

Integrating high conservation values into our land-use planning



For APRIL Indonesia, responsible land-use planning begins before a plantation concession licence is awarded. Our land development specialists conduct preliminary evaluations of available concessions by assessing soil and land types for potential fibre plantation growth rates, access and wood transport distances, quality of existing vegetation, and social issues. This evaluation provides information for preliminary decisions on the viability of the concession. It is then followed by a land-use planning process that ensures and incorporates compliance with legal requirements, science-based practices and voluntary commitments.

Industrial fibre plantation concession development is guided by national government forestry regulations that stipulate the general allocation of land to be used for fibre, community livelihood and natural tree plantations, conservation forest and infrastructure. First, a macro-delineation occurs using available vegetation and environmental data to broadly identify each of these allocations within the concession. Next, a micro-delineation occurs by an independent third-party to differentiate areas to be maintained as natural forest from those that can be developed

into fibre plantations. This is based on specific legal criteria focusing on protecting sensitive soils, hydrological features, wildlife and cultural sites. These processes fulfil legal requirements for land-use plan development.

For the responsible development of peatlands, a science-based land use and water management plan is developed for the concession based on entire river basins – a landscape-level approach we called “eco-hydro” management. It identifies water management zones in planted areas, hydro-buffers and conservation areas in the deepest peat and natural forests.

As a voluntary commitment, we conduct High Conservation Value (HCV) assessments for each new concession area based on the *Toolkit for Identification of High Conservation Values in Indonesia (2008)*. These assessments identify and delineate exceptionally important biodiversity values, ecosystem services and social or cultural values and recommends management and monitoring activities to guarantee these values will be maintained and enhanced. We incorporate the findings of HCV Assessment into our land use planning process and ensure that our fibre plantation development is undertaken in a manner that will maintain the HCVs.

The HCV process often confirms the micro-delineation and “eco-hydro” planning that we have conducted. APRIL Indonesia finds added value in the HCV concept as a planning tool that takes the “precautionary approach” to land development by identifying and delineating additional values that may result in conserving more natural forests. The

guidance and recommendations from HCV experts enable our planners and managers to implement best practices and achieve sustainable wood production through a rational balance between environmental conservation, social concerns and economic development. The HCV approach in Indonesia acknowledges that one or more forms of active management can be undertaken to ensure the maintenance or enhancement of one or more high conservation values in an area.

As HCV assessment methodology and practice evolve, we have tried to keep pace with this change and understand that many of our stakeholders have genuine concerns about ensuring the proper application of HCV assessments where conversion of natural forests occurs. These concerns include acknowledgment of customary or legal rights of indigenous communities; science-based definitions and delineation of HCV forests or management areas; stakeholder consultation; land-use plan development; and quality control of HCV documents.

APRIL Indonesia has worked directly with leading HCV experts in Indonesia and through the Global HCV Resource Network to develop various approaches in applying the HCV process for a fibre plantation context in Indonesia. We continue our efforts to seek common interpretation and share knowledge by participating in regional and global HCV forums, developing internal capacities and engaging partners to meet the challenges of applying HCV process.