

## 1.3 The Amazon River

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**Main Idea** The Amazon River supports life in its vast rain forest.

The Amazon River begins high in the Andes Mountains of Peru. It flows east for 4,000 miles across the continent and empties into the Atlantic. This massive river system has more than 1,000 **tributaries**, or small rivers that drain into a larger river. Seven of these tributaries are more than 1,000 miles long.

### Life Along the River

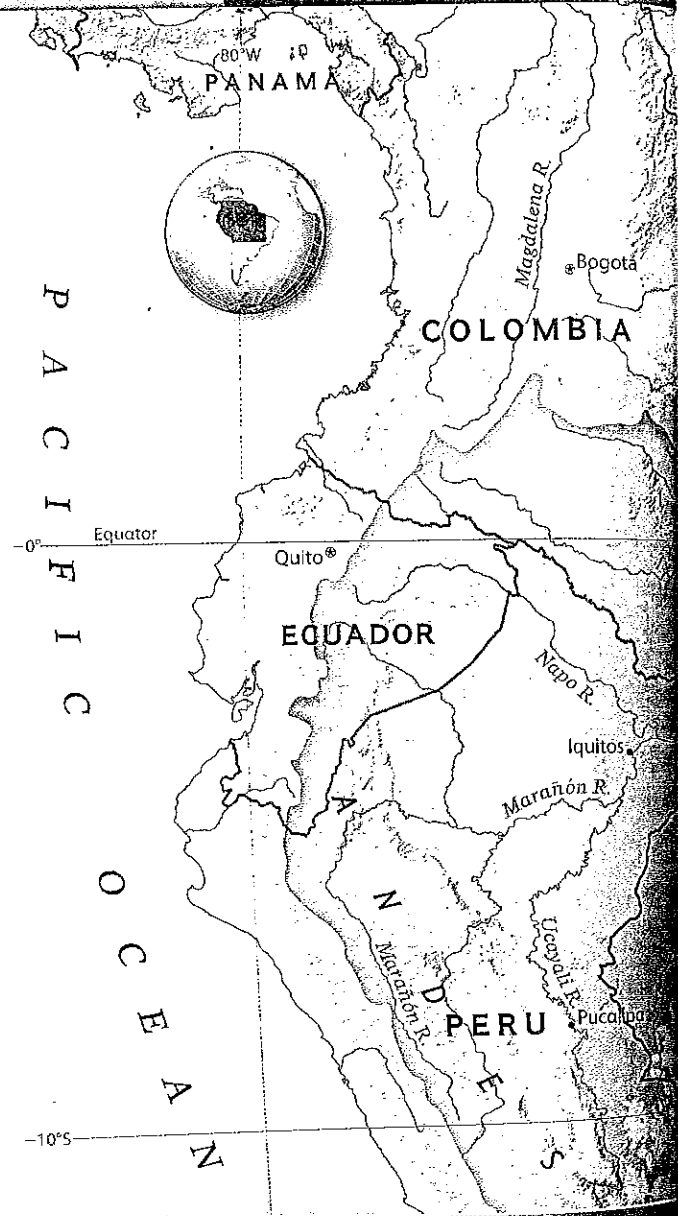
Though the Amazon River is the world's second longest river, it is the largest river in the world by volume. The Amazon creates the largest river basin—2,700,000 square miles—and includes the world's largest tropical rain forest. The Amazon rain forest is home to thousands of plant and animal species and millions of insect species. The variety of species in an ecosystem is called its **biodiversity**.

Annual flooding of the river from melting snow and rain in the Andes usually occurs between June and October. The floodwaters deposit rich nutrients, or substances that support life, in the lowland forest soils. These nutrients support the biodiversity of the rain forest.

Today, a growing population puts pressure on rain forest lands through mining, logging, farming, and land development. Conservationists suggest that setting limits on development will help protect the Amazon rain forest.

