



Voice from the Frontlines of Peat Conservation in 7 Provinces: Evaluation on 2 Years of Peat Restoration

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Flashback: Development and Challenges of Peat Restoration Commitment in 2007

The Indonesian Government has committed to restoring and protecting peatlands as part of efforts to prevent more forest and land fires as those taking place in 2015. In the last two years, the government has been following up on this commitment through the Peat Restoration Agency (BRG) and related ministries with the involvement of companies and civil society organizations. Pantau Gambut has noted significant developments in the realization of such commitment through real restoration actions throughout 2017.

The restored areas

According to this [BRG report](#), restoration activities have covered 75 villages and sub-districts in 7 provinces targeted for peat restoration, comprising a total area of 1.18 million hectares. BRG also facilitates the development of peat rewetting infrastructure in 6 provinces, comprising a total area of 202,454 hectares. The largest area covered by the rewetting program in 2017 was Central Kalimantan at 62,126 hectares. The rewetting activity covered 8,900 units of artesian wells, 1,849 canal blocks and 110 canal backfilling points.¹ BRG also conducted the [Desa Peduli Gambut](#) (DPG) program in which the people spearhead peat restoration.

Peat Mapping with LiDAR

Peat mapping using Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) with a scale of 1:2,500, covering 464,000 hectares in 4 priority restoration regencies of Musi Banyuasin, Ogan Komering Ilir, Pulang Pisau and Kepulauan Meranti. The technology was used to obtain details on the targeted restoration locations to ensure the effectiveness of the restoration program. LiDAR is a breakthrough in solving peat restoration challenges, since the BRG still uses a map with a scale of 1:250,000 to determine restoration priorities in 7 provinces.

Review of Permits on Peatlands

¹ Masyarakat Sebagai Garda Depan Perlindungan Gambut 2017: Catatan terhadap capaian kerja BRG pada tahun kedua. Available for download at <https://brg.go.id/masyarakat-sebagai-garda-depan-perlindungan-gambut-2017-catatan-terhadap-capaian-kerja-brg-pada-tahun-kedua/>



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Through the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), peatland conservation and permit reviews are pursued through the revision of Work Plan (RKU) of Business Licenses of Utilization of Forest Products – Industrial Plantation Forest (IUPHHK-HTI) and Land-Cultivation Permit (HGU) for palm oil plantations. RKU revisions are necessary, as the KLHK has found that the proposed RKU for the 99 IUPHHK-HTI units does not include the work plan of the cultivation permit holders concerning peat conservation. Meanwhile, 40% of the incinerated land in 2015 was located in a cultivation area.² As of November 2017, 27 ratified RKUs from 99 HTI companies have proposed RKU revision, while the rest have shown a peat ecosystem conservation system.³

Enforcement of Peatland Clearing Prohibition

The KLHK plays a major role in building the support systems in achieving restoration targets, including through the prohibition of further peatland clearing. This policy was first stipulated in the Circular Letter of the Minister of Environment and Forestry No. S.494/MENLHK-PHPL/2015. In its implementation, the KLHK has revoked the RKU of PT Riau Andalan Pulp & Paper (RAPP) due to the company's violation with the clearing of another block that covers a peatland for acacia plants.

Revocation of Regulation of the Minister of Environment and Forestry No. 17/2017 concerning HTI Development

Businesses have expressed objection to KLHK's policies, as shown by the lawsuit filed against the Regulation of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry No. 17/2017 concerning Industrial Plantation Forest Development, which was then revoked by the Supreme Court. This regulation has been the main instrument of the KLHK in revising the RKU plans of various HTIs. Despite the revocation of the regulation, the KLHK continues to revise RKUs based on the Ministerial Regulation No. 30/2014 concerning Periodic Comprehensive Forest Inventory and Work Plan of HTI Timber Product Utilization Businesses.

Recommendation for Further Restoration Actions

Through Pantau Gambut's Network in 7 priority peat restoration provinces, Pantau Gambut has carried out field monitoring on the realization of the government and other related parties. The following are several notes to be considered by government agencies in achieving peat restoration and conservation targets.

