

Pantau Gambut Pushes Private Companies to Contribute More on Peatland Restoration

- *Pantau Gambut had done spatial analysis and field observation on 1,222 sample points in burned deep peatlands, which spread across 43 concession areas in seven provinces.*
- *Pantau Gambut's analysis found that companies still plant extractive plants such as oil palm or acacia at 64.4% sample points. The rest of the sample points indicate that companies left the lands without any restoration effort as mandated by the government.*
- *Pantau Gambut also found that 91.5% of the sample points did not have any infrastructure restoration. Only 1.8% have those infrastructures in good condition.*
- *Restoration activities in concession areas still face challenges such as data transparency on restoration implementation and the method to measure its success and sub-optimal law enforcement.*

Jakarta, Riau, dan Kalimantan, 28 Mei 2021 – Pantau Gambut, an independent public initiative that enables community participation in safeguarding peat restoration, pushes companies to be more committed to peatlands restoration activities. Pantau Gambut released the statement based on field analysis and monitoring, which found that 91.5% of the sample points¹ area had no restoration infrastructure, and only 1.8% of areas containing restoration infrastructures were in good condition. Pantau Gambut conducted this analysis with local communities on concessions in seven provinces, namely Riau, Jambi, South Sumatra, West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, Papua, and West Papua.

Pantau Gambut conducted this study through spatial analysis and field observations of peatland areas inside concessions that were burned or indicated

¹ The sampling method is determined by using *random sampling* method on the concession area with indicators such as: burnt area, tree cover loss, and restoration implementation planning points in the annual / contingency action plan prepared by the Peat Restoration Agency. Sample points are grouped using a spatial clustering algorithm to be selected as field verification points. The determined sample points are re-validated using high-resolution satellite imageries such as *Planet* imagery and *Sentinel* imagery to see the land cover and land use conditions in the area within the specified period.

as being cleared. In total, Pantau Gambut visited 1,222 sample points, which spread over 43 company concessions in seven provinces. Pantau Gambut observed the area from 2015–2019 to determine field sample points through remote sensing and spatial analysis. Field verification was carried out from November 2019 to April 2021, varying in each province that carried out the monitoring activities.

Through this study, Pantau Gambut hopes that the public will be aware of the latest developments in peat restoration in the concession area. In addition, Pantau Gambut hopes that the results of this study can be used by the government and related companies to carry out restoration actions and performance assessments to protect peat ecosystems in Indonesia.

The Lack of Comprehensive Restoration Actions

The results of satellite imagery analysis by Pantau Gambut show the loss of tree cover in the peatlands area with a protected function covering an area of 421,221 ha in the concession area during the 2015–2019 period. Furthermore, through field verification in 405 sample points of protected peat areas, Pantau Gambut found that there were extractive plantations in the form of oil palm or acacia in 64.4 percent of the sample points. The remaining sample points show abandoned land without any restoration efforts mandated by regulations.

Furthermore, Pantau Gambut also identified 1 million hectares of burnt peatlands in the concession area in the 2015–2019 period by analysing satellite imagery, where more than 50 percent were areas with land use permits (HGU). Pantau Gambut also found that field verification at 482 points of burnt land in 39 companies showed that 67.8 percent were abandoned land without any restoration efforts. At the same time, companies planted the rest of the area with extractive crops such as acacia or oil palm.

Additionally, Pantau Gambut also visited 335 other sample points planned, either by Contingency Plans or Annual Action Plans, by the Peat Restoration Agency (BRG). Supposedly, the sample points have restoration infrastructure as part of the companies' responsibility for peatlands restoration. However, Pantau Gambut found that only 1.8% of the area had restoration infrastructure, either canal blocks or boreholes, in good condition. Most of the sample points, or as much as 91.5%, did not have any restoration infrastructure at all. These observations indicate that the

companies have not restored the peatlands ecosystem, especially in the areas that have experienced peatland fires.

The Government's Essential Role

Per the Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation No. 16 of 2017, business and /or activity holders must carry out restoration activities on peatlands. Therefore, the government plays a role in determining peat restoration orders to supervise and evaluate restoration activities carried out by concessions.

During the 2015–2020 period, the Indonesian government, through BRG and KLHK, has reported on the achievements of restoration activities. BRG said that it had restored 645 thousand hectares of peatlands from the total target of 1.7 million hectares in the concession area. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry claimed that 294 companies or around 3.6 million hectares of HTI concession areas had been successfully restored in a separate report. Unfortunately, these two data cannot explain the relationship with each other. In addition, both institutions did not disclose the details of the peatland restoration implementation in concession areas and the methods used to measure the success of restoration activities.

Pantau Gambut believes that the discovery of violations that are still being committed in the concession area means that it is essential to evaluate the implementation of restoration activities. Especially regarding the things that have caused the company not to carry out peat restoration. The Indonesian government also needs to improve the existing monitoring system to ensure the implementation and effectiveness of peat restoration in concession areas in a transparent manner. In addition, the law enforcement process needs to be improved so it can provide a deterrent effect for companies that violate the regulations.

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