



Forest Clearing by Paper Giant APP/Sinar Mas Linked to 12 Years of Sumatran Tiger, Human Fatalities

Press Release

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Pekanbaru – Most violent incidents between people and tigers in Sumatra’s Riau Province in the past 12 years have occurred near forested areas being cleared by paper giant Asia Pulp & Paper (APP) and associated companies, under the umbrella of its holding group, Sinar Mas Group (SMG), according to an analysis of human-tiger conflict data.

Since 1997 in Riau Province, 55 people and 15 Sumatran tigers (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*) have been killed during conflict encounters, according to Eyes on the Forest, a coalition that investigates forest crimes and conflict in the central Sumatran province. Another 17 tigers have been captured and removed from the wild.

Sumatra is home to some of the most biodiverse forests in the world, however, half of the forest remaining in 1985 has since been lost. “With so much forest loss, the tigers have nowhere to go” said Ian Kosasih of WWF-Indonesia, “In the last month alone, four tigers have been killed in Riau. There are fewer than 400 Sumatran tigers estimated to remain in the wild and every tiger killed is a significant loss to the population of this critically endangered subspecies.”

By overlaying the locations of these conflicts with government maps of pulpwood plantation concessions, Eyes on the Forest found a direct correlation between tiger conflict and the unsustainable forest practices of APP/SMG-associated companies to supply APP’s pulp & paper production. At least 147 of 245 or 60% of all conflicts in Riau, resulting in 27 human deaths (49%) and 8 tiger deaths (53%), occurred in the Senepis area, where APP/SMG-associated companies have expanded its natural forest clearance operations in five concessions mainly since 1999 -- three of them without proper license from the Ministry of Forestry.

“APP/SMG-associated companies’ activities in Senepis are legally questionable and environmentally reckless,” said Johnny Mundung, of Walhi Riau. “APP has recently made ridiculous public claims that it is leading tiger conservation in the area, when in fact it is jeopardizing the safety of local communities and pushing the tigers closer to local extinction. Global paper buyers should not be fooled: APP destroys forests and wildlife.”

Cleared areas around the Kerumutan forest have become a new hotspot for tiger conflict: four tigers were killed in three separate incidents in this year alone. Large area of this deep peat forest have been licensed for APP/SMG-associated companies and some sections have been cleared in recent years by them in what

Eyes on the Forest believes is legally questionable logging. Since 2007, Riau and National Police had been probing 14 companies as part of a widespread illegal logging case. Half of them were APP/SMG-associated companies, including one concession in Kerumutan (PT. Bina Duta Laksana) where one human-tiger conflict happened in February. However, the Riau Police abruptly shut down their investigation in December 2008 without any charges being brought, except one against an APP/SMG-associated company, PT. Ruas Utama Jaya, which has concessions in Senepis.

“The Riau Police should continue probing the legality of natural forest clearing, including APP/SMG-associated companies’ activities, to ensure respect for the law, especially provisions that safeguard the environmental and social rights of Riau communities,” said Susanto Kurniawan from Jikalahari. In February, the national Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) pledged to resume the cases of 13 companies and House of Representatives’ Law Commission (III) supports this move.

APP is responsible for more natural forest clearance in Sumatra – the only habitat for the Sumatran tiger - than any other company. Since it began operations in the 1980s, APP is estimated to have pulped more than 1 million hectares (approximately 2.5 million acres) of natural forests in Riau and Jambi provinces in Sumatra. Currently, NGOs are concerned about APP’s involvement in forest destruction in Senepis, Kerumutan, Kampar and Bukit Tigapuluh forest blocks in these provinces. Eyes on the Forest calls on APP/SMG-associated companies to stop natural forest clearance immediately.

Besides being critical habitat for tigers, Senepis, Kerumutan, Kampar Peninsula and other Sumatran peat forests in Riau are a globally significant carbon store; the carbon-rich peat soil is so deep that simply cutting the trees or disturbing the soil releases enough carbon emissions to impact global climate change. Of all the natural forest lost from 1982 until 2007 in Riau, 24% was replaced by or cleared for industrial pulpwood plantations and 29% was replaced or cleared for industrial palm oil plantations.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

- Eyes on the Forest is a coalition of 25 environmental NGOs in Riau, including Riau Forest Rescue Network “Jikalahari”, Walhi Riau and WWF-Indonesia. Maps to accompany this story are available at www.EyesontheForest.or.id. For hi-res photos inquiry you can send e-mail to Afdhal Mahyuddin, EoF Editor at afdhalmy@yahoo.co.uk.
- The human-tiger conflict data was compiled from information gathered by WWF-Indonesia, Riau University, Sumatran Tiger Conservation Program (PHKS), and media reports.
- There have been many reports of APP committing human rights abuses in Riau and Jambi provinces, such as seizing what indigenous peoples and local communities believe to be their lands, intimidating villagers and prohibiting villagers’ access to previously public areas. In December 2008, an APP-affiliated company and Riau police destroyed hundreds of homes in a village that had been in a land dispute with the company. At least one child was killed due to indirect effect from the incident, homes set on fire and villagers arrested or evicted, according to news accounts and the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights. See Amnesty International’s Press Release on 23 December 2008: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/indonesia-investigate-forcible-destruction-homes-police-riau-20081223>
- APP is one of the world’s largest pulp and paper companies and the largest pulp & paper company in Indonesia, with an annual combined pulp, packaging and converting capacity of over 15 million tons a year. The company markets products (including copier paper, toilet tissue, printing paper, shopping bags,

stationery and paper cup stock) in more than 65 countries and amassed in excess of US \$3.2 billion in sales in 2005. APP is part of the Sinar Mas Group, owned by the Wijaya family, which includes vertically integrated pulp & paper companies (including natural forest clearance, plantation development, pulp and paper making, and sales) and palm oil companies. APP operates mainly in Indonesia and China.

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