² Wijaya, Arief, Reidinar Juliane, Susan Minnermeyer, Octavia Aris Payne, and Andres Chamorro. Setelah Kebakaran yang Memecahkan Rekor, Dapatkah Kebijakan Baru di Indonesia Menurunkan Panas Api?. September 20, 2016. Available for download at <https://wri-indonesia.org/id/blog/setelah-kebakaran-yang-memecahkan-rekor-dapatkah-kebijakan-baru-di-indonesia-menurunkan-panas>

³ Alfi, Azizah Nur. Soal Lahan Gambut, Pemegang HTI Harus Selesaikan Revisi RKU Akhir 2017. *bisnis.com*: November 2017. Online <http://industri.bisnis.com/read/20171127/99/713096/soal-lahan-gambut-pemegang-hti-harus-selesaikan-revisi-rku-akhir-2017>



A. Enhancing coordination between ministries and agencies as well as between central and regional governments

In field monitoring, Pantau Gambut's Network found it necessary to enhance coordination between central and regional governments as well as national agencies such as the BRG and the Regional Peat Restoration Team (TRGD). Based on the observation of the Pantau Gambut's Network, the lack of coordination was mainly contributed by the absence of an integrated restoration plan at the central and regional levels.

Based on Presidential Regulation No. 71 of 2014 Jo PP 57 of 2016, Regional Governments shall refer to the Peat Ecosystem Conservation and Management Plan (RPPEG) formulated by KLHK. To date, KLHK has not issued this RPPEG document. On the other hand, Presidential Regulation No. 1 of 2016 has set the mandate for BRG to formulate a peat restoration plan, which is currently stipulated in the Peat Ecosystem Restoration Plan (RREG). RREG is currently being formulated. Pantau Gambut's Network see the potential for the peat restoration plan to be duplicated due to the absence of clear regulation to integrate the two documents.

Peat restoration planning must be able to comprehensively identify the root problems across the sectors. To ensure effective intervention, communication with other sectors beyond the forestry sector must be improved. With the allocation of budget for the regional governments under the Decentralization program in 2018, BRG and regional governments must be able to ensure the effectiveness of such distribution and budget utilization in accordance with the restoration plans that have been coordinated with the relevant agencies and offices.

Pantau Gambut expects the full commitment of central and regional governments along with all related agencies to ensuring such coordination and finding a solution that works for everyone through cross-institutional policy integration. Policy integration between national and regional ministries and agencies is vital since 87% of priority peat restoration areas are located in cultivation areas while the remaining 13% are located in conservation areas where most cultivation is carried out by forest permit and concession holders or palm oil plantations.⁴ The active roles of the Ministry of Agriculture and regional governments are also vital as the enforcement of Law No. 18 of 2004 concerning Plantation relies on the regulations of the Ministry of Agriculture and recommendations from governors or regents.

B. The importance of peat restoration data transparency

Restoration target of 2 million hectares of peatland is a bold environmental restoration and conservation target that requires the participation of all parties from regulators, practitioners to the grassroots. Public participation is also required considering that restoration activities will directly impact their lives. Law No. 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Conservation and Management even stipulates that the people have equal rights and opportunities to actively participate in environmental conservation and management. Public can participate through field monitoring on the progress of restoration activities. Such participation requires data transparency and access from the central

⁴ BRG. Laporan Tahunan 2016. Mengawali Restorasi Gambut Indonesia. Available for download at https://brg.go.id/files/Publikasi/BRG%202016%20report_29.05.17.pdf



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government, regional governments and related agencies such as the BRG and TGRD as well as peatland concessionaires. Transparency and access concerning information on the restoration of 2 million hectares of peatland need to be continuously improved.

