



## Natural Forest Clearance Continues on Deep Peat in APRIL Supplier Concession

APRIL's sustainability commitment questioned, High Conservation Value Forest cleared



Two heavy equipments operating in PT. Adindo Hutani Lestari (AHL) Sesayap Sector concession.  
Photo taken by GAPETA Borneo at 3°33'21.7948"N, 117°4'25.8401"E on 19 April 2014.

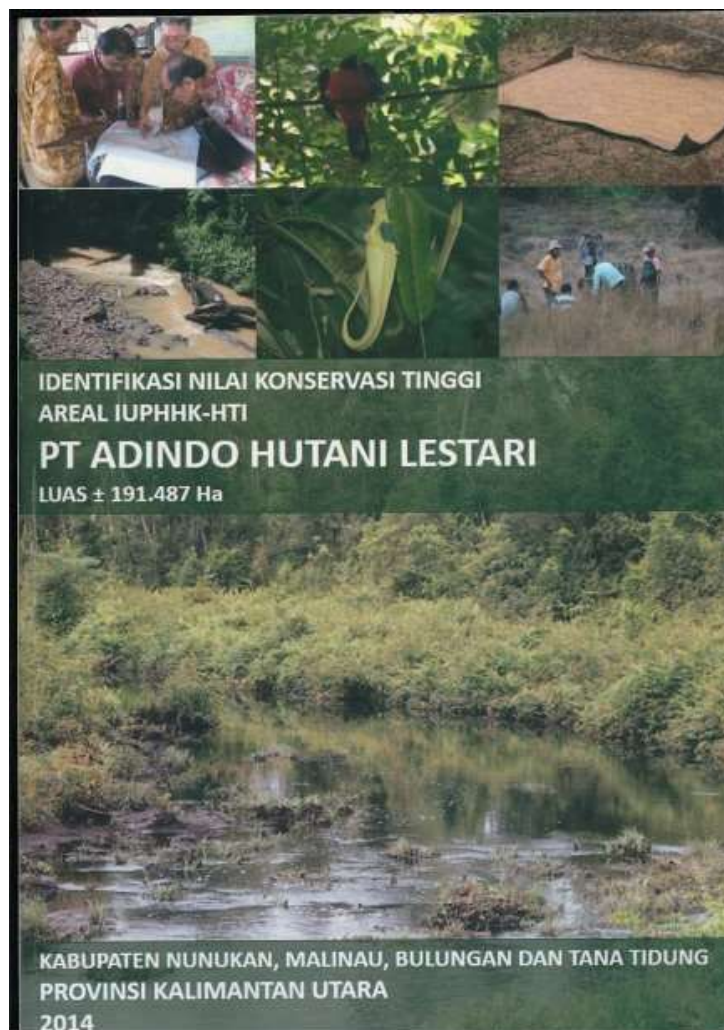
Investigative Report by:  
GAPETA Borneo, RPHK and WWF Indonesia-East Kalimantan

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## Introduction

Asia Pacific Resources International Holdings Limited (APRIL) issued its “Sustainable Forest Management Policy (SFMP)” on 28 January 2014 which commits that “APRIL sources fibre from non High Conservation Value Forest (“HCVF”) areas that have been identified through independent HCV assessments, based on Indonesian HCV toolkit and peer-reviewed by HCV Resource Network”<sup>1</sup>.

PT. Adindo Hutani Lestari (AHL) in North Kalimantan province is one of the mixed tropical hardwood (MTH) suppliers for APRIL’s pulp mill at Kerinci in Riau Province, Sumatra. An HCV assessment was conducted by a consultant, Tropenbos Indonesia, and delivered in a public consultation at the local area on 26 November 2013 to obtain inputs from stakeholders. APRIL shared the final HCV assessment report with WWF-Indonesia on 24 January 2014. The report was never peer-reviewed by HCV Resource Network.

