



# Atabapo River

## Report card

2016

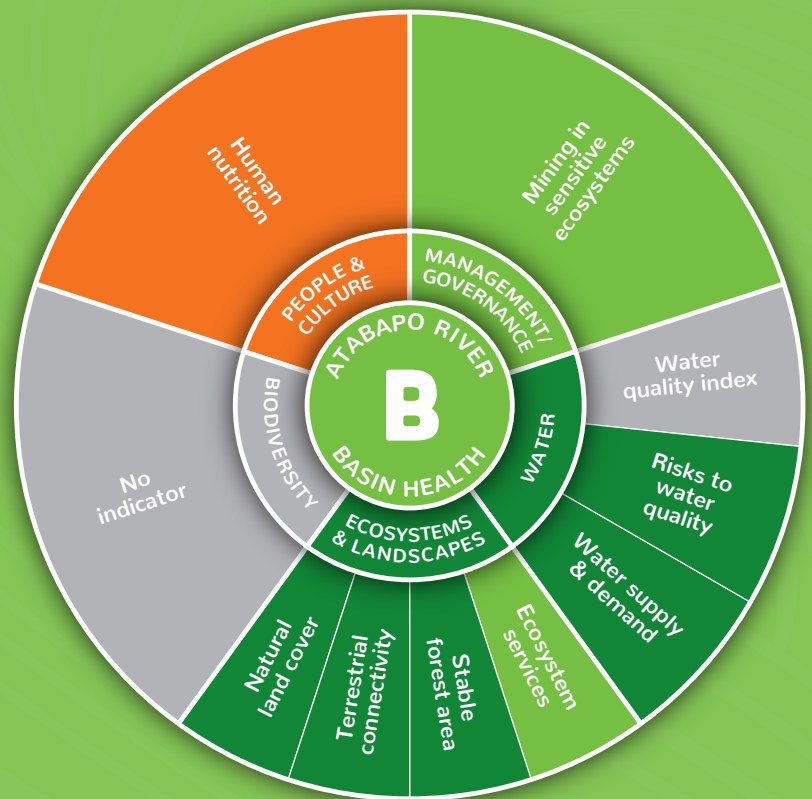


## Characteristics of the Atabapo River Basin

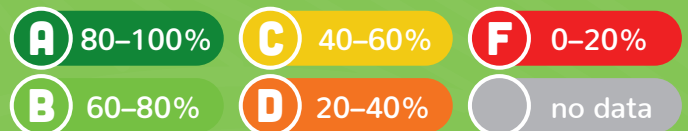
The Atabapo River, is one of the smallest tributaries of the Orinoco River in Colombia, and forms part of the border between Colombia and Venezuela. The river originates in the low plain forests of the transitional Amazon biome and stretches 185 km in length. The basin includes a variety of ecosystems, such as seasonal savannas, basal rainforests, and basal gallery forests. Main threats within the basin are exploitation of natural resources and gold mining.

## The Arauca's health is good **but its population** faces challenges

The Atabapo River Basin received an overall B grade (72%). Of the eight indicators assessed, most scored in the good-excellent range, except for the human nutrition indicator which had the second-lowest score in all of the Orinoco River Basin. Overall basin scores ranged from as low as 38% for human nutrition, to as high as 100% for both water supply and demand, and natural land cover. The condition of stable forest area, terrestrial connectivity, and risks to water quality were also excellent in the Atabapo River Basin. Unfortunately, none of IDEAM's National Network Monitoring Program water quality sites are currently within the Atabapo River, so the water quality index was not available for this sub-basin. There is currently no biodiversity indicator. The main biodiversity indicator in the other sub-basins was river dolphins, but due to the type of water, length/depth of the river, and fish abundance, river dolphins are not naturally present in this river.



What do the scores mean?



# White sands and black waters of the **Atabapo River** are threatened

One of the least visited rivers in the Colombian portion of the Orinoco River Basin is the Atabapo River. This tributary, commonly known as the “river of black water”, is part of the Inirida Fluvial Star and flows into the Orinoco at the municipality of San Fernando de Atabapo, which is within Venezuela. Indigenous communities live along the river including the Curripaco, Puinave, and Guanano ethnic groups.

The term “black water” is a result of the color of its waters and its “white sands” reflects the geologic influence of the Guayana shield. Illegal mining for gold is a key threat present in the sub-basin. Indigenous communities frequently complain about destructive methods used during gold mining, including the use of water dredging techniques and unregulated mercury use for extraction of ore. Together, both are very damaging to the environment as well as the indigenous communities that inhabit the basin.

## A need to **know more**

The **extensive biological diversity** found in the basin demands **significant investments in biodiversity assessments and monitoring** to supplement important yet fragmented biodiversity records. Additionally, information is needed on the state of river-related cultural values in order to include this in subsequent report cards.

### VALUES

#### BIODIVERSITY



#### PEOPLE & CULTURE



### FUTURE INDICATORS

#### MAMMAL RICHNESS



#### FLORA RICHNESS



#### FISH RICHNESS



#### RIVER DOLPHINS



#### INDIGENOUS AREAS



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*The banks of the Atabapo River.*



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