[6]. We hypothesize that this decrease in
190   maintenance and defence led to our plot-level increase in mortality. Thus, while such a drought-
191   induced strategy may reduce the mean per-tree performance in the forest via increased mortality, it is
192   still likely to be selected for on an individual basis given the evolutionary constraints proposed by

193 game theory [28]. In other words, this strategy increases mortality for a small proportion of trees

194 because most are locked in to growth competition with neighbours. Such unexpected carbon

195 allocation patterns have been theorized previously, but before now have lacked much empirical

196 support. For instance, trees may grow excess leaves not to improve carbon uptake but to shade out

197 competition[29] or they may over-allocate carbon to root growth in shallow soil systems in response to

198 competition[6].

199 Overall, our plot data indicate that drought suppressed total CO_2 uptake with little

200 reduction in growth and therefore, less carbon was available to the trees for defence and maintenance.

201 Reduced carbon would have also increased tree mortality from embolisms and cavitation because

202 non-structural carbohydrates (sugars) may be involved in sensing and reversing embolism[18]. The

203 debate over drought-induced tree mortality is often framed as being caused by either C starvation,

204 water cavitation, or biotic attack, but the three are often intertwined[30] because during drought there is

205 less C available to fend off all three threats. This insight and new mechanistic understanding can help

206 to improve predictions of the impact of future climate change on tropical forests.

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Author contributions – CED, YM, and DBM designed and implemented the study. CED analysed the data. CED, CAJG, FFA, DG, WHH, JES, AA, MCC, ACLC, TF, AM, WR, and OP collected the data. CED wrote the paper with contributions from YM, OP, PM, and DBM.

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Summary statement - Monthly averaged data for all our plots used to calculate the results are available in the supplementary material. Detailed plot descriptions for each plot are available in a series of companion papers ([19-23,32-33]). All raw data inputs are available upon request from the authors or from http://gem.tropicalforests.ox.ac.uk/.

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Figure legends

Figure 1 –**Impact of drought on carbon fluxes.** (a) Total plant carbon expenditure (PCE), (b) total autotrophic respiration (R_a), (c) total net primary production (NPP), and (d) heterotrophic soil respiration (R_h) by the forests for the three drought-affected forest plots in humid lowland zones (solid black), in dry lowland zones (solid red), and the eight non-drought plots (solid green). Error bars indicate the standard error of mean plot differences. For visual clarity we do not include all error bars. Dashed lines show "normal" (2009; pre-drought) estimates smoothed with a span of 5months during 2010 and 2011 for the lowland plots (black dashed) and the dry lowland plots (red dashed). The vertical bar labelled "drought" represents the approximate period of the drought. The areas highlighted in yellow represents the drought anomaly or the impact of the drought on total plant carbon expenditure (numerically equivalent to GPP) and R_a.

Figure 2 –**Impact of drought on carbon allocation**. (a) Total NPP, (b) mean carbon allocation to canopy, (c) to wood, (d) to fine roots for non-drought lowland plots (green solid line; N=8), drought plots in the humid lowlands (black solid lines; N=3), and drought plots in the dry lowlands (red dashed lines; N=3). On the right (e-h) are the seasonally detrended anomaly data for each variable on the left. All error bars are standard errors across plots. The vertical bar labelled "drought" represents the approximate period of the drought. Significant change is determined with paired t-test comparing six month periods during and following the drought to equivalent months in 2009 for all plots.

Figure 3 – **Estimated impact of drought on the basin-wide flux of CO_2 -** The shifts in annual fluxes in 2010 relative to 2009 for each individual plot for (a) plant carbon expenditure (PCE; equal to GPP over longer time scales), (b) autotrophic respiration (R_a) and (c) total Net Primary Production (NPP), plotted against the shift in maximum cumulative water deficit (MCWD) in 2010 relative to 2009. (d) Estimate of basin-wide anomaly in Gross Primary Production (2011 minus 2010; assumed equal to PCE) based on the TRMM v7 calculated CWD anomaly (mm month^{-1}) and the slope of the linear regression found in Figure 3a. We contrast 2010 to 2011 to compare with the atmospheric inversion measurements collected during this period[5]. (e) Mortality rates as fraction of plot biomass for Peruvian drought plots (grey line, N=3, error bars are s.e.), Bolivian drought plots (black line, N=2), and no drought plots (red line, N=3). Mean Amazonian background tree mortality (no drought) is shown as a black horizontal dashed line (from Lewis et al. 2004 Figure 3)[27] .

