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Launching Ceremony of Pilot Projects for Environmental Compliance Audit

This monthly news bulletin is produced by Sarawak Timber Association (STA) to disseminate information to our counterparts on training, research and other relevant areas.

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Photo: (top) Signatories to the MoU signing the document on stage as a symbol of their commitments to the Pilot Projects, (bottom) Representatives of the 8 companies looked on as Dato Henry (STA) and Mr Peter Sawal (NREB) exchanged MoU documents.

The Pilot Projects for Environmental Compliance Audit were launched in a ceremony jointly organised by the Natural Resources and Environment Board (NREB) Sarawak and Sarawak Timber Association (STA) on 9 November 2017 at Hilton Hotel, Kuching. A Seminar on Environmental Management in the Forestry Sector was also held in conjunction with the launching of the Pilot Projects.

The Natural Resources and Environment (Audit) Rules, 2008 was made under Section 18(q) of the Natural Resources and Environment Ordinance, 1993 to enhance environmental stewardship and cultivate self-regulation among the private and corporate sectors in Sarawak.

The Pilot Projects were initiated to prepare the forestry sector for the full implementation of the said Rules. Eight (8) STA member companies that operates in natural forests and forest plantations, namely (i) Daiken Sarawak Sdn Bhd, (ii) GP Pusaka Sdn Bhd, (iii) Interglobal Empire Sdn Bhd, (iv) Jaya Tiasa Holdings Berhad, (v) Ravenscourt Sdn Bhd, (vi) Shin Yang Forestry Sdn Bhd, (vii) Subur Tiasa Holdings Berhad, and (viii) Tanjong Manis Holdings Sdn Bhd volunteered to participate in the Pilot Projects.

In his welcoming speech, Dato Henry Lau Lee Kong, Honorary Secretary of STA applauded NREB for taking a phased approach in implementing the NRE (Audit) Rules, 2008 as

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well as the 8 companies for actively playing their roles by participating in the Pilot Projects voluntarily. He added that the close working relationship between STA and NREB is fundamental to ensure the successful implementation of the said Rules and hoped that other State agencies could emulate such approach and work in tandem with the forestry and timber industry towards achieving a common goal; sustainable environment.

Mr Peter Sawal, Controller of Environmental Quality Sarawak mentioned in his speech that the auspicious occasion marked another milestone for the State of Sarawak in the areas of environmental conservation and protection, particularly in the forestry sector.

The Right Honourable Datuk Patinggi (Dr) Abang Haji Abdul Rahman Zohari bin Tun Datuk Abang Haji Openg, the Chief Minister of Sarawak, in his opening speech read by Datu Len Talif Salleh, Assistant Minister of Urban Planning, Land Administration and Environment shared with participants of the Event that the State is expected to implement the NRE (Audit) Rules, 2008 for all development sectors in Sarawak by 2019.

He added that the compliance to State's environmental rules and regulations are prerequisite for any companies that wishes to be certified under the Malaysian Criteria and Indicators for Forest Management Certification (Natural Forest).

The launching ceremony was attended by approximately 300 representatives from various forestry agencies, timber companies and environmental consultants. This was followed by the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between (i) NREB acting on behalf of the State Government as the regulating authority, (ii) STA as the party that provides grant for costs and fees of External Environmental Compliance Audit and (iii) the 8 participating companies that will participate in the Pilot Projects audit.

The Seminar with the theme "Towards Environmental Sustainability" convened in two (2) sessions consisting of six (6) papers, as follows;



Photo: Mr Justine Jok Jau presenting his paper to participants of the Seminar

1. Environmental Policy of Sarawak: The Way Forward by Mr Justine Jok Jau, NREB;
2. Environmental Audit: The Implementation Roadmap by Ms Elizabeth Nyomek, NREB;
3. Overview of Environmental Quality Monitoring by Ms Valecca Sibuar, NREB;
4. Scheduled Waste Management by Ms Rafidah Mohamad Annuar, Department of Environment (DOE);
5. Environmental Issues and Mitigating Measures for Forestry Projects by Mr Manaffery Madhan and Mr Mitchell Bay Anak Samuel, NREB and
6. Occupational Safety and Health in the Timber Industry by Mr Haizul Afta bin Masri, Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH).

Participants of the Seminar were informed that an Audit Unit was established in NREB in 2013 among many others, to spearhead the full implementation of the said Rules and that the State will gazette thirty (30) new water catchment areas by the end of this year to protect and manage water resources in the State.

The responsibilities of the company were also highlighted which are; (i) monitoring of environmental elements such as air, noise, waste and water, (ii) storage, labelling, and disposal of scheduled wastes (SWs) and (iii) establishing a good occupational safety and health (OSH) management system in throughout the lifespan of a project implementation or operation to avoid or reduce impacts on the quality of environment and create a safe working environment.

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Did you know that....

There are still a lot that we do not know yet about the effectiveness of protected areas. With missing baseline ecological and social data from before the parks were created, studies on trends provide very little information about what the trends might have been like in the absence of the protected areas. Therefore, instead of comparing forest cover change inside protected areas with that outside which tends to overestimate the positive effect of parks, more carefully designed studies are now being conducted to compare protected forests with unprotected forests that have very similar baseline characteristics.

Source: *Do Protected Areas Work in the Tropics?* Available at <https://news.mongabay.com/2017/12/do-protected-areas-work-in-the-tropics/>

Did you also know that....