### Before You Move On

**Summarize** In what ways does the Amazon River support life in its rain forest?

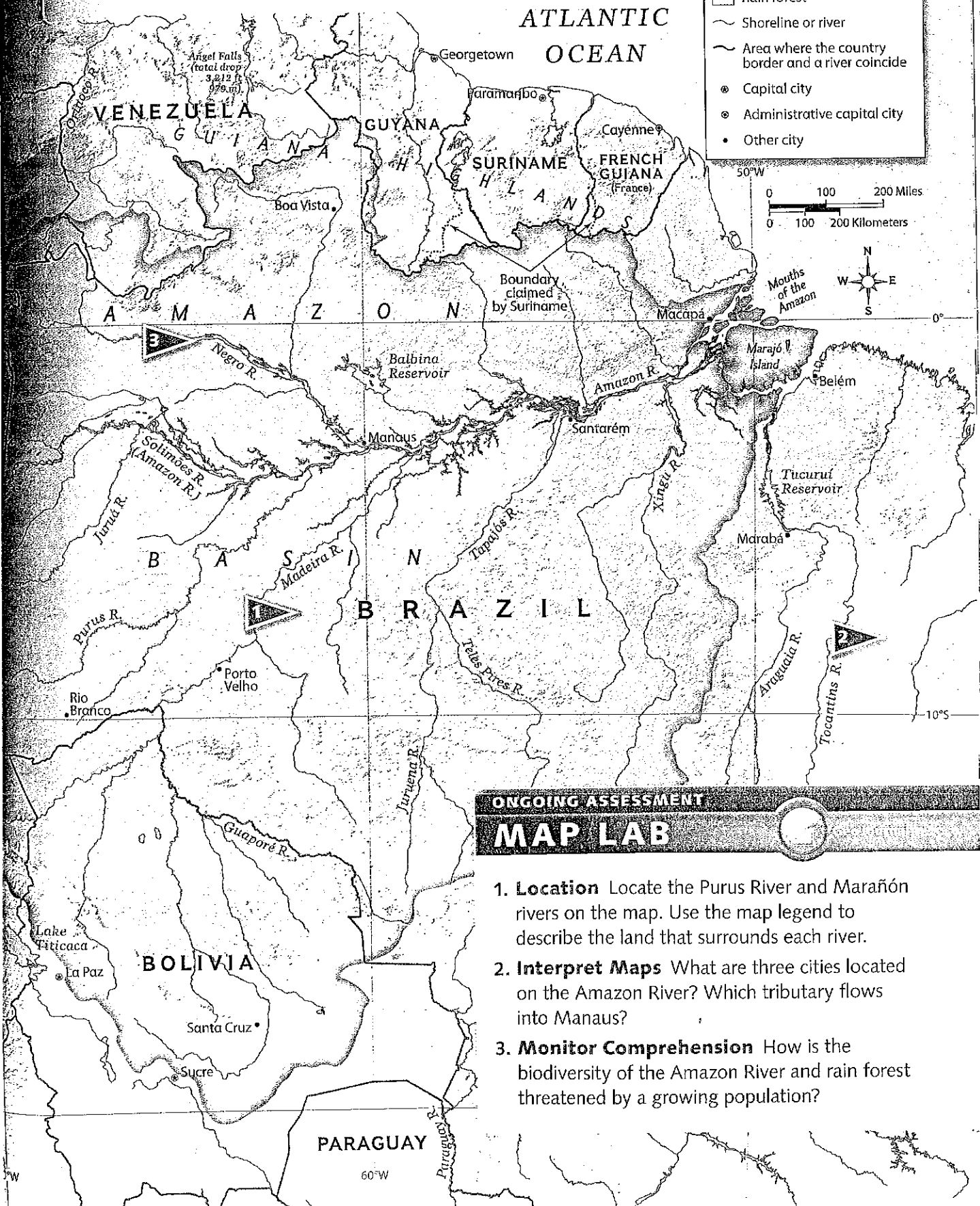


### AMAZON RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES

Source	Andes Mountains
Length	4,000 miles
Basin	2.7 million square miles
Directional Flow	East-northeasterly
Number of Tributaries	More than 1,000
Three Notable Tributaries	Madeira (2,082 miles long) Tocantins (1,677 miles long) Negro (1,400 miles long)

Source: Encyclopædia Britannica

**Visual Vocabulary** A tributary is a small river that drains into a larger river. The Purus River is a tributary that runs through continuous forest on its way to the Amazon.



**ONGOING ASSESSMENT**  
**MAP LAB**

- 1. Location** Locate the Purus River and Marañón rivers on the map. Use the map legend to describe the land that surrounds each river.
- 2. Interpret Maps** What are three cities located on the Amazon River? Which tributary flows into Manaus?
- 3. Monitor Comprehension** How is the biodiversity of the Amazon River and rain forest threatened by a growing population?