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**PRESS RELEASE – For immediate publication**

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**Pantau Gambut Releases Study “The Winding Journey to Peat Restoration: Findings from Field Analysis of 2018 Forest Fires in Restoration Areas”**

**Jakarta, 2 October 2018** – Pantau Gambut, a coalition of 23 non-governmental organizations dedicated to monitoring the restoration and protection of peatlands in Indonesia, launched a study titled *The Winding Journey to Peat Restoration: Findings from Field of 2018 Forest Fires in Restoration Areas*. The study is the result of spatial analysis and field monitoring by Pantau Gambut Local Networks in seven peatland restoration priority provinces.

Pantau Gambut conducted this study following rampant fires in peatland restoration priority provinces at the peak of the dry season in August 2018. The national restoration program, ongoing for two years now, should have reduced or eliminated forest fires in these provinces.

For spatial analysis, Pantau Gambut compared hot spot data from NASA VIIRS sensors from 1–31 August 2018 with several available maps, namely: maps of the peatland restoration priority areas in seven provinces from the Peatland Restoration Agency (BRG), the official map indicating areas with an active moratorium on new licenses (PIPPIB) Revision No. XII, as well as maps of company concession permits. Based on these materials, Pantau Gambut categorized hot spots by location into the following groups:

- a. Restoration priority and moratorium areas
- b. Priority restoration areas without a moratorium on new permits
- c. Moratorium areas not prioritized for restoration
- d. Areas not included in restoration priorities or the moratorium

An important finding from this analysis is that most hot spots were found in restoration priority and/or moratorium areas. Of the hot spots that appeared in August 2018, 57% were in these areas.

“The results of this hot spot analysis are an important reminder as the restoration program continues. Keeping in mind meteorological factors, hot spots in restoration priority and

moratorium areas become test points of peatland protection and restoration policies,” Pantau Gambut Local Network National Coordinator Muhammad Teguh Surya said at a press conference in Jakarta.

Based on available data and spatial analysis, Pantau Gambut Local Networks conducted field research in seven provinces, monitoring locations with repeated hot spots and high fire risk. Based on this direct field observation, Pantau Gambut Local Networks assessed the primary causes of hot spots and fires as follows:

**a. Ineffective implementation of restoration activities**

Local Networks found that wetting facilities built in rural areas under the framework of peatland restoration did not function properly. Implementation, especially in cultivation-zoned areas, was weak and lacked transparency. Supervision to ensure the quality of restoration infrastructure and fire response was inadequate, and coordination between institutions was lacking, especially between national and regional institutions. Researchers also noted the implementation of supporting tasks and utilization of wetting facilities outside of priority restoration areas.

**b. Weak law enforcement and regulations**

To date, communities and companies continue to point fingers regarding the causes of forest fires in various priority areas.

“Hot spots and forest fires outside of restoration priority and moratorium areas have not been ignored. Pantau Gambut also identified peat areas that were not included in restoration priorities, where no programs were carried out, which resulted in the reoccurrence of fires that were difficult to extinguish,” said Pantau Gambut Local Network Coordinator in South Kalimantan Kisworo Dwi Cahyono.

In addition to analyzing hot spots with restoration and moratorium maps, Pantau Gambut Local Networks also compared this spatial data with company concession maps. They discovered a number of hot spots in pulp and paper and industrial forest plantation concession areas in Riau, South Sumatra, South Kalimantan and West Kalimantan, which in 2015 also experienced fires. This indicates that restoration efforts have not been maximized within cultivation areas.

Based on these findings, Pantau Gambut recommends:

1. Enhanced monitoring and evaluation on the impacts and conditions of peat restoration infrastructure, and periodic forest fire prevention and response
2. Transparency in law enforcement and additional regulations regarding fire response in company concession areas
3. Increased coordination between ministries and institutions, as well as between the central and regional governments.



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The involvement of all stakeholders, including groups that are not specifically focused on environmental or peatland issues, could also help to keep peat restoration in Indonesia on the right track with good governance and strict law enforcement. Pantau Gambut notes that one of the agencies that has the potential to encourage improved governance and transparency for this sector is the Corruption Eradication Commission (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi*, KPK). The Commission has been engaged in the natural resource sector for several years, namely through the National Movement for the Rescue of Natural Resources (*Gerakan Nasional Penyelamatan Sumber Daya Alam*, GN-SDA). At an event, Pantau Gambut received a positive response from the KPK, which also expressed its concern about peatland protection and its wider implications for the environment and the public.

“Protecting peat for national interests is part of our work too, not only because it addresses concession issues and environmental protection, but also with regard to the need for integrated, open, and up-to-date geospatial information in one map\*,” KPK Deputy Chairperson Laode Muhammad Syarif said in a meeting with Pantau Gambut.

Pantau Gambut hopes that this study will be followed up with by the relevant agencies and prompt other stakeholders to contribute to the accomplishment of peat restoration through good governance and strict law enforcement.

### **About Pantau Gambut**

Pantau Gambut is an independent coalition of non-governmental organizations in Indonesia that utilizes technology, collaborative data, and community networks to provide information and increase public participation in monitoring progress on peatland restoration pledges. [pantaugambut.id](http://pantaugambut.id) includes a Pledge Monitor and Restoration Activity Map as well as Stories and additional information. The [pantaugambut.id](http://pantaugambut.id) platform is free and accessible to all.