



Press Release

The BOS Foundation Continues Conservation Work Despite Forest Fires and Thick Haze in Kalimantan

Massive forest and brush fires have again struck Kalimantan and other regions in Indonesia. Despite the perilous conditions, the BOS Foundation along with other stakeholders continue their hard work in protecting and rehabilitating Bornean orangutans and their habitat.

Bogor, 17 September 2019. Currently, the massive wildfires scorching Kalimantan hold the potential to harm not only the health of local communities, but impede the efforts to conserve orangutans and their habitat. However, the staff of the BOS Foundation are committed to continuing their work in protecting critically endangered Bornean orangutans from the threat posed by these growing fires.

Dr. Ir. Jamartin Sihite, MSc., BOS Foundation CEO stated that, "Thus far, a total of 80 hectares of peat forest in our Mawas working area has been affected by the fires. Twenty hectares in the Sei Daha area, located near the Tuanan Research Center, and 60 hectares in Sei Mantangai, both in Kapuas District, Central Kalimantan, are burning. However, our team from Mawas Conservation Program has been working closely with the local communities and the team from the Tuanan Research Centre to control, isolate, and, ultimately, extinguish the fires.

But this challenge does not diminish our passion and dedication to protecting Bornean orangutans and their habitat. Our teams from the Mawas Conservation Program, the Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, and the Samboja Lestari Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre are conducting regular patrols to closely monitor all potential hotspots and limit the risk for further fire outbreaks in our work areas. At this time, we have not rescued nor translocated orangutans threatened by forest fires."

The following is a report on the current conditions in BOS Foundation working areas which are affected by fires and thick haze.

Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre in Samboja Lestari, East Kalimantan

A layer of thin smoke, thought to be a result of fire, has been covering the Samboja Lestari Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre for the past few days. To avoid adverse effects on the orangutans undergoing rehabilitation, the medical team in Samboja Lestari has been providing a daily dose of milk and multivitamins for all orangutans in the centre, which now totals 130 individuals. Outdoor activities at Forest School for young orangutans have been reduced to only a few hours. For adult orangutans living in the socialisation cage complex, the Samboja Lestari technicians regularly spray the enclosures with water to keep them cool.

The haze undoubtedly impacts the health of both humans and orangutans. Whenever haze is present, particles of dust and carbon, results of the burnings, enter the respiratory tract and cause negative physiological reactions. This has the potential to trigger conditions such as bronchitis and pneumonia due to the compromised immune system. As of now, there have been no orangutans newly infected with acute respiratory infections (ARI).

Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre in Nyaru Menteng, Central Kalimantan

Previously, a fire had threatened our Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, located near the city of Palangka Raya. In the first week of August, our firefighting team was mobilised to fight an



approaching fire, a mere 300 meters from the Nyaru Menteng outer fence. After tirelessly working for approximately 4 hours with local stakeholders, we finally were able to extinguish the burn.

The team at Nyaru Menteng is now working closely with the local communities and the local government to conduct patrols and extinguish several hotspots in order to prevent the fires from spreading even further.

Unfortunately, land clearing practices that utilize slash-and-burn agriculture continue to be employed in many areas within Central Kalimantan, specifically near the City of Palangka Raya. This has led to thick smoke completely shrouding the city and the surrounding areas. Over the past few days, the Air Pollution Standard Index in Palangka Raya has been classified as dangerous.

The thick smoke does not only endanger the health of our staff at Nyaru Menteng, but also it affects the 355 orangutans we currently care for in the rehabilitation centre and the surrounding pre-release islands. As many as 37 young orangutans are suspected to have contracted a mild respiratory infection. The Nyaru Menteng medical team is giving treatment in the form of nebulizer treatments, multivitamins, and antibiotics, focusing specifically on orangutans who have been diagnosed with severe infections.

Mawas Conservation Program, Central Kalimantan

The 309,000 hectares of peat forest within the conservation program in Kapuas and South Barito Regencies is our working area currently facing the greatest threat by active forest and brush fires. This is due to the enormity of the area and the extreme difficulty of extinguishing peatland fires. Moreover, during the dry season, which is occurring currently, the canals have and continue to recede, limiting the water available for our use in extinguishing the burns.

The first fire was discovered on 3 September in the Sei Daha area, near the Tuanan Research Center. Even though we managed to extinguish active burns in a relatively short time, the unique nature of the peat forest with its abundant stock of flammable natural components such as ferns, makes it difficult to extinguish completely. To this day, hotspots are still found within this area of approximately 20 hectares. Our team consisting of the local village fire brigade, the research team, and technicians from the Tuanan Research Station continue to work to isolate the fire and secure the research station. The team has drilled 8 wells and set up 5 pump units ready to fight fire.

Meanwhile, in Sei Mantangai, fires continue to spread in a 60-hectare area of fragmented land. In order to extinguish it, our team has dug 26 wells to provide the water needed for dousing. The main obstacle the teams are facing is the lack of water sources and the inaccessibility of the fire outbreaks. Our team is working together with the firefighters from the local communities to continue fighting the fire, while hoping for the rainy season will soon arrive.

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Editor's Note:

ABOUT BOS FOUNDATION

Founded in 1991, the BOS Foundation is a non-profit Indonesian organisation dedicated to the conservation of Bornean orangutans and their natural habitats, working together with local communities, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia, and international partner organisations.

The BOS Foundation currently cares for more than 500 orangutans in two orangutan rehabilitation centres, with the support of 440 highly dedicated staff members and experts in the fields of primatology, biodiversity, ecology, forest rehabilitation, agroforestry, community empowerment, communications, education, and orangutan welfare. For further information, please visit ***www.orangutan.or.id***.