347   **Methods** – We measured total NPP and autotrophic respiration at 13 one ha plots (plots described
348   individually below) throughout the Amazon basin through 2009-2010 (and 2009-2011 or 2009-2012
349   for droughted plots). A detailed description of each measurement is listed in ED Tables 1-3. Total
350   measured NPP included canopy, woody, and fine root NPP. In our seasonal estimates of NPP we
351   exclude several smaller components such as branchfall (although these data are shown in ED figure 6
352   and described in ED Tables 1-3), herbivory, coarse root, and small tree NPP (<10cm) that we have
353   included in previous estimates of these sites. We calculate leaf flush by calculating the change in leaf
354   area index, LAI (m^2 m^{-2}), multiplied by the mean specific leaf area, SLA (m^2 g^{-1}), and adding this to
355   leaf litterfall following a procedure from Doughty and Goulden (2008)[31]. Total estimated autotrophic
356   respiration consisted of rhizosphere respiration (i.e. respiration from roots, mycorrhizae and exudate-
357   dependent soil microbes), woody respiration and canopy respiration. Each component was measured
358   every 1-3 months, except for canopy respiration, which was measured only 1-2 times per plot at the
359   leaf level but scaled to the canopy scale using monthly LAI partitioned in sun and shade components.
360   Seasonal changes in autotrophic respiration during and following drought are due to monthly
361   measured rhizosphere and woody respiration, not canopy respiration (ED Figure 7). Detailed
362   information on the methodology and graphs showing data from each individual component are also
363   available from a series of companion papers[19-23,32-33]. Each of these site papers includes a full spatial
364   and scaling error analysis for each measurement so we do not include them here for brevity.

365   *Photosynthesis* - Leaf photosynthesis was measured in Bolivia in the peak of the drought (Nov 2010)
366   and during a non-drought period (June 2011) on the same ~20 individual trees (12 different species
367   from plot A and 17 species from plot B) in the plot using canopy top cut branches (immediately recut
368   under water to restore hydraulic conductivity). These measurements are compared with leaf
369   photosynthesis measurements in the Tapajos, Brazil on attached (not cut) canopy top leaves accessed
370   via three walk up towers, to show that A_{sat} (light saturated photosynthesis) would not necessarily be
371   expected to decrease during a typical dry season and the measurements were taken at the start of a
372   typical dry season to near the end (ED Figure 3- methodological details in ED Tables 1-3).

373   *Climate* - We classified our drought sites according to cumulative water deficit (CWD) anomalies
374   based on precipitation data collected from automatic weather stations at each of the plots (AWS)
375   (Skye Instruments, Llandrindod, UK). Six of our 13 plots experienced drought in 2010 (negative
376   CWD anomalies more than half the year) with a mean CWD anomaly of -107 mm in October and a
377   mean MCWD of -135 mm , meaning that the driest month on average had a water deficit 135 mm
378   greater than a normal year (ED Figure 2). This varied regionally with the highest MCWD in the
379   Bolivian sites ($MCWD_{anom}$ = -240 mm) and the lowest in the lowland Peruvian sites ($MCWD_{anom}$ = -
380   51 mm). We use Tropical Rainfall Monitoring Mission (TRMM) data from Jan 1998 to Dec 2012
381   (TRMM version 7) to calculate for each pixel the maximum monthly CWD anomaly (ED Figure 2).
382   The basin wide median $MCWD_{anom}$ for 2010 for droughted tropical forest regions was 136 mm
383   (excluding $MCWD_{anom} \geq 0$ mm). This implies that the mean of our droughted plots had equivalent
384   moisture anomaly to the basin-wide "typical" Amazon drought for 2010 (ED Figure 2), but also that
385   our plots did not experience the more severe drought seen by some regions of Amazonia.

386
387   *Statistics* –All data were tested for normality and if they were normal, we did a two-tailed paired t-test
388   using Sigmaplot (Systat Software inc., San Jose, Ca, USA). If normality was not passed, as with the
389   mortality data, we used a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. We used a two-tailed test except for mortality
390   where we expect the change to be in one direction and therefore used a one-tailed test. We calculated
391   95% confidence intervals by multiplying the standard error by 1.96.

