

HCV 4.3 Barriers to destructive fires

The Malaysian Toolkit (WWF-Malaysia, 2009) states that any specific areas that can act as barriers to provide protection to forests, especially forests with high conservation values, from fire, in areas that are generally fire-prone and where the consequences are potentially severe, can be considered HCV 4.3.

Findings

Sg. Sugut runs to the north of Trusan Sugut FR, which potentially prevented a devastating fire in 2015— a major forest fire happened in FMU 2 and fires were burning dangerously along the river bank just across from Trusan Sugut FR. Fortunately the river acted as a fire break (as it normally would) and a catastrophe was avoided (Markus S., SFD, pers. comm.). Parts of Trusan Sugut FR are inundated with water (freshwater swamps) some parts of the year, and could naturally act as barriers to fires. There are also three other rivers running out of Trusan Sugut FR (Sg. Timbang 1, Sg. Timbang 2 and Sg. Sugut Parai).

As mentioned before, Trusan Sugut FR has been subjected to devastating fires in the past (1997-98 El Nino drought related fires) and currently, most part of the reserve is surrounded by oil palm estates and settlements. Fire poses as a significant threat to Trusan Sugut FR and thus the water bodies identified above can be considered HCV 4.3.

50-100 m vegetation strip within the reserve boundary can be considered as HCV 4.3 especially those bordering oil palm and alienated land. Low vegetation structure is more susceptible to catch fire in comparison to high vegetation structure (Reuben N, pers. comm, 2016). These strips are the first wall of defence before the fire reaches the core area.

Management Recommendations

Ensure that the nearest fire break/ water bodies are identified and their locations recorded. As long as development is kept to a minimum and the water sources are protected, the identified HCV 4.3 above will be maintained.

The areas which are identified as grasslands bordering the reserve in Figure 20 should be investigated according to its water table condition; if the sites are dry, they should be restored using local species according to the restoration proposal (WWF-Malaysia, 2016; section 5 of Trusan Sugut FMP).

Monitoring Recommendations

Monthly patrolling should be carried out to ensure that water bodies are still in good condition.

Planted areas should also be monitored for stand dynamics, i.e. growth, mortality and natural regeneration.