Public participation requires detailed information on peatland restoration, which remains difficult to access although it should be publicly available. To date, the Pantau Gambut's Network on the field has not been able to confirm the progress of the BRG facilitation in 2017, which covered an area of 1.18 million hectares. For that, the Pantau Gambut's Network require detailed data on such progress, such as data on the locations of the development of 5,900 artesian wells, 1,849 canal blocks and 110 canal backfilling points throughout 2017.⁵ Information on restoration activities within licensed areas is also difficult to access. As mandated by Presidential Regulation No. 57 of 2016, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry has instructed concessionaires to restore damaged peat ecosystems, but details on those companies are not publicly available. The companies' Work Plan Revisions (RRKU) also remains inaccessible by the public. Meanwhile, every intervention on peat ecosystems has potential impact on the surrounding communities. Pantau Gambut hopes that these data will be made publicly available to inform the public of the direction of restoration activities by entrepreneurs so that they are able to take part in monitoring the implementation on the field. Access to such information is important in allowing the public to monitor the indicators of peat restoration success.

C. The importance of raising awareness and developing capacity of the people concerning peat restoration

The Pantau Gambut's Network in priority restoration provinces note that most of the people does not possess adequate knowledge and understanding on peat and peat restoration. From its observation, Pantau Gambut has identified two possible causes for such lack of knowledge and understanding. First, local communities have their own terms for peat, such as *rawa goyang* or *rimba payau* in Papua, making communications and public education on peat conservation challenging. Second, communities have limited knowledge on peat utilization, which has been overlooked for so long. The few people who have knowledge on peat, such as the people of South Kalimantan, are only familiar with peatland burning for land clearing.

The government tried to solve such problem through the establishment of [Desa Peduli Gambut](#). In implementing the program, Pantau Gambut found that several villages that were burned in 2015 and have been restored have not been registered in the Desa Peduli Gambut program. An example is Guntung Payung Village, Landasan Ulin District, Banjarbaru City, South Kalimantan. In interviews with the locals, Pantau Gambut's Network found that the communities have not been fully involved in the restoration activities. For instance, the construction of artesian wells only involved sub-district officials. To ensure that the DPG is selected more effectively, the selection of villages needs to be synchronized with the peatland map early in the planning stage.

⁵ The numbers are based on the official statement on BRG website in the article titled *Masyarakat Sebagai Garda Depan Perlindungan Gambut 2017: Catatan terhadap capaian kerja BRG pada tahun kedua*. Available for download at <https://brg.go.id/masyarakat-sebagai-garda-depan-perlindungan-gambut-2017-catatan-terhadap-capaian-kerja-brg-pada-tahun-kedua/>



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The Pantau Gambut's Network appreciates the progress made by the BRG in formulating the Peat Ecosystem Restoration Plan (RREG), including in South Sumatra. However, the development of this plan did not involve the Peat Restoration Management Unit (UPRG), either community groups or companies. Considering the substantial role of UPRG as the implementer of the government's restoration plan, the involvement of UPRG in the planning will help create a more realistic plan to ensure that the restoration targets can be reached. UPRGs also needs to increase its capacity to independently formulate and implement the peat restoration plans in their respective regions to support the government's restoration targets by 2019.

Table 1: Communities and peat restoration in 2017 as observed by the Pantau Gambut's Network

Location		Finding	Impact
Province	Village/District/Regency		
Riau	Rimbo Panjang Village, Tambang District, Kampar Regency	Knowledge on how to use artesian wells is lacking among the people	Less effective use of artesian wells during fires
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rimbo Panjang Village, Tambang District, Kampar Regency • Sungai Tohor Barat Village, Tebing Tinggi District, Kepulauan Meranti Regency 	Restoration activities have begun to change the mindset of the people	Parts of the community have ceased burning lands
	Nipah Sendanu Village, Tebing District, Kepulauan Meranti Regency	Parts of the communities have been involved in trainings and briefings on restoration efforts, but such involvement remains limited and incomprehensive	Inefficient canal blocking leads to the people assuming that the canal blocks are the cause of floods in rubber plantations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nipah Sendanu Village, Tebing District, Kepulauan Meranti Regency • Sungai Tohor Village, Tebing Tinggi District, Kepulauan Meranti Regency 	Parts of the peatlands affected by canal blocking have begun to show signs of recovery	Sago plants along the canal blocks have begun to grow
	Sungai Tohor Village, Tebing Tinggi District, Kepulauan Meranti Regency	Trainings under the Desa Peduli Gambut program and restoration planning and execution have not been properly socialized so that only village officials are privy to	Low community understanding on and contribution to peat restoration



