



SMG/APP deforestation and deadly human-tiger conflict



Investigative Report
Eyes on the Forest

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Eyes on the Forest (EoF) is a coalition of environmental NGOs in Riau, Sumatra: Friends of the Earth "Walhi" Riau Office, Jikalahari "Riau Forest Rescue Network" and WWF-Indonesia, Riau Program. EoF monitors the status of the remaining natural forests in Sumatra's Province of Riau and disseminates the information worldwide.

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Front cover

Photo on top: Kerumutan tiger landscape in Riau Province, Sumatra where APP “owned” supplier PT. Satria Perkasa Agung has cleared High Conservation Value Forest on deep peat soil. Acacia seedlings planted for paper production are the only vegetation left in the cleared area. Photo taken by Eyes on the Forest at 0°6’44.64”N, 102°41’44.98”E on 17 January 2012.

Photo on bottom left: Young tiger who died in 2011 when APP owned supplier PT. Arara Abadi knowingly failed to rescue it for days after his right front leg was caught in an illegal snare set in the supplier’s pulpwood concession in the Tesso Nilo landscape in Riau Province, Sumatra. Photo taken by WWF-Indonesia.

Photo on bottom right: Tiger caught in 2011 by a task force led by an APP-affiliated group called the Sumatran Tiger Conservation Foundation (YPHS) and displayed in APP’s so-called “observation and protection enclosure”. APP insisted that it was this tiger, later named Bima, who caused deadly conflicts with humans in SMG/APP associated concessions. But there appears to be no evidence for this claim. Photo taken by WWF-Indonesia.

Summary

- The Asia Pulp & Paper company of the Sinar Mas Group (SMG/APP) portrays itself as a saviour of the critically endangered Sumatran tiger. Investigations by the NGO coalition Eyes on the Forest (EoF) show that the forest clearing operations of APP and its suppliers appear to be one of the major threats to the survival of the tiger in Riau, Sumatra.
- Most violent conflict between people and tigers in Sumatra's Riau Province between 1997 and 2009 occurred near deforestation sites operated by wood suppliers for Asia Pulp & Paper of the Sinar Mas Group (SMG/APP). At least 147 of 245 or 60% of all conflicts, resulting in 27 human deaths (49%), 8 tiger deaths (53%) and 14 tiger capture & relocations (82%) occurred in an area called Senepis, where five APP/SMG supplier concessions have been clearing natural forest since 1999.
- That pattern has continued since. A series of human and tiger deaths and injuries in Riau's Senepis, Kerumutan and Tesso Nilo forest landscapes since 2009 appears to be associated with SMG/APP tiger habitat clearing operations. 9 people and 3 tigers died, 7 people were injured and one tiger was removed from the wild.
- The arguably worst human-tiger conflict occurred in SMG/APP's Pulau Muda forest management unit (FMU) in Riau's Kerumutan, where SMG/APP's "own" suppliers have kept clearing High Conservation Value Forests in violation of what the company itself stated were legally binding commitments on achieving "full sustainability" by 2007 under debt restructuring agreements with taxpayer-backed Environmental Credit Agencies (ECAs) in nine countries. The area has been identified as a regional priority "Tiger Conservation Landscape" by global tiger experts.
- SMG/APP "own" suppliers continued forest clearance in the area even after the Pulau Muda conflicts had claimed three peoples' lives and had been widely reported.
- In addition to destroying tiger habitat, SMG/APP also removed one tiger, later named Bima, as a measure to resolve the Pulau Muda conflict, from an unspecified location, in secrecy, without involvement of independent experts, and without apparent evidence that this was the actual conflict tiger.
- Despite government recommendations that a tiger must be relocated to its habitat within a few days after the capture and SMG/APP's press statements that it would release the tiger back into the wild in early 2012, Bima was moved to Java and the public never learned whether he was ever released into the wild as promised.
- APP has self-congratulated itself to solve human wildlife conflicts by removing from the wild critically endangered species that cause trouble. But that trouble appears to be a direct result of the company's own operations: large-scale deforestation of critical tiger habitats. Its self-portrayal as a "tiger conservation" company appears to be one of the most cynical examples of greenwashing by SMG/APP to date.
- EoF calls on SMG/APP to immediately issue a moratorium on the use of natural fiber by all pulp mills to save Sumatran tiger habitat, implement "best management practices" for tiger conservation and disclose information about the fate of Bima and involve independent experts to help decide its future.
- EoF calls on the Government of Indonesia to stop issuance of new and execution of existing licenses which would cause the clearance of natural forest in Sumatra.
- EoF calls on APP's creditors to hold APP accountable for breaching the agreement and APP/SMG customers, investors and other business partners to not to purchase their

products and finance their wood sourcing operations and expansion and new construction of pulp and paper mills.

