



PRESS RELEASE

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Fire Strikes the Borneo Orangutan Survival (BOS) Foundation's Working Areas Yet Again

Bogor, September 12 2023. The Borneo Orangutan Survival (BOS) Foundation is deeply concerned about the recent outbreak of forest fires within its operational areas in Kalimantan.

As we enter the dry season this year, where the "El Niño" event puts forests in Indonesia at a higher risk for extreme fires, two locations in BOS Foundation areas have already experienced burns. In the middle of last August, it was reported that an estimated 50 hectares of peat swamp had been engulfed by flames, across two different locations within the BOS Foundation's Mawas working area. Due to limited access and the deep, flammable peat in the area, the burns extended far below what was visible from the surface and took nearly a week to extinguish. This sudden outbreak of forest fires in 2023 underscores the pressing need for urgent and collaborative action to address this crisis before it grows more dire.

Looking back to 2015, the El Niño phenomenon had also gripped the island as it does now, causing the dry season to grow longer and more extreme. Eight years ago, the dried cropland and shrubland fuelled massive fires all across the island of Borneo, which were further exacerbated by illegal land-clearing activities. More than 2 million hectares of forest were lost to forest fires that year. Clouds of toxic smoke blanketed the sky, causing respiratory problems and destroying habitats for countless species of flora and fauna, including orangutans. From November 2015 to February 2017, the BOS Foundation had to relocate wild orangutans to safer forests. Then, in 2019, the flames reappeared. Although their ferocity was not comparable to 2015, the fires still posed a serious threat to the environment and human well-being.

Having learned from the severe forest and land fires in Kalimantan in 2015 and 2019, the BOS Foundation regularly conducts training on managing fires, monitors the working areas, manages and trains firefighting groups, and builds wells to serve as water reservoirs for extinguishing fires. To maximise the impact of our disaster mitigation preparations, we also ensure that fire extinguishing infrastructure and wells are accessible in locations that are prone to or have already undergone severe fires.

Dr. Ir. Jamartin Sihite, MSc., BOS Foundation CEO said; "BOS Foundation's working area located in the former mega-rice project area, the One Million Hectare Peatland Project (PLG) area, is a fire-prone and carbon-rich area. Ahead of the dry season, the BOS Foundation has already implemented forest fire prevention measures. Together with



partners, we have carried out land rewetting and constructed wells and "beje" (ponds). In the event of fires, these wells and ponds can be used as a source of water to extinguish the burns. The BOS Foundation is also working together with surrounding communities to raise awareness on fire prevention as we would always rather prevent than fight a fire."

Preventive efforts undertaken to mitigate the impact of forest fires involve the participation of all stakeholders, including the government, communities, the private sector, and international partners. Only through strong collaboration and a commitment to sustainable practices can the negative impact of forest fires in Kalimantan be reduced or avoided entirely.

The BOS Foundation extends its heartfelt gratitude and recognition to all contributors who have devoted their time and resources toward fire prevention. Our partners and donors, both institutional and individual, stand as pillars of strength, enabling us to tirelessly pursue our mission.

For media inquiries, please contact:

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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 400 orangutans in two orangutan rehabilitation centres, with the support of 420 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.