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		such information	
South Kalimantan	Guntung Payung Village, Landasan Ulin District, Banjarbaru City	Involvement in restoration activities such as artesian well construction is limited to sub-district officials	Lack of understanding on the function and utilization of artesian wells among the community, resulting in less efficient utilization of artesian wells during fires
Central Kalimantan	Mantangai Hulu Village, Kalumpang Village and Katunjung Village, Kapuas Regency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No community education before canal blocking• Only village officials are informed of canal blocking	The constructed canal blocks hamper the people's access to the plantation and potentially cause flooding

D. Enhancement of peat restoration supervision by companies

Of the 2.4 million hectares of priority peat restoration area, around 60 percent or 1.4 million hectares are located within concession areas. Presidential Regulation No. 57 of 2016 and Regulation of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry No. 14 of 2017 requires companies to restore peatlands destroyed by corporate activities within and outside of cultivation areas. Tangible actions by companies for peat restoration will affect peats within the same hydrological ecosystem despite being outside the concession area. Therefore, the government must directly monitor and supervise the execution of the companies' restoration responsibility. Pantau Gambut hopes for the BRG to complete the guidelines for concession land restoration supervision in 2018.

Regional Pantau Gambut's Network has observed that peat restoration is mostly concentrated in community-managed areas than business permit areas. For instance, BRG's mapping of peat restoration areas shows that of the 594,230 hectares of restoration areas in South Sumatra, 458,430 hectares are business permit areas. Unfortunately, detailed data and information concerning further actions and efforts by the permit holders for peat restoration in the target area are not available.

The government's commitment on peat restoration requires the permit holders to realize their commitment more speedily. It is manifested in the stipulation of a clear deadline and sanction for companies that fail to fulfill the commitment in the Work Plan (RKU). While such deadlines and administrative sanctions have been stipulated under Presidential Regulation No. 57 of 2016 in the forms of government enforcement and suspension of license, the regulation has not been optimally enforced. Pantau Gambut also hopes for better coordination on restoration plans between community-managed areas and permit areas as well as clear action by the government to supervise the implementation of peat restoration in permit areas.



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E. Assimilation of local knowledge into sustainable peat management method

The future of peat, especially within community-managed areas, goes hand in hand with the future of the communities around it. Preserved peat ensures the availability of food and water supply for the people. On the other hand, peat damage affects the people socially and economically as well as the environment. Therefore, comprehensive holistic strategies that balance those aspects are greatly needed. In a visit to the Mantangai Hulu Village, Central Kalimantan, the Pantau Gambut team identified several economic activities in the community that have the potential to accelerate peat restoration. These activities include fish farming, sedge cultivation for handicrafts, *jelutung* cultivation, agroforestry as well as rice and vegetable farming on shallow peatland.

These are local knowledge that are inherited through the generations and may differ from one region to another. All parties, including the government, academics and the public, must consider research on local economic potentials. Peat restoration is more likely to be successful with the adoption of local knowledge into the government's peat restoration plans.

Subject	Recommendation to Government Agencies					
	KLHK	BRG	Regional Government	Ministry of Agriculture	National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas)	The Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning (ATR)/National Land Agency (BPN)
Enhancement of coordination between ministries and agencies as well as central and regional governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KLHK needs to enhance coordination across ministries and agencies concerning the programs carried out in priority peat restoration areas KLHK needs to enhance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BRG and TRD must draw a joint policy map for restoration activities BRG and TRD must cooperate with local government bodies and regional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synergize the regional peat management plan (Provincial/regency RPPEG or RREG) with RPJMD and Strategic Environmental Assessment (KLHS) 	Ensure that the national and regional peat restoration and conservation plans have been considered in the plantation planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that peat restoration and conservation have been incorporated in the 2019 RKP Coordinate with BRG to determine the scope of peat restoration in the 2019 RKP 	Ensure that environmental conservation as part of the peat restoration program has been incorporated in the RTRW planning, especially in the formulation of KLHS