Introduction

In 2009, EoF reported that most violent incidents between people and tigers in Sumatra's Riau Province between 1997 and 2009 occurred near deforestation sites operated by wood suppliers for the Asia Pulp & Paper company of the Sinar Mas Group (SMG/APP)¹.

The deaths and injuries of both people and tigers have continued since then, prompting EoF to again investigate and explore the link between deforestation, conflict and the company's widely advertised tiger conservation campaign.

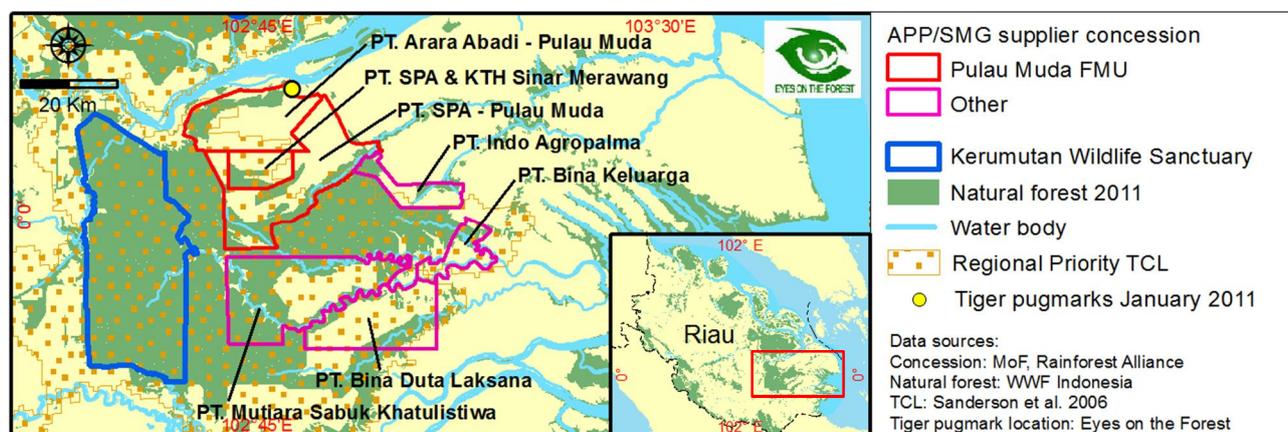
For this study, EoF investigated 14 human-tiger conflict incidences that left 9 people and 3 tigers dead, injured 7 people and removed one tiger from the wild.

The most interesting series of incidents occurred in SMG/APP's Pulau Muda Forest Management Unit (FMU). They were used by the company to portray itself as a saviour of the critically endangered Sumatran tiger. The company now prides itself to solve human wildlife conflicts by removing from the wild critically endangered species that cause trouble². But that trouble appears to be a direct result of the company's own operations: large-scale deforestation of critical tiger habitats. SMG/APP's portrayal of itself as a "tiger conservation" company appears to be one of the most cynical examples of greenwashing yet by the Indonesian and Chinese paper conglomerate aspiring to become the world leader.

The four steps of "greenwashing" deforestation and conflicts into tiger conservation

Step 1: Clearcut large areas of some of the last remaining tiger forests

In March 2012, EoF reported on SMG/APP pulping High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) in Kerumutan after promising to protect it under debt restructuring agreements with taxpayer-backed Environmental Credit Agencies (ECAs) in nine countries^{3, 4}. The cleared HCVFs were inside the Kerumutan "Tiger Conservation Landscape", identified as a regional priority by global tiger experts⁵. EoF confirmed the presence of tigers in the FMU in January 2012 (Map 1, Photos 1 & 2).



