



ASEAN Peatlands Newsletter

QUARTER 1 2016

First Task Force Meeting on ASEAN Haze Free Roadmap

High-level ASEAN officials gathered in Chiang Mai, Thailand on 7-9 March 2016 to attend a three-day "First Task Force Meeting to Draft the Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation Towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation". Thailand has proposed each country establish measures to control and limit haze pollution in the ASEAN region by the year 2020. Eight key strategies were identified for the Roadmap – one of which focusses on scaling up effective implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution. The Meeting proposed to submit the roadmap for consideration of the ASEAN leaders during ASEAN Summit in September this year in Lao PDR.



ASEAN Conference on Biodiversity 2016



From 15 to 19 February 2016, more than 500 representatives convened at Centara Grand & Bangkok Convention Centre, Thailand to report and discuss the status of biodiversity in the ASEAN region. ASEAN Member States (AMS) presented their progress made to achieve Aichi Biodiversity Targets, discussed key biodiversity issues and proposed a way forward in addressing the region's biodiversity challenges. Organised by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), in

cooperation with the AMS, it also promoted the work of ACB and the ASEAN in biodiversity conservation in responding to both global and regional biodiversity agenda. The progress of the ASEAN Programme on Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems 2014-2020 was also presented.

Fourth Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-4) Plenary in Kuala Lumpur



The fourth IPBES meeting was held at the KL Convention Centre on 22-28 February 2016. IPBES is an intergovernmental body which assesses the state of biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides to the public. The plenary was attended by more than 500 participants from 125 countries worldwide. Among the matters discussed was the threat to pollinator species everywhere. It also discussed the function of forests as home to biological diversity. The Forestry Department of Peninsular Malaysia mentioned its commitment to protecting forests, especially species rich peatlands which are under threat of fires.



World Wetland Day 2016 Celebrations in Cambodia



In Cambodia, the Department of Freshwater Wetlands Conservation (DoFWC) of the Ministry of Environment - is the national Ramsar Administration Authority (RRA) and government focal point to the convention. Every year RRA and partners (government, academic institutions and NGOs) organized World Wetland Day (WWD) celebration using topic set by the Ramsar Secretariat but adapts to local context. In 2016, DoFWC organized WWD on the topic “Wetland for Our Future” in which celebrated at O’Svay village, O’svay Commune, Thalaborivat District, Stung Treng Province on 02 February 2016.

The main objectives of this annual WWD celebration are to: 1). promote Ramsar Convention on wetlands, 2). enhance the support from policy makers, university students, school kid, local communities and media to participate in wetland protection, and 3). improve networking between government and NGOs who are working on wetlands.

Cambodia is the first country in ASEAN with peatland found within the mangrove ecosystems. Conserving the mangrove ecosystems along the coast may prevent degradation of the peatlands underneath.

World Wetlands Day Celebrations in Raja Musa Forest Reserve, Malaysia

On 27 February 2016, 250 volunteers replanted 2 hectares of degraded peatlands in Forest Compartment No. 100 of the Raja Musa Forest Reserve, North Selangor. They represented government agencies, private sector, NGOs and local communities. Several dozen peat swamp fish species were also released to celebrate water quality improvement brought about by peatland restoration.



Bono Festival in Riau, Indonesia



More than 900 visitors flocked to Desa Teluk Meranti, a peatland village in Pelalawan Regency, Riau Province, Indonesia from 5-12 March 2016 to surf and enjoy the views at an annual surfing event. The Kampar River which flows through the province has a large -tidal bore which peaks in March and September and brings large waves that continue for many kilometres along the river. Surfers can ride these waves for hours on end.

This year’s event was jointly organised by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy at Pelalawan with an Australian team aiming to break the existing Guinness World Record for longest surfing ride of 12.2 km. The team comprising James Cotton, Roger Gamble and Zig Van Sluys were successful in their quest, surfing 17.2 km individually and 37 km in a team.

Traditionally living off agriculture, this event has become an opportunity for locals to gain additional income from providing accommodations, logistics, food and services to visitors. This alternative income reduces the pressure to further convert peatlands for agriculture. The area will be the focus of a new four year Project supported by GEF, IFAD and the Government of Indonesia to showcase integrated management of a 850,000ha peatland hydrological unit and demonstrate implementation of the New Indonesian Regulation on Protection and Management of Peatland Ecosystems (PP71/2014).

Watch a ‘bono’ video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmEaTbMztD4>



Rehabilitation of Degraded Peatland in Riau, Indonesia



In Sepahat village, 5 canal blocks were successfully completed at the end of March 2016. A combined effort between local communities and Mitra Insani Foundation, the project is funded by UNDP as part of the peatland rehabilitation efforts in Riau. Thanks to their efforts, there have not been any large fires in the area since January.

Link: <http://sepahat.desa.id/antisipasi-karlahut-pembangunan-sekat-kanal-oleh-yimi-selesai/>
(in Indonesian)

Perimeter Canal Blocking on Asia Pulp and Paper (APP) Concessions

Together with Deltares, an independent institute for applied research in the field of water and subsurface; APP is now blocking 4,000 km of perimeter canal around each of its plantation to reduce drainage of adjacent land. The aim is to reduce fire risk and enhance conservation of remaining natural forest in and around its concessions. Nearly 7,000 blocks are planned with 3,500 already completed since October 2015. It has also taken 7,000 ha of pulp and paper plantation on peat out of production to restore it back to forest.