392
393   *Additional Mortality data* - For the additional RAINFOR analyses for Tambopata and Caxiuanã,
394   interval-by-interval loss rates in each plot were computed following standard RAINFOR field and
395   ForestPlots.net data protocols (see for example Quesada et al. 2012 and Lopez-Gonzalez et al.
396   2011)[34-35] . At Caxiuanã, data were collected by the TEAM network whose protocols are closely based
397   on RAINFOR models. These include multiple repeated diameter measurements of the same tree at
398   1.3m or above buttresses - allowing where necessary for point of measurement changes -, high-
399   resolution botanical identifications of hundreds of tree species at each site, and the use of taxon-

400 specific wood density values, to derive from each individual tree >10cm diameter the stand-level
401 values of biomass and biomass dynamics. We used a generalized region-specific height-diameter
402 biomass allometry[36]. Because here the question is simply whether the 2010 drought coincided with
403 mortality changes in each site, and not what the precise values of mortality were for individual
404 intervals and plots, we did not attempt to account for the small effects of slightly varying census-
405 interval lengths on wood production rates. Data were downloaded from ForestPlots.net in October
406 2014, and the TEAM database in April 2013.
407

408 *Site descriptions of 13, one ha plots*

409 *Plots with drought in 2010*
410   *Kenia (N=2, 1 ha plots)* - These plots were established and monitored on private property at
411 the Hacienda Kenia in Guarayos Province, Santa Cruz, Bolivia (16.0158° S, 62.7301° W) from
412 January 2009. The plots are 2 km apart, and are situated on inceptisols with relatively high fertility
413 (high cation exchange capacity and phosphorus concentration) and low acidity compared with eastern
414 Amazonian forests. The plots experienced almost identical climate and had sandy loam soil with 76%
415 sand content. However, one plot was located on a shallow soil (< 1 m depth) over pre-Cambrian
416 bedrock, leading to lower available water (we term this plot Kenia-B). The second plot was located on
417 deeper soils in a slight topographic depression (henceforth termed Kenia-A). These differences in
418 drainage and soil depth had an effect on forest composition at this ecotone, with Kenia-A hosting a
419 more humid forest type typical of Amazonian forests and Kenia-B a drier forest type typical of
420 *chiquitano* dry forests. For further details see Araujo-Murakami et al. 2014 [20].
421   *Tanguro (N=2, 1 ha plots)* - The study area is located on the Fazenda Tanguro (~80,000 ha)
422 in Mato Grosso state, about 30 km north of southern boundary of the Amazon rainforest in Brazil
423 (13.0765° S, 52.3858° W). The soil type at the site is a red-yellow alic dystrophic latosol (RADAM
424 Brazil, 1974; Brazilian soil classification), a relatively infertile sandy ferralsol (FAO classification) or
425 oxisol (Haplustox; U.S. Department of Agriculture classification scheme), the groundwater is at about
426 15 m depth, and no layers of soil prevent root penetration through the soil profile. These soils are
427 amongst the least fertile in Amazonia and widespread across eastern Amazonia. The vegetation is
428 closed canopy, old growth forest with a relatively low mean canopy height (20 m) and relatively low
429 plant species diversity (97 species of trees and lianas greater than 10 cm DBH (diameter at 1.3 m stem
430 height above the ground)) when compared with the wetter forests typical of the central Amazon. For
431 further details see Rocha et al. 2014[23].
432   *Tambopata (N=2, 1 ha plots)* - The two study plots are located in the Tambopata reserve
433 (TAM-05 12.837° S, 69.2937° W and TAM-06 12.828° S, 69.2690° W), in the Madre de Dios region
434 of Peru. The geomorphology of the study region is based on old floodplains of the meandering
435 Tambopata River. TAM-05 is situated on a Pleistocene terrace (< 100,000 years old). The soil at
436 TAM-05 is a haplic cambisol (WRB taxonomy), and that at TAM-06 is a haplic alisol[37]. We
437 incorporate mortality data from an additional nearby plot (TAM-09). No hardpan layers of soil
438 prevent root penetration through the soil profile. For further details see Malhi et al. 2014[22].
439   We divide these six plots into three lowland plots (TAM-05, TAM-06, and Kenia-A - black
440 lines figure 1 and 2) and three dry-lowland plots (2 Tanguro plots and Kenia-B - red lines figure 1 and
441 2). Distinction of dry-lowland plots is made by using mean MCWD for Tanguro and by species
442 composition for Kenia-B with drier forest type species typical of *chiquitano* dry forests.
443