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	<p>coordination with the BRG concerning programs implemented across ministries in priority peat restoration areas</p>	<p>offices to jointly identify activities that have been completed in the villages in peat areas and must follow up on pending activities whether joint or separate activities concerning the restoration of the 2 million hectares of peatland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with KLHK, BRG, Ministry of Agriculture, other related ministries and related agencies in the formulation and implementation of regional peat management plans (provincial/regency RPPEG or RREG) 			
<p>Raising awareness and building capacity among the people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KLHK needs to educate the public and increase research on sustainable peat management from the ecological, social and economic perspectives, both internally within the KLHK and externally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BRG cooperates with universities or local NGOs to raise public awareness on peat restoration with measurable indicators BRG cooperates with research institutions to provide comprehensive trainings on the technical, 		<p>Increase counseling for local communities to support the improvement of local economies with sustainable peat management</p>		



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		<p>economic and social aspects of peatlands with the involvement of the community and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More careful selection of Desa Peduli Gambut with the involvement of the community and by taking into consideration the proximity of the villages to the peatlands				
Importance of peat restoration data transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• KLHK needs to improve transparency and public access to data on concession permits within peatlands• KLHK needs to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitate access to data on the progress of restoration by BRG and provide periodical information on the progress of basic indicators of restoration				Provide access to information on oil palm plantations' Land-Cultivation Permit (HGU) to facilitate public participation in monitoring the restoration efforts of the companies



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	<p>improve transparency and public access to the RKU revision plans submitted by concessionaire companies</p>	<p>success to the public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BRG cooperates with peat restoration partners in permit areas to regularly communicate the program's achievements and restoration activities to the public				
<p>Strengthening of peat restoration supervision by companies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• KLHK needs to stipulate clear deadlines and administrative sanctions for companies that violate Presidential Regulation No. 57/2016• Deadlines and administrative sanctions to be restated in the Regulation of the Ministry of Environment and	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BRG needs to clarify and improve transparency in the planning and supervision of peat restoration in the 1.4 million hectares of permit area				



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	<p>Forestry No. 14 of 2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• KLHK needs to improve transparency in the review and ratification of companies' RKU					
<p>Assimilation of local knowledge into the sustainable peat management method</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• KLHK needs to educate the public and increase research on community peat management• KLHK needs to consider the research findings on peat management in the making of sustainable policies from the ecological, social and economic perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BRG cooperates with universities or local NGOs to record the various sustainable peat management methods employed by the people• BRG encourages transparent and inclusive peat restoration planning to obtain more information from communities, researchers and academics.				



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Note

The report is prepared based on the national and regional field monitoring by the Pantau Gambut's Network under the following steps:

- Pantau Gambut's Network identified the 7 main commitments on peat restoration of public officials.
- Pantau Gambut's Network monitored the progress and challenges in the realization of the commitment using information from related institutions and renowned media.
- Pantau Gambut's Network coordinated with the regional network across 7 priority peat restoration provinces to monitor the realization of the commitments in the seven regions.
- Pantau Gambut's Network conducted live observation by visiting priority peat restoration areas and arranging meetings with the local governments.
- Observation results were then abstracted into significant points as presented in this report.

About Pantau Gambut

Pantau Gambut is an independent initiative of various Indonesian non-governmental organizations that utilizes technology, data collaboration and community networks to provide information and enhance public participation in ensuring the success of the peat ecosystem restoration commitments of all stakeholders in Indonesia.

Pantaugambut.id has the features of *Pantau Komitmen* (Commitment Monitoring), *Peta Aktivitas Restorasi* (Restoration Activities Map), *Berbagi Cerita* (Story Sharing) and *Pelajari* (Learn More). The Pantaugambut.id platform is accessible to the public for free.