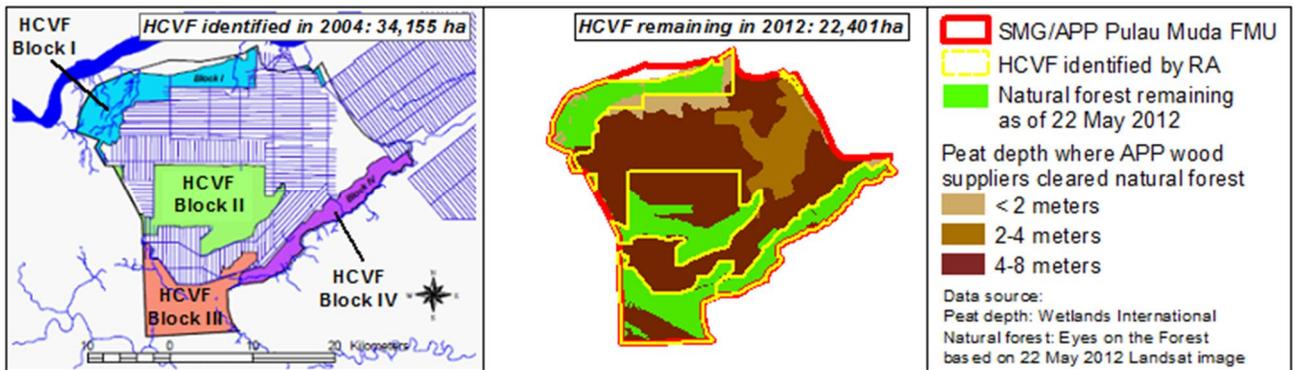
Map 1. Location of SMG/APP supplier concessions in Kerumutan, Riau.



Photo 1-2. A Sumatran tiger's pugmarks found by EoF in January 2012 inside the APP/SMG Pulau Muda FMU (see location A in Map 1) © Eyes on the Forest.

SMG/APP suppliers have been systematically clearing the dense tropical peatland forests contiguous with the Kerumutan Wildlife Reserve to supply APP's mills for years. Two Sinarmas Forestry companies⁶, PT. Arara Abadi and PT. Satria Perkasa Agung (SPA), cleared the HCVF in APP's Pulau Muda FMU (red boundary, Map 1). So-called "independent SMG/APP suppliers" deforested the neighboring four concessions (pink boundary, Map 1) to be pulped by APP's mills.

Historical Landsat images show that by 22 May 2012 APP had already pulped 1/3 (almost 12,000 hectares) of the HCVF the company had committed to protect (Map 2).



Map 2. Left: APP committed to protect HCVF blocks I to IV (shown in light blue, green, pink and purple, respectively) identified by SmartWood in 2004 (Figure 5 from the Pulau Muda assessment report, page 52⁷). Right: HCVF remaining as of 22 May 2012 (green). APP wood suppliers cleared natural forest in the rest of this FMU, mostly on deep peat soil in violation of several government regulations^{8, 9, 10}.

The concession areas visited by EoF were a moon-like landscape with exposed peat soils, no longer the tiger habitat these HCVFs once were supposed to protect (Photos 3-6).

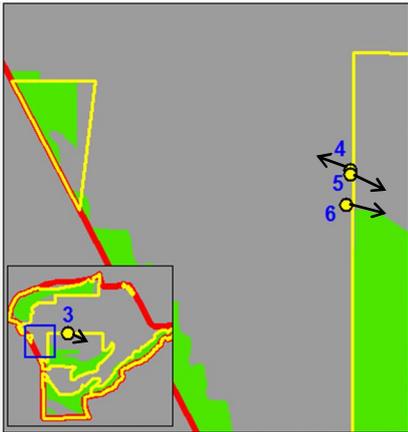


Photo 3: Acacia monoculture recently planted on peat soil.



Photo 4: Cleared area with peat drainage canal. Small APP endorsed HCVF block still stands, though apparently not well protected as mature trees are missing and smoke likely from clearance operations can be seen on right.



Photo 5: Newly cleared "moonscape" expanding over a huge area. Some APP endorsed HCVF still stands on right.



Photo 6: Canal draining peat soil under APP endorsed HCVF on right.

