



## Once-Untouched Haven for Tigers, Orangutans, Elephants Being Systematically Targeted by APP/SMG

*Sumatran Forest is Last Home of the Indigenous Orang Rimba and Talang Mamak*

A joint media release by KKI Warsi, FZS, Eyes on the Forest and WWF-Indonesia

*Embargoed until December 14th on 12.00 Western Indonesian Time*

**JAMBI, Indonesia** – A forest named by international scientists as one of the top 20 priority landscapes globally for the survival of the tiger is being systematically targeted for pulp production by Asia Pulp & Paper/Sinar Mas Group (APP/SMG), one of the world’s largest paper suppliers. This is in breach of company’s claims that it doesn’t target high quality and high conservation value forest for clearing and that it’s carbon footprint is close to neutral.

An investigation by local NGOs working in central Sumatra found that since 2004, APP-affiliated companies have systematically sought out inactive selective logging concessions on land with dense natural forests in the Bukit Tigapuluh landscape. The companies obtained government licenses to switch their status to industrial timber plantation concessions, sometimes under legally questionable circumstances. This allows for clear cutting and replacing the natural forest with commercial plantations. Such conversion leaves homeless the elephants, tigers, orangutans and forest-dwelling indigenous tribes who have been living here for centuries.

“Despite APP’s claims that it doesn’t pulp high quality forest, our investigation found that in the last six years, the company in this landscape alone contributed to loss of about 60,000 hectares of high carbon and high conservation value forest without appropriate professional assessments or stakeholder consultation,” said Susanto Kurniawan of EoF. “Bukit Tigapuluh is just one of very few remaining rain forests left in central Sumatra, therefore we urge the Government not to give it away to APP/SMG who will mercilessly eliminate it and will devastate local communities and biodiversity.”

Bukit Tigapuluh is home to two tribes of forest-dwelling indigenous people. 551 Orang Rimba and 165 Talang Mamak live here, neither settle outside of central Sumatra. The Orang Rimba people have inhabited the jungles of Bukit Tigapuluh for centuries, traveling in tight-knit family groups in the forests, hunting, fishing and collecting non-timber forest products on their traditional lands.

“Members of this indigenous tribe occasionally trade goods with villages on the edge of the forest, but prefer to keep to themselves,” said Diki Kurniawan from WARSI. “They are being driven off their ancestral land by APP and other companies and are running out of options. They depend on the forest for medicine, food, shelter and crops to trade with villagers. Many must now beg for rice handouts to survive.”

The “Global Priority Tiger Conservation Landscape” of Bukit Tigapuluh in central Sumatra was deemed one of the 20 landscapes critical to the long-term survival of tigers in the wild by leading tiger scientists in 2006. In November 2010, the Indonesian government pledged at a global tiger summit to make the landscape one of its focal areas for tiger conservation.

Bukit Tigapuluh harbors close to 320,000 hectares of natural forest in 2010, the largest concentration of remaining blocks of lowland forest on non-peat soil on the island. Around 30 tigers are estimated to survive here, nearly 10 percent of the population of critically endangered Sumatran tigers left in the wild. The tigers here share the forest with more than 150 Sumatran elephants and 130 great apes that were released here as part of the only successful reintroduction program for Sumatran orangutans.

“We have released more than 100 orangutans, including Tamara from Perth Zoo, into this forest in

partnership with the Indonesian government because this was supposed to be a good and protected forest,” said Julius Paolo Siregar of the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) “These great apes are the survivors of the illegal pet trade who are confiscated and finally getting a chance to live and breed again in the wild. Orangutans cannot live without trees and forest conversion plans mean certain death for many of them.”

The landscape had long been too remote and hilly for industry to target but as much of Sumatra was being deforested the pulp and paper industry started to focus here. Today, only 42 percent (134,834 hectares) of the remaining forest in the landscape – in the most hilly area – is under protection as Bukit Tigapuluh National Park. Evaluation of likely natural forest loss in the future concludes that APP/SMG could become the single biggest destroyer of natural forest in Bukit Tigapuluh - close to 60 percent, about 97,000 hectares, of the remaining forest outside the park is under danger of large-scale commercial conversion for pulp and paper production by APP/SMG.

Two APP/SMG affiliates - PT. Artelindo Wiratama and PT. Tebo Multiagro Corporation – continued to clear Bukit Tigapuluh’s natural forest in 2010 and PT. Rimba Hutani Mas of Sinar Mas Group is planning to clear close to 43,000 hectares of natural forest. NGOs fear that the newest industrial timber plantation concessions of PT. Lestari Asri Jaya of Barito Pacific Group, containing around 36,000 hectares of dense natural forests, could start to clear them to supply the wood to APP/SMG in the near future.

Like the pulp and paper industry, the tigers, elephants and orangutans prefer the flatlands to the hills, putting them in the direct path of the bulldozers that come to clear the forest. The ones that survive are subsequently threatened by conflict with the plantation workers, illegal encroachers and poachers who follow, once easy access is provided by logging roads including the APP logging road constructed possibly illegally.

Already local governments and NGOs endorsed a ‘Bukit Tigapuluh Ecosystem Conservation Implementation Plan’ in May 2009 aiming at a sustainable landscape which supports the conservation of biodiversity and welfare of the local communities based on sustainable low-carbon economy. Already, Jambi Province has applied to become the country’s first pilot REDD-plus province. Already, many decision makers have agreed to expand Bukit Tigapuluh National Park. Yet APP/SMG keeps cutting away.

“It is urgent that as much remaining natural forest in the landscape as possible is protected in expanded national park or ecosystem restoration concessions and that no more licenses for natural forest conversion be issued or executed,” said Aditya Bayunanda of WWF-Indonesia. “The Bukit Tigapuluh landscape is a major test of Indonesia’s climate agreement with the Kingdom of Norway. We propose that the Government of Indonesia applies the moratorium on natural forest and peat conversion that it committed to in its agreement with Norway to all forests, including those in the Bukit Tigapuluh landscape. We stand ready to help the Government find ways to protect the forest and Indonesia’s natural heritage.”

###

#### **Notes to Editors:**

- The report is published at: [http://www.wwf.or.id/btp\\_report\\_dec10\\_pdf](http://www.wwf.or.id/btp_report_dec10_pdf)
- The report is accompanied by supportive evidence in geo-referenced format on Google Earth. including deforestation map of the area and photographs. The collection can be downloaded at: [http://www.wwf.or.id/btp\\_evidence\\_google\\_earth](http://www.wwf.or.id/btp_evidence_google_earth)
- Last year’s joint NGO press release on Bukit Tigapuluh can be found at: <http://www.savesumatra.org/index.php/newspublications/pressdetail/8>
- In 2007, APP’s affiliates built a new and likely illegal logging and wood transport highway that cuts the Bukit Tigapuluh Landscape in half and was constructed through High Conservation Value Forests without an environmental impact assessment. It is severely damaging the landscape by giving access to encroachers and poachers who never used these forests before.

#### **For further information, please contact:**

- Susanto Kurniawan (EoF) : +628127631775 / [santo@jikalahari.or.id](mailto:santo@jikalahari.or.id)
- Diki Kurniawan (KKI Warsi) : +628127407730 / [dicky@warsi.or.id](mailto:dicky@warsi.or.id)
- Julius Paolo Siregar (FZS) : +6281380656556 / [combi\\_regs@yahoo.co.id](mailto:combi_regs@yahoo.co.id)
- Aditya Bayunanda (WWF-Indonesia) : +62818265588 / [abayunanda@wwf.or.id](mailto:abayunanda@wwf.or.id)