444 *Plots with no drought in 2010*

445   *San Pedro (N=2, 1 ha plots)* - The San Pedro site (13.0491°S, 71.5365°W) is located in
446 the Kosñipata Valley, in the cultural buffer zone of the Parque Nacional del Manú, Cusco, Peru. The
447 two plots at San Pedro lie very close to the transition between upper and pre-montane forest zones,
448 which occurs in this valley at approximately 1500-2000 m. Although data on cloud cover frequency
449 and cloud base elevation in the plots over the annual cycle are difficult to obtain, SP 1750 is immersed
450 for longer periods than SP 1500 during the austral winter months. SP 1500 is estimated to be near the
451 lower limit of the cloud base. For further details see Huasco et al. 2014 [33].

452   *Wayqecha (N=2, 1 ha plots)* - The Wayqecha (RAINFOR plot code WAY-01: 13.1751°S
453   71.5948°W) and Esperanza (RAINFOR plot code ESP-01) plots are high elevation cloud forest
454   located in the cultural buffer zone of the Parque Nacional del Manú, Cusco, Peru at ~3000 meters
455   elevation. The two plots lie a few hundred metres below the treeline transition to high elevation
456   grasslands. For further details see Girardin et al. 2014 [32].

457   *Caxiuanã-(CAX-08 and CAX-06) (N=2, 1 ha plots)* – These plots are located in Caxiuanã
458   National Forest Reserve, Pará in the eastern Brazilian Amazon. Terra Preta (1.8560° S, 51.4352° W)-
459   The *terra preta* plot (plot code CAX-08 in the RAINFOR Amazon forest inventory network) was a
460   late successional forest with a large proportion of fruit trees, on an isolated patch (< 2 ha) of fertile
461   dark earth or *terra preta do Indio*. The original ferralsol soils became progressively enriched by the
462   activities of local inhabitants between the years of 1280 to 1600AD[38]. The species composition of the
463   *terra preta* plot was that of an old abandoned agroforestry system, with Brazil nut (*Bertholletia
464   excelsa*), kapok (*Ceiba pentandra*) and also paleotropical tree crops including coffee (*Coffea*) and
465   orange (*Citrus*). The water-side location of the *terra preta* plot results in a substantially different
466   microclimate from that of the inland tower plot, with high solar radiation (the large cool water area of
467   the bay suppresses cloud formation close to the bay) and higher temperatures. The *tower* plot (CAX-
468   06) (1.7198 S, 51.4581 W) was a tall primary forest (35 m canopy height) situated on a clay-rich geric
469   alumnic ferralsol (alumnic, hyperdistric, clayic), near an eddy covariance flux tower, with species
470   composition typical of eastern Amazonia. For further details see Doughty et al. 2014[21].
471   *Caxiuanã-(TFE-control) – (N=1, 1 ha plots)* This control plot of an experimental drought
472   study is approximately 2 km south of the tower plot mentioned above (1.7279°S, 51.468° W). It is a
473   largely undisturbed *terra firme* forest, of the type widespread across eastern Amazonia. The study plot
474   is located on highly weathered vetic acrisols typical of upland forests in the eastern Amazon, with a
475   thick stony laterite layer at 3–4 m depth. The site elevation is 15 m above river level in the dry season
476   and the water table has been occasionally observed at a soil depth of 10 m during the wet season. For
477   further details see da Costa et al. 2014[19].

478   **Extended Data results –**
479   *Heterotrophic respiration* - Soil heterotrophic respiration showed no significant change during the
480   drought period in the droughted *humid* lowland plots (Figure 1d black line, N=3) and no significant
481   change with cumulative water deficit (CWD) anomaly (P>0.05). There was a slight suppression of
482   R_H near the start of the drought, but this was compensated by a larger than normal increase in R_H later
483   in the drought as some rains (although much lower than normal) arrived (Figure 1d black line).
484   However, in contrast, the droughted *dry* lowland plots did show a large decrease in soil heterotrophic
485   respiration at the start of the drought in comparison to 2009 (although only marginally significant
486   P<0.1, N=3) (Figure 1d red line), but these regions are a geographically small part of the basin and
487   their overall influence on basin wide fluxes is likely to be small. Mean temperatures were similar in
488   2010 and 2011 and therefore any change in heterotrophic flux was most likely to have been moisture
489   driven (ED Figure 2). Dead wood respiration was initially suppressed during the dry season of the
490   drought year but this was compensated by a large gain once the rains started, leading to no net annual
491   change in dead wood respiration from the drought (ED figure 6). Branch fall did not increase during
492   the drought and, in fact, slightly decreased, possibly because of lower wind speeds from reduced
493   storm activity (ED figure 6). Our data show little net change to heterotrophic respiration, and
494   therefore we estimate that the drought forest plots were first a net C source in 2010 due to suppressed
495   photosynthesis, and then a net C sink in early 2011 as photosynthesis returned to normal but R_a
496   remained slightly supressed compared to previous periods, an observation which is in line with a
497   recent atmospheric inversion study of the Amazon basin[5].
498
499   *Carbon Allocation shifts*- In two of the plots (Kenia A and B), NPP allocation shifted towards roots in
500   the second year after the drought, possibly to alleviate water stress for future droughts, or to increase
501   nutrient uptake to track recovered carbon uptake (ED Figure 5 – NPP allocation patterns at this site
502   are explored in detail in a companion paper[26]). However, allocation responses to drought vary
503   strongly by site. For instance, in two lowland Peruvian plots that experienced milder drought, NPP