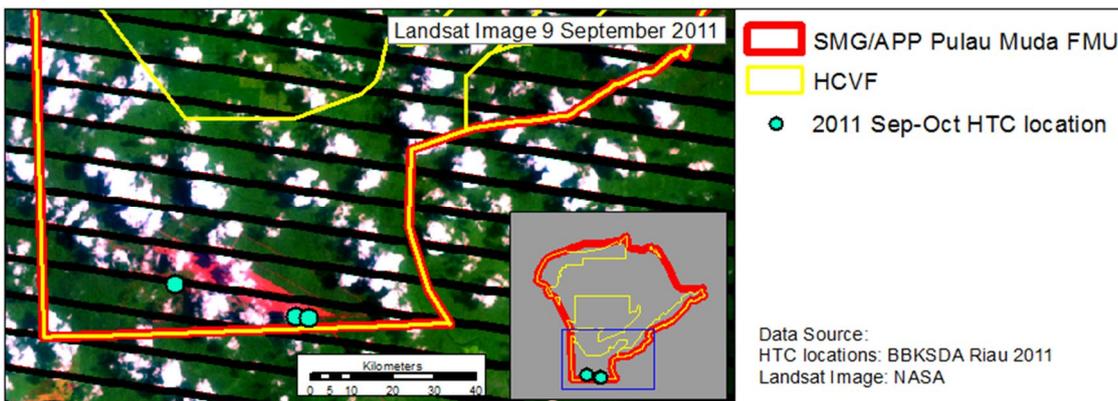


Photo 3-6. HCVF blocks were either pulped or not protected from illegal loggers by APP.

Step 2: Stop independent investigation of human-tiger conflicts

Between late September and early October 2011, three human-tiger conflict incidents occurred in the southern part of the Pulau Muda FMU described above. The incidents resulted in the deaths of three Sinarmas Forestry workers. A Landsat image of 9 September 2011 shows a pink area near the conflict locations indicating recent deforestation around the time of the conflicts (pink area, Map 3).

Investigation efforts to determine the facts behind the incidents were thwarted by Sinarmas Forestry officials and a member of the Sumatran Tiger Conservation Foundation (YPHS), an organization closely affiliated with APP and intensively marketed by APP's public relations companies, interfered with the investigation. What was it the company was trying to hide by stopping the investigations?

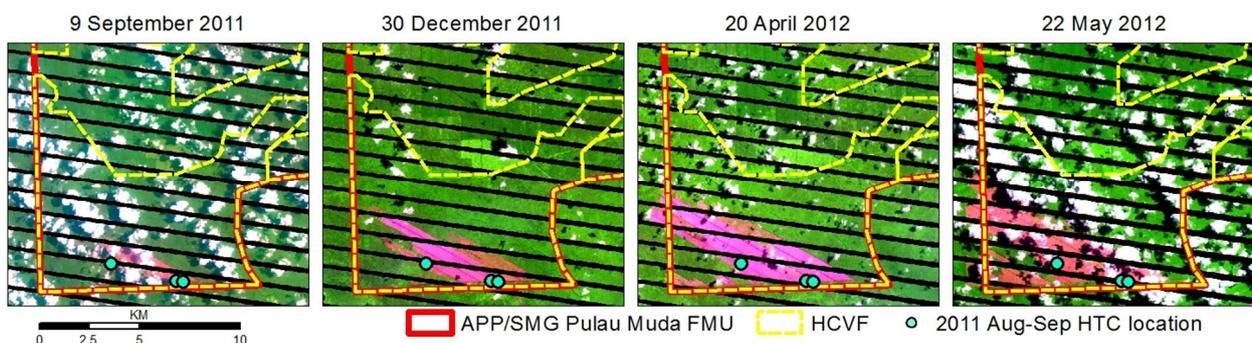


Map 3. HCVF clearance around the three 2011 September-October conflict locations (blue dots) can clearly be seen as pink in this Landsat image from 9 September 2011.

Step 3: Mark a tiger as trouble maker and remove him from the wild

A few weeks after the conflict incidents, in October 2011, APP reported the “successful rescue and planned relocation” of a young tiger named Bima by a “task force” lead by SMG/APP's tiger collaborator YPHS¹¹. The capture was conducted in total secrecy without involvement of independent experts at an unknown location. SMG/APP claimed it was the tiger that had mauled its workers. Yet, there is no evidence to support this claim¹².

Soon after the capture, environmentalists objected to APP's method of “conflict resolution”: removal of tigers from its concessions¹³ instead of elimination of the main cause of conflict – deforestation of tiger habitat. But the company remained undeterred and continued pulping tiger habitat until at least May 2012 (Map 4). Even after being notified of their violation of their commitment to protect HCVF by EoF's publication on APP's “double default”, the company knowingly continued to destroy HCVF tiger habitat.



Map 4. Continued clearance of HCVF in APP/SMG Pulau Muda FMU since the tiger conflicts.

Step 4: Display “trouble tiger” to show conservation achievements

Despite the Ministry of Forestry’s recommendation that a tiger must be relocated to its habitat within two or three days after the capture¹⁴, APP gave its captured tiger a name, Bima, and sent it to an arboretum in Perawang, a town far away from the capture site but at the location of APP’s PT. Indah Kiat Pulp & Paper mill.

