Speaker 1:

On the next episode of Big Ideas TXST, Dr. Jennifer Divine, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography, and Dr. Nate Curatt, Associate Professor and Director of the Texas Center for Geographic Information Science, discuss the staggering environmental destruction being wrought in Central America by narcotics traffickers clear-cutting huge swaths of rainforest.

Dr. Jennifer Divine:

But what this means in Central America is that drug traffickers are seeking out ever remote areas to claim for their smuggling operations, and they're not just contributing to deforestation. We are starting to use a term that we call narco degradation to capture the diversity of environmental impacts that go far beyond just deforestation. So going back to ground zero of narco cattle ranching in the Maya Biosphere reserve, Laguna Del Tigre National Park, forest fires that were funded by narco cattle ranchers devastated parts of the last remaining nesting sites of the Scarlet Macaw in Central America.

Dr. Jennifer Divine:

These are also archeological sites, so archeological ruins are being burned and destroyed. Drug trafficking also enables other illicit markets to thrive. Flora and fauna poaching are on the rise. Timber poaching is on the rise. These illegal activities and illegal actors dip their hands in many illicit trades. And so what you see is just an erosion of governance, and the rule of law that allows for multiple illegal markets to proliferate, and they all have impacts on the environment.

Speaker 1:

To hear the full interview with Dr. Divine and Dr. Curatt, listen to Big Ideas Episode Five, available now. Subscribe to experience more innovative, thought provoking content from Texas State University.