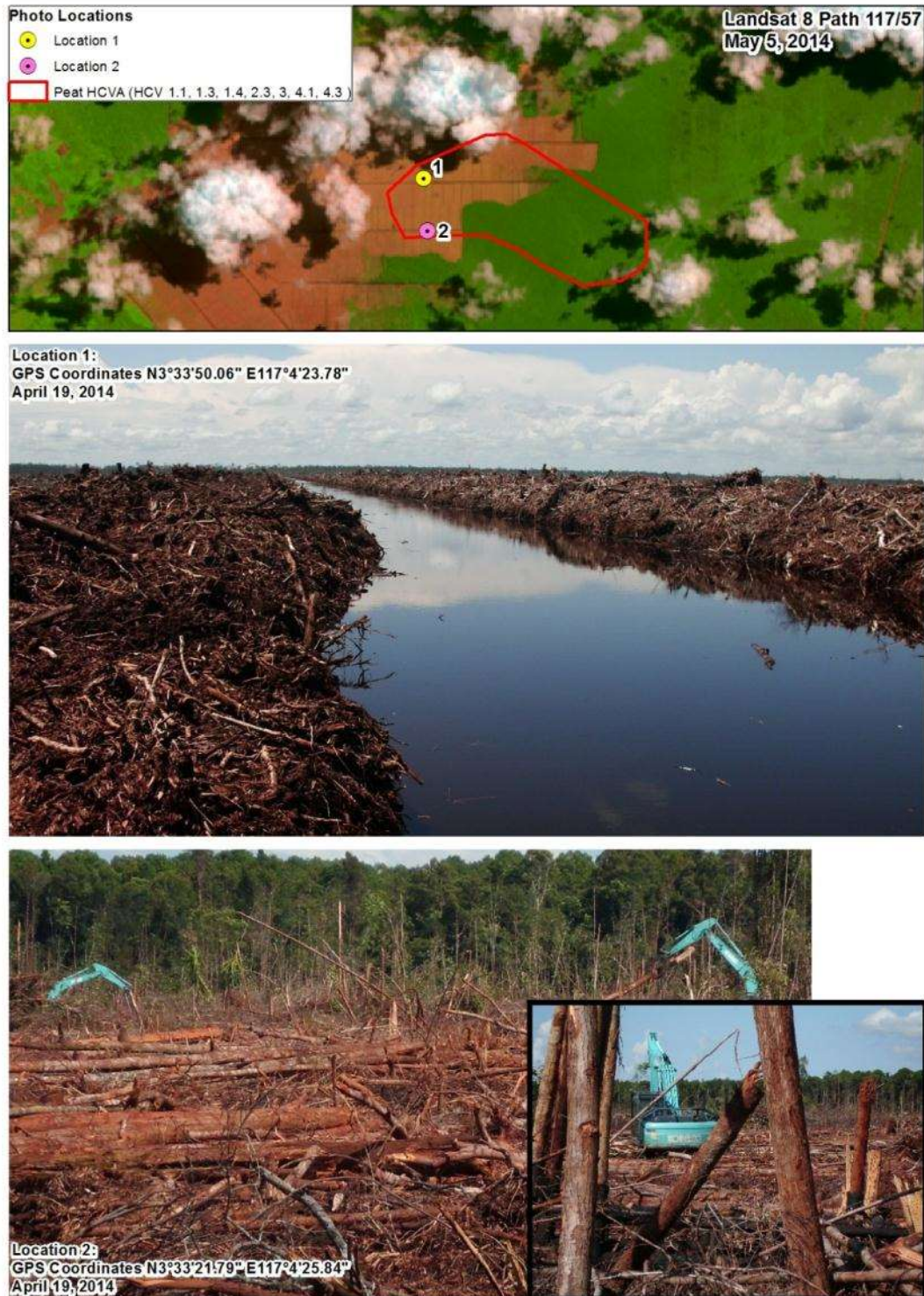


**Picture 1.** Front cover of HCVF report assessment of the pulpwood concession of PT. Adindo Hutani Lestari.



## Investigation findings

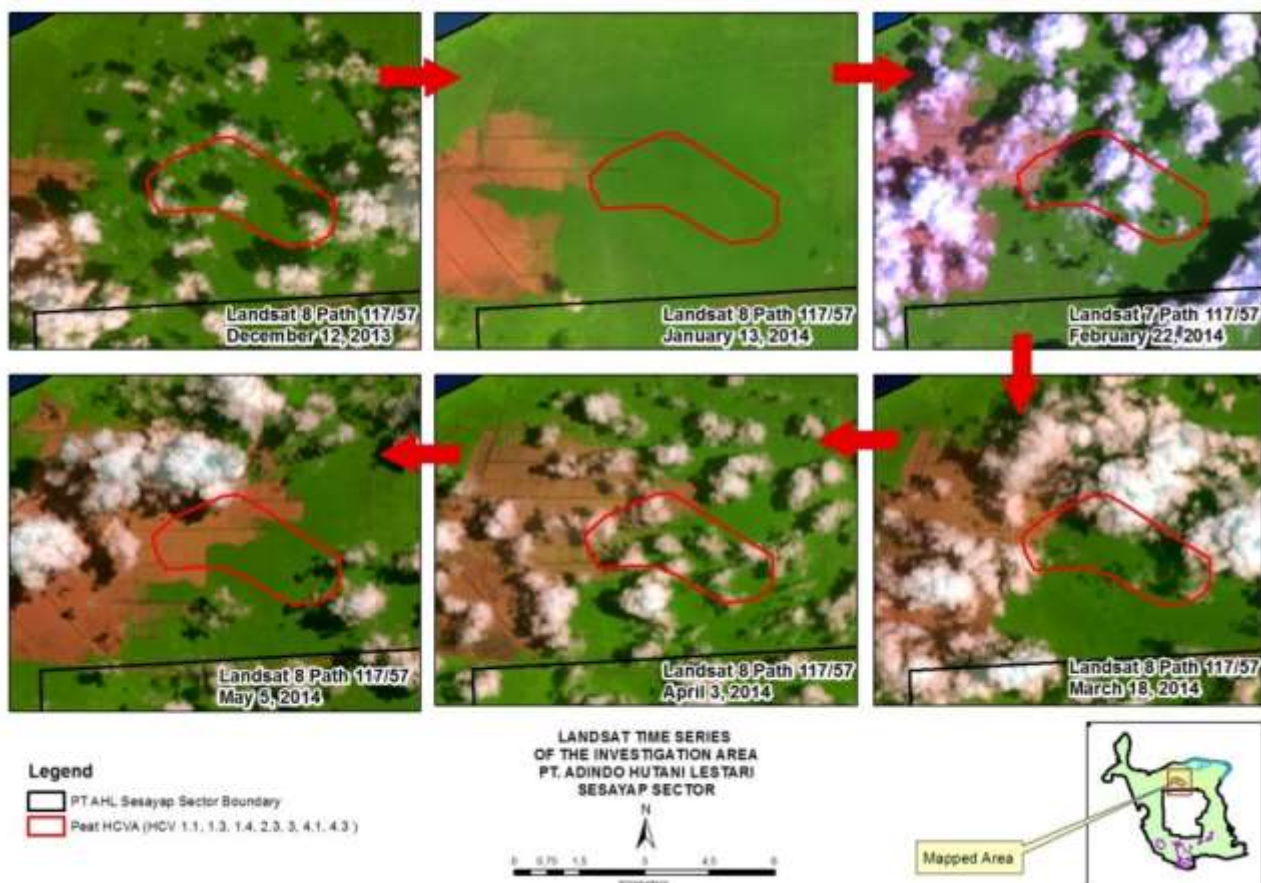
Our field investigation between 17 and 25 April 2014 discovered AHL to be still clearing natural forest, even a small High Conservation Value Forest identified by Tropenbos for protection, in its Sesayap Sector concession of 63,700 hectares (