

APP suppliers pulp new bid for sustainability credentials in Kalimantan

Pontianak, West Kalimantan – Pulp timber suppliers to controversial paper giant Asia Pulp & Paper (APP) are continuing to log tropical forest and dig drainage canals through peat soils in Kalimantan, regardless of the new Forest Conservation Policy (FCP) launched with much fanfare by APP and parent group Sinar Mas last month.

Over the same period that heavy machinery was engaged in logging and dredging, representatives of both APP and the two supplier companies hosted a meeting 80 km away in provincial capital Pontianak to convince sceptical local NGOs that the FCP was not yet another company greenwashing stunt.

APP has previously announced an end to tropical forest pulping in 2004, 2007 and 2009. On February 5 it hosted a gala announcement that it had halted tropical forest clearing on its own and independent supplier concessions throughout Indonesia on January 31, with heavy equipment impounded pending independent assessment of conservation values and above ground carbon.

A consortium of Kalimantan's Forest Monitoring NGOs (RPHK) who were among those present at the February 26 meeting in Pontianak, has lodged a complaint on the basis of extensive photographic and video evidence of the work by PT Asia Tani Persada (ATP) and PT Daya Tani Kalbar (DTK), two of the four companies disclosed by APP as West Kalimantan suppliers to its mills in devastated Sumatra.

RPHK observers familiar with the areas of the two concessions said they contained orang-utan habitat. The promised assessments would have examined whether and where orang-utans are still present.

"We are really concerned to see how heavy equipment is still actively clearing natural forest, digging peat canals and clearing the land in the two supplier's concessions in West Kalimantan. This is a clear violation of the APP's FCP that APP socialized in Pontianak on 26 February," said Baruni Hendri, a spokesperson of the RPHK consortium.

"Our findings showed that APP is not taking their conservation policy seriously, thus making RPHK doubt APP's seriousness on the implementation of their commitment."

WWF-Indonesia, a member of RPHK with local NGOs, noted that not only was clearing going on ahead of the assessment of conservation values, but potential orang-utan habitat and peat areas prone to releasing immense carbon emissions when drained were precisely the sort of areas likely to be declared off-limits by the assessments.

WWF-Indonesia has also called on APP and its parent, the giant Sinar Mas Group, to quickly close a loophole allowing mills to continue accepting "stockpiled" mixed tropical hardwoods for an indefinite period, nominating May 5 as giving ample time to clear stockpiles. The evidence of current clearing vindicates concerns that freshly cleared timber will continue to be "laundered" into pulp mills.

The internal monitoring process currently conducted by the company and its advisor, The Forest Trust, has not spotted these violations

"We call on global buyers of pulp and paper to remain skeptical and await independent verification by independent NGOs of the credible field implementation of APP's FCP before making any new purchasing decision," said Anton P. Wijaya, Director Executive of WALHI (Friends of Earth Indonesia) chapter West Kalimantan.

Photos and videos of this issue can be accessed through:

www.linkarborneo.com and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o54C3jf6PLYRPHK>.

Member groups of the Consortium of Kalimantan Forest Monitoring Volunteers (RPHK) able to provide information in English are WWF-Indonesia (Contact : Ian Hilman, +6282121868624, ihilman@wwf.or.id), and TITIAN, an active biodiversity conservation institute for local community sustainable benefits in West Kalimantan (Contact Director, Sulhani +62561-6589198). Other member groups include AKAR, an illegal wildlife crime monitoring network in Borneo, actively raising public awareness about the importance of wildlife protection and their habitat; JPIK Kalimantan Barat, a civil society network that focuses on monitoring effort of the sustainable forest management for Forest Plantation Wood Production Permit; Link-AR Borneo (Lingkaran Advokasi dan Riset), a civil society organization focus on advocacy based on research or investigation related to land plunder and biodiversity degradation, as well as community empowerment (www.linkarborneo.com); SAMPAN (Sahabat Masyarakat Pantai), a civil society organization focus on advocacy for coastal and watershed communities (www.sampankalimantan.org) and LEMBAH, an active institute in Bengkayang District for social and economic empowerment based on environment.