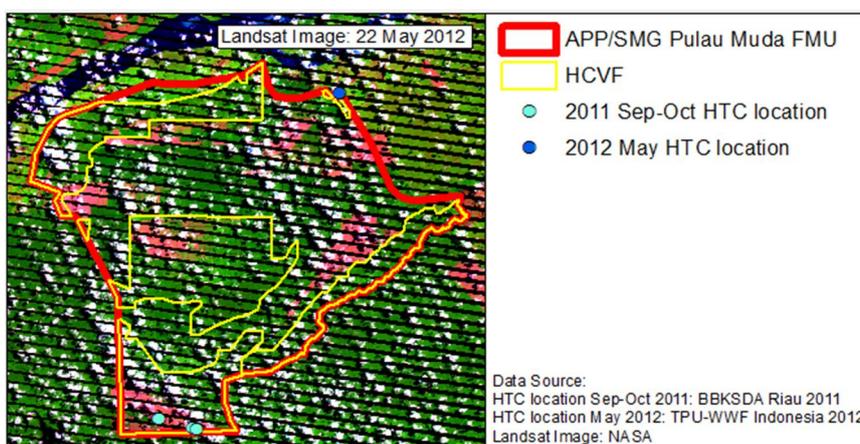
There APP celebrated the opening of a 6 x 6 meters tiger “observation and protection enclosure” in January 2012 by putting Bima on public display as proof for the company’s tiger conservation efforts^{15, 16} (Photo 7). APP wrote of the occasion: “The latest tiger to be made ready to be returned to the wild is Bima, a two-year-old male that was rescued in Riau last October. Bima is scheduled to be released in the coming months.”¹⁷



Photo 7. Bima inside the “observation and protection enclosure” before he got sick and was sent to Bogor’s Taman Safari. Locals say that Bima is a “Harimau Rawa”, a peat tiger. But will he ever get back to his home, Kerumutan forest? © WWF-Indonesia.

However, in February 2012, Eyes on the Forest learned that Bima had got sick and was sent to Taman Safari Indonesia in Bogor, West Java. APP’s PR machine suddenly went silent and the public never learned about whether Bima was released into the wild.

On 8 May 2012, another human-tiger conflict incident occurred in SMG/APP’s same Pulau Muda FMU. This time a tiger mauled corn farmer Arifin bin Ripet (Map 5)¹⁸.



Map 5. May 2012 conflict location in the NE corner of the SMG/APP Pulau Muda FMU.

Deforestation and human-tiger conflicts

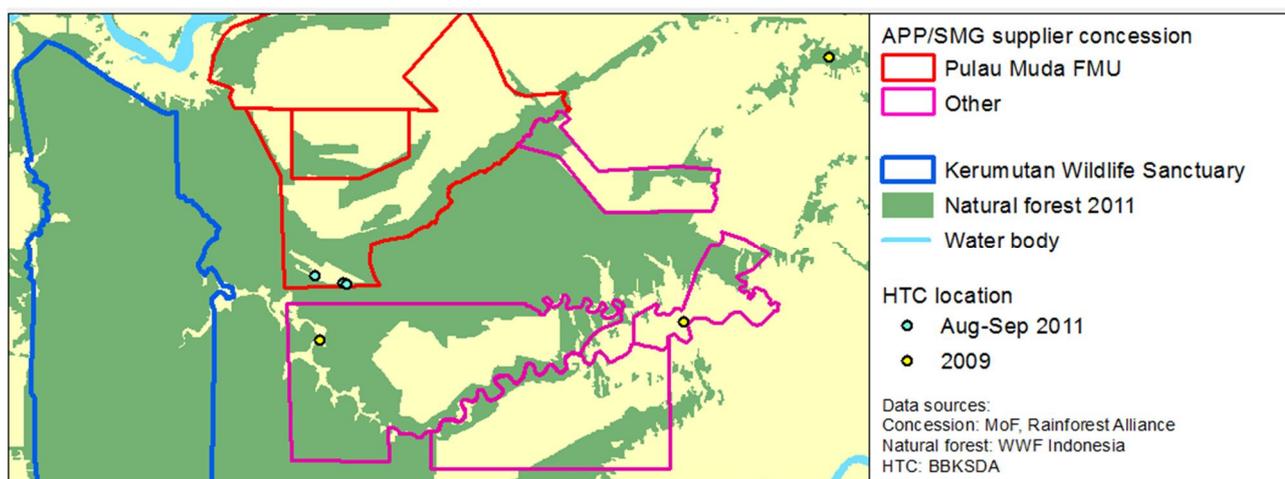
Human-tiger conflict associated with SMG/APP's deforestation activities has not been limited to the Pulau Muda FMU but has been occurring throughout much of the company's range of operations in Riau, Sumatra.