Lusi, the Sidoarjo mud flow in East Java has been spewing mud since it erupted in 2006 due to the blowout of natural gas caused by a mishap during drilling process. The lack of safety protocols have led to hazardous consequences to the people as schools and houses in the vicinity were destroyed, families displaced and many others suffered from burn injuries. Therefore, stringent safety regulations must be established and adhered to by all industry workers to avoid immense risks to the industry workers as well as the environment.

Source: *Oil and Gas Environmental Footprint in Southeast Asia*, available at <https://www.theaseanpost.com/article/oil-and-gas-environmental-footprint-southeast-asia>



Roadshows on The Forest (Nursery) Rules, 2017

Forest Department Sarawak (FDS) organised Roadshows on Forests (Nursery) Rules, 2017 in Sibu on 21 November 2017 and in Miri on 23 November 2017.

The Roadshows were attended by approximately 40 participants from Ministry of Urban Development and Natural Resources (MUDNR), FDS's Regional Forest Officers, Sarawak Forestry Corporation (SFC), Department of Agriculture (DoA) Sarawak, Sarawak Timber Industry and Development Corporation (STIDC), Harwood Timber Sdn Bhd (HTSB), Licence for Planted Forests (LPF) Holders and STA Secretariat.

Mr Wong Siong Kuan, Senior Assistant of Director of Forests, Forest Plantation & Reforestation Division, FDS, in his opening remarks told participants that the Forests (Nursery) Rules, 2017 was made under Section 113(1)(w) of the Forests Ordinance, 2015 and applies to all nurseries established for forest plantation purposes, with the exception of transit nurseries.

The Rules had been approved by the State Cabinet on 22 June 2017 and came into force on 1 August 2017. The FDS is expected to implement the Rules on 1 January 2018, when the procedures for the importation of seeds and planting material will be enforced.

This process will involve a few agencies i.e. FDS, SFC, DoA and Royal Malaysian Customs Department Sarawak (RMCD). He also stressed that the Rules will ensure (i) imported planting materials, including those collected elsewhere in Sarawak are of high quality; (ii) pest and disease-free planting materials; and (iii) optimum yield and productivity of the tree crops.

Mr Kos Anak Amud, Senior Executive Forester, Forest Plantation & Reforestation Division, FDS, highlighted the main features of the Rules as follows:

1. All forestry nursery owners are required to register with FDS;

2. It is the responsibility of the nursery owners to liaise with the relevant authorities for the importation of seeds and/or other planting materials;
3. All the imported planting materials must be supported by relevant documents certifying they are pest and disease free;
4. A registration fee of RM500 is to be charged to the nursery owner before a registration certificate is issued. The certificate is to be renewed annually with a fee of RM200.
5. Renewal of the certificate can only be considered if there is no contravention to the Forests (Nursery) Rules, 2017;
6. The nursery owner is liable to be fined or compounded according to the rates as specified in the Rules if he is found to have contravened any clause of the Rules.

Mr Paddy Anak Jiob, Assistant Agriculture Officer, Plant Biosecurity and Quarantine Division, DoA Sarawak, stressed that all consignments must be treated prior to the importation, to prevent the entry and spread of foreign plant pests and diseases into the State. Each consignment must also have a Phytosanitary Certificate issued by the country of origin of the planting material.

He added that an import permit is also needed for every consignment. The application fee for the permit is RM15 for three months validity and can only be extended once. He also mentioned that no soil material is allowed with planting materials during the importation of, i.e. for seedlings. He suggested the only alternative way is to use the sterilised peat moss, if applicable.

The FDS has appointed SFC to do the seed viability and health screening tests for all imported seeds.

The Meeting also discussed the possibility of using the DoA's application form for import permit as a basis for applying for approval from the Director of Forests to import planting materials, to avoid having to fill in the same information twice.

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Dialogue on the Draft Natural Resources and Environment (Prescribed Activities) Order, 2017

A Dialogue on the Draft Natural Resources and Environment (Prescribed Activities) Order, 2017 [NRE (PA) Order, 2017] was conducted by the Natural Resources and Environment Board (NREB) Sarawak on 29 November 2017 at their Headquarters in Kuching.

The Dialogue, chaired by Mr Justine Jok Jau Emang, Deputy Controller of Environmental Quality Sarawak, NREB, was attended by sixteen (16) participants representing various stakeholders such as the Sarawak Oil Palm Plantation Owners Association (SOPPOA), Sarawak Dayak Oil Palm Plantation Association (DOPPA), Sarawak Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), the Association of Environmental Consultants Sarawak (AECS) and Sarawak Timber Association (STA).

In his welcoming remarks, he informed participants of the Dialogue that NREB is in the process of drafting the NRE (PA) Order, 2017 to replace the current NRE (PA) Order, 1994. The new draft NRE (PA) Order, 2017 is targeted to regulate small scale activities that are not listed as the Prescribed Activities in the existing NRE (PA) Order, 1994.

He added that these activities, despite being small in scale, would have a significant cumulative impact on the environment.

During the Dialogue, Ms Tang Hung Huong, Head of Planning and Development Section of NREB Sarawak presented the draft NRE (PA) Order, 2017. She informed the participants of the Dialogue that the draft NRE (PA) Order, 2017 is aimed at:-

1. Enhancing the regulation of Prescribed Activities that are environmentally sensitive through Social and Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA);
2. Regulating additional Prescribed Activities through Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); and
3. Regulating small scale Prescribed Activities through Environmental Permit (EP).

Guidelines or mechanisms will be developed to facilitate its implementation, particularly on the issuance of Environmental Permit once the draft NRE (PA) Order, 2017 is finalised.