504   instead shifted back towards woody growth in the second year following the drought (ED Figure 5)
505   while in two dry lowland Brazilian plots that experienced moderate drought, woody growth increased
506   in the year following the drought at the expense of canopy and fine root growth (ED Figure 5). The
507   two plots hardest hit by the drought ($MCWD_{anom}$ = -240 mm) showed a long term decrease in
508   allocation of NPP towards wood even though total NPP remained constant (ED Figure 5). This
509   indicates that care should be taken in the interpretation of tree growth and dendrochronology results as
510   proxies for productivity following drought as they may be more influenced by shifting carbon
511   allocation than by changes in total NPP. Our plots show no significant change in woody NPP growth
512   rates during the drought although there is a small decline (Figure 2). Woody growth rates may
513   actually decline, but our sample size of three is too small to capture the signal statistically.

514
515   *Additional mortality results-* To see if mortality increased more broadly in the regions surrounding
516   our plots, we compared plots in the RAINFOR database near Tambopata (with drought according to
517   our meteorological station data) to Caxiuanã (without drought in 2010). In Caxiuanã, we compared
518   plots 1 to 6 (= TEC-01 to TEC-06 using the RAINFOR code) for pre-2010 mortality (starting in 2003)
519   to mortality from a census in late 2010. In Tambopata, we compared plots TAM-01 to TAM-08 for
520   pre-2010 mortality (mostly starting in 1983) to mortality from a census in mid-2011. For this dataset,
521   we use a non-parametric Wilcoxon signed rank test and find significant increase in biomass mortality
522   following the 2010 drought in the larger Tambopata dataset (N =9, p = 0.018). We contrast this to
523   Caxiuanã (a no drought site) where we also have high resolution met station data and find no
524   significant change following 2010 (N=6, p>0.05).
525

526

527

528

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571

572

a PCE

drought

b R_a

c NPP

- no drought
- drought-humid lowland
- drought-dry lowland
- drought-lowland-2009
- drought-dry-2009

d R_h

wet / dry / wet / dry / wet / dry

2009 / 2010 / 2011

Y-axis (all panels): Mg C ha^{-1} mo^{-1}

a

b

c

d

e

f

g

h

Total NPP (Mg C ha^{-1} mo^{-1})

% canopy

% wood

% fine roots

NPP anomaly (Mg C ha^{-1} mo^{-1})

% canopy anomaly

% wood anomaly

% fine roots anomaly

— no drought
— drought - humid lowland
- - - drought - dry-lowland

drought

drought

no significant change

significant change

no significant change

significant change

wet   dry   wet   dry   wet   dry
2009   2010   2011

wet   dry   wet   dry   wet   dry
2009   2010   2011

a PCE$_{anom}$

PCE$_{anom}$ = -1.0+0.011*MCWD$_{anom}$
P<0.05

b Ra$_{anom}$

Ra$_{anom}$ = -0.51+0.007*MCWD$_{anom}$
P<0.1

c NPP$_{anom}$

Not significant

Mg C ha^{-1} yr^{-1}

MCWD anomaly 2010-2009 (mm month^{-1})

d

Mg C ha^{-1} yr^{-1} anomaly

e Tree Mortality

fraction of total plot carbon lost

— drought - Ave Tam5, 6 and 9
— drought - Ave Kenia A and B
-- Background mortality Amazon
— no drought - Ave Cax

Year