In Kerumutan, at least three farmers and one tiger were killed in February 2009. Teluk Kabung village head, Fahrudin, linked the escalating conflicts to natural forest clearance by SMG/APP wood suppliers¹⁹. "We villagers believe that the area logged and planted by the company might bring about threats to us as tigers now wander to our village," Fahrudin told Eyes on the Forest. Herdi of Simpang Gaung's village council urged the government to solve problems of escalating human-tiger in Gaung sub-district caused by logging operations of the pulp plantation companies. Eyes on the Forest mapped the three conflict incidences and found two of them to be inside the concessions of APP/SMG wood suppliers PT. Mutiara Sabuk Khatulistiwa and PT. Bina Keluarga (Map 6).

In August and September 2011, three conflict incidents occurred inside PT. Mutiara Sabuk Khatulistiwa, resulting in the death of one and injuries to six company's workers^{20, 21}. After the August 2011 incident, Riau's Natural Resource Conservation Agency (BKSDA) asked WWF Riau to check the location and investigate the incident. But Sinarmas Forestry officials stopped WWF's investigation despite it being requested by the government agency, saying the company would not try to capture the conflict tiger and also prevent further conflicts.

Fahrudin, head of the local Teluk Kabung village where the incidents occurred, may have come close to the truth when he identified the link between SMG/APP deforestation and tiger conflicts. He said that as long as the forest is cleared by the companies, tigers will attack the people²². Local online news "Riau Terkini" quoted him as saying: "It's a consequence that the tiger got angry, how would we feel if our homes are destroyed by others, we would be absolutely mad"²³.

Hariansyah Usman, Executive Director of Walhi Riau, agrees "For me it is clear: as long as natural forest is clearcut and mostly converted into pulpwood plantation, I think the human-tiger conflict will keep rising and casualties will fall, either human or tiger."²⁴



Map 6. 2009-2011 human tiger conflict locations in Kerumutan. The locations of three additional incidents in August-September 2011 could not be exactly identified.

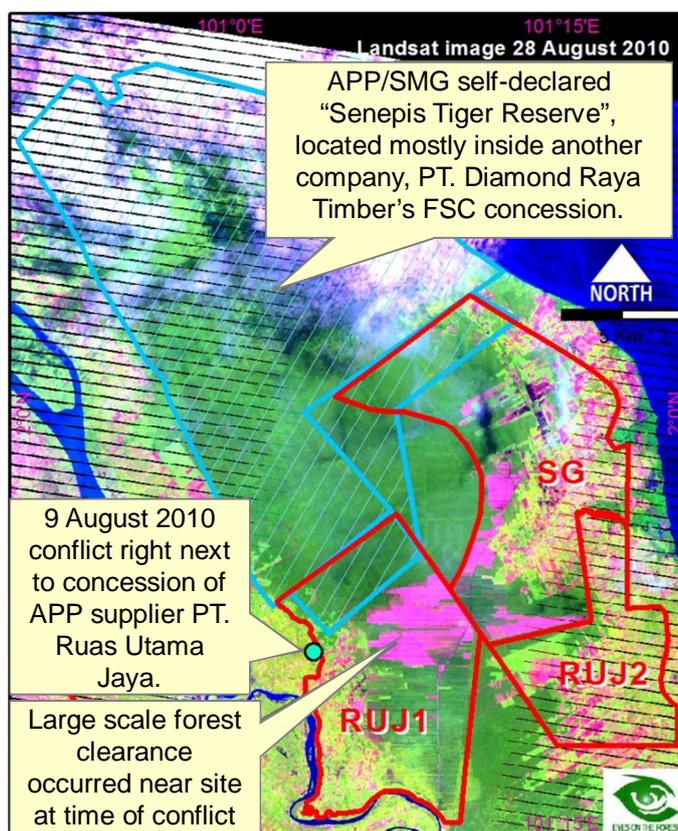
In Senepis, on 9 August 2010, a rubber farmer was killed by a tiger 1.8 kilometer outside the concession of APP/SMG supplier PT. Ruas Utama Jaya²⁵. Landsat Images taken the same month show natural forest clearance near the conflict location (Map 7).