For full details, download the booklet at:

http://www.asiapulppaper.com/sites/default/files/download/ssepeat_final.pdf



Selangor Peatlands Are Burning

A number of peatlands in Selangor State, Malaysia are burning due to an extended dry season linked to the El Nino Phenomenon. Nearly 200 ha has burnt in the past month in North and South Selangor Peat Swamp Forests. -The fires were started by a combination of agricultural development, hunting and fishing activities. -Most of the fires have been brought under control through a combination of water bombing, flooding (through large scale pumping of water from adjacent lakes) and ground attack. More than 100 personnel from a range of different agencies have been fighting the fires. The area burnt is much less than other drought years such as 2014 when nearly 2000ha burnt at the same sites. Daily patrolling of fire prone areas which led to rapid detection and deployment followed by coordinated action by multiple approaches and agencies limited fire spread. Daily surveillance of fires by drones/UAVs led to more accurate estimation of fire spread and enabled deployment of teams to priority sites.



Peat Fires Flare in Brunei Darussalam

Despite continuous efforts to keep Brunei peatlands well hydrated, fires sometimes still happen in the current hot and dry conditions. With some of the fires attributed to illegal land clearing, Brunei has suffered months of haze across the country.

News links:

- <http://www.bt.com.bn/news-national/2016/02/21/strong-winds-fuel-forest-fires>
- <http://www.bt.com.bn/frontpage-news->





[national/2016/02/29/water-bombs-douse-seria-fires](http://www.bt.com.bn/news-national/2016/02/29/water-bombs-douse-seria-fires)

- <http://www.bt.com.bn/news-national/2016/02/26/80-firefighters-battle-belait-forest-fire>
- <http://www.bt.com.bn/frontpage-news-national/2016/04/09/arson-likely-cause-belait-fires>
- <http://www.bt.com.bn/news-national/2016/04/18/brunei-ling-project-successful-keeping-forest-fires-away>

Research on Nitrous Oxide Emissions at Inle Lake, Myanmar

In Myanmar, the FREDA team has been supporting University of Tartu's research work since January 2016. The university's Department of Geography has conducted research on the emission of Nitrous Oxide from peatland drainage. Soil and air samples were collected from peatlands near Inle Lake in January and the results are being analysed. A paper on the findings will be published in the near future.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

APFP-SEApeat Key Achievements

The APFP and SEApeat projects were two peatland conservation and sustainable management projects in Southeast Asia, involving all 10 ASEAN Member States in a bid to improve the protection of existing peatlands in the region. Supported by GEF/IFAD and EU respectively, they were completed recently, in 2014 and 2015. The key achievements of the two interrelated projects have been documented in a booklet which can be downloaded via http://www.aseanpeat.net/view_file.cfm?fileid=540.



UPCOMING EVENTS



Empowering
People
to Stop Haze

1) People's Forum on Haze 2.0

Date: 23rd April 2016 (Saturday)

Time: 1.30 – 5.30 PM

Venue: SIM University, 461 Clementi Road, Singapore

P.M. Haze (Singapore) will have a forum to discuss ways the public, corporations and NGOs can work together in addressing haze issues. For more details, visit the [event page](#) or email them at contact@pmhaze.org.

2) XtheHaze Volunteer Orientation

Date: 24th April 2016 (Sunday)

Time: 10am - 12 noon

Venue: One Marina Boulevard (NTUC Centre),
Room 901, Singapore 018989

RSVP at: <http://goo.gl/forms/Mhb7UK2jP9>



BOH ECO TRAIL RUN 2016



As part of their efforts to create awareness and protect the Kuala Langat North Peat_Swamp Forest, BOH is organising a non-competitive run on their Bukit Cheeding estate in Selangor State, Malaysia. Organised in cooperation with the Selangor State Forestry Department and Fitness First, all proceeds will be channelled to Global Environment Centre. The run is already fully subscribed, but we look forward to the actual event on 28 May. Stay tuned for event updates in the next newsletter.

15th International Peat Congress

2nd Circular and Call for Papers now available. For accepted papers, the new deadline for extended abstracts is on **30th April 2016**.

The Malaysian Peat Society (MPS) 6th Annual General Meeting for 2016 will be held as follows:

DATE : 14 May 2016 (Saturday)

TIME : 10am

VENUE: Board Room, Tropical Peat Research Laboratory Unit, Kuching, Sarawak.

For further inquiries, please contact the Secretariat at [\(+60 82 662 491 / 663 615\)](tel:+6082662491).

IMCG Field Symposium and General Assembly: Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam (Peninsular Malaysia and Borneo) - August 2016



The field symposium will be held from 19 August to 28 August 2016. The scientific congress and IMCG General Assembly will be held at the end of the Field Symposium.

Click over to <http://www.imcg.net/pages/events/imcg2016.ph> for further details.

APFP is a project of



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