Senepis appears to be the center of tiger conflict in Riau with at least 147 of 245 or 60% of all conflicts occurring between 1997 and 2009. They resulted in 27 human deaths (49%), 8 tiger deaths (53%) and 14 tiger captures & relocations (82%). Five APP/SMG supplier have been clearing tiger forests in this area since 1999^{26, 27}, including PT. Ruas Utama Jaya which recently cleared tiger habitat even inside APP's self-declared "Senepis Tiger Sanctuary"^{28, 29, 30, 31}.

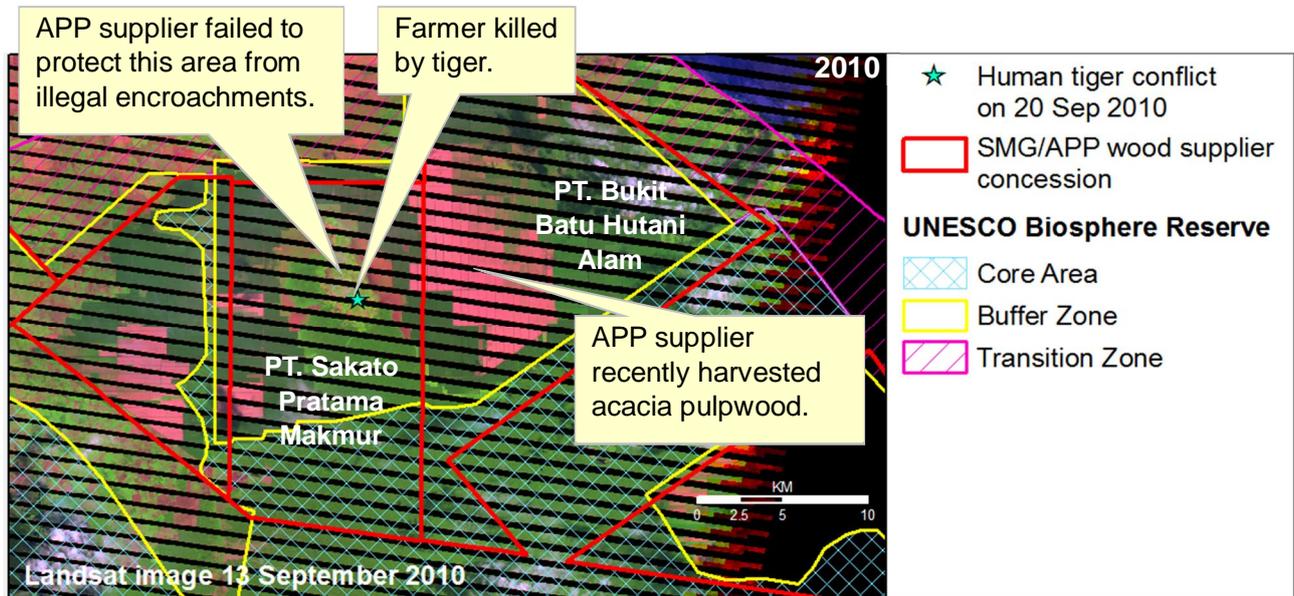
In Tesso Nilo, in July 2011, Sinarmas Forestry's PT. Arara Abadi knowingly left a young Sumatran tiger trapped by a poacher's illegal snare for many days to die from starvation^{32, 33} (photo 8). PT. Arara Abadi was clearing tiger forest near the site of the killing, failed to protect the concession from illegal setting of wildlife traps, and did nothing to help government agencies and NGOs rescue the trapped tiger in time. In October 2011, Arara Abadi was still clearing the last remaining natural forest near the incident's location^{34, 35}.

In Giam Siak Kecil, on 20 September 2010, an oil palm farmer was found dead after being attacked by a Sumatran tiger inside a concession of APP wood supplier PT. Sakato Pratama Makmur. The incident happened in an area inside the buffer zone of the heavily APP promoted UNESCO Man & Biosphere Reserve which APP had excluded from plantation development but failed to protect from illegal encroachment for planting oil palm plantation in its concession (Map 8)³⁶. Satellite images taken between early February and September 2010 show acacia harvesting activity in the neighboring concession of APP supplier PT. Bukit Batu Hutani Alam advancing westward up to 3 kilometers of the conflict location. The great disturbance caused by the logging operations and the elimination of all protective cover in the harvested areas could be one of the important factors to tiger conflict.

On 28 September 2010, villagers caught a tiger in a snare set to capture the individual that had killed the farmer (Photo 9). However, there is no evidence that the captured animal actually was the tiger who had killed the farmer. The community reported their capture to APP supplier PT. Sakato Pratama Makmur, Riau BKSDA and YPHS the same day, though none came to the location. Looking for help, the village informed WWF on 30 September. When WWF and BKSDA arrived that same day, the tiger had already died.



Map 7. Location of 9 August 2010 conflict in Senepis (at 101°3'46.200"E 1°49'5.900"N), just outside concession of APP wood supplier PT. Ruas Utama Jaya's (RUJ1).



Map 8. Landsat image of 13 September 2010 showing the area where the farmer was killed inside the concession of APP supplier PT Sakato Pratama Makmur and large area of pulpwood acacia recently cleared (pink) by neighboring APP supplier PT. Bukit Batu Hutani Alam, suggesting heavy disturbance and loss of cover in the area.



Photos 8. Sumatran tiger who died in SMG/APP's PT. Arara Abadi concession after knowingly left suffering in a snare for several days in July 2011 © WWF-Indonesia.



Photos 9. Sumatran tiger killed in an APP supplier's concession inside the UNESCO Biosphere reserve's buffer zone in September 2010 © WWF-Indonesia.

First step towards human tiger conflict mitigation is habitat protection

Tigers need large areas of good habitat to survive. Protection and restoration of Sumatra's remaining forests are crucial for the species' survival in many areas. The most important steps in finding a solution to human-tiger conflict is the identification and elimination of the cause. "In Sumatra, tigers have lost massive amount of their habitat in a very short period of time. The time has come that all kinds of deforestation should be stopped," says Sunarto, Ph.D, Tiger and Elephant Specialist of WWF Indonesia.

Pulpwood monocultures are cleared every 6 years causing great disruption for tigers and other wildlife due to the large scale tree felling, the operation of heavy equipment, and the sudden influx of large crews of workers. The infrastructure created for the logging operations allows poachers easy access to tiger habitats where they set snares to capture tigers and their prey. "There are many ways to avoid tiger conflicts, including careful planning and regulation of planting, management and infrastructure development. Forestry companies such as APP have the obligation to protect endangered species living in their concession, instead of capturing them and moving the animals to other areas," adds Sunarto.

But why is APP not protecting tigers? Why is APP promoting capture & relocation of "conflict" tigers when such conflict could be avoided if the company were to stop destroying tiger habitat?

APP's public relations teams have been advertising the company's tiger protection efforts worldwide. But it appears that by advertising the removal of "trouble makers" as tiger conservation SMG/APP is trying to hide the undeniable fact that the company is helping to drive the Sumatran tiger towards extinction: Not only is APP destroying tiger habitat it is

even removing some of the remaining individuals from the wild.

APP's so-called tiger conservation measures also appear to be in conflict with the Ministry of Forestry's regulation³⁷ and tiger experts' recommendations³⁸. Both recommend capture and removal to be the last resort when all other attempts failed and even then only to be applied to tigers that keep coming back to villages/settlements³⁹.

Eyes on the Forest recommendations

Eyes on the Forest calls on SMG/APP to:

- Immediately issue a moratorium on the use of natural forest fiber by all pulp mills to save Sumatran tiger habitat.
- Implement "best management practices" for tiger conservation, including protection of tiger habitat, restoration of natural forests to connect remaining habitats and transparent, professional conflict mitigation rather than immediate removal from the wild.
- Disclose information about the fate of Bima and, if still alive, involve independent experts to help decide its future.

Eyes on the Forest calls on the Government of Indonesia to:

- Protect the remaining natural forests in Sumatra from pulp and paper, palm oil and other deforesting industries to protect their biodiversity and environmental functions.
- Stop issuance of new and execution of existing licenses which would cause the clearance of natural forest in Sumatra.

Eyes on the Forest calls on the company's creditors to:

- hold APP accountable for breaching what the company stated were legally binding commitments on achieving "full sustainability" by 2007 and clearing HCVF in the Pulau Muda FMU.

Eyes on the Forest calls on customers, investors and other business partners of APP/SMG to:

- reject the company's public relations claims^{40, 41, 42, 43, 44} and consider joining the growing list of responsible companies that have stopped business with the company not to purchase their products and finance their wood sourcing operations and expansion and new construction of pulp and paper mills.

END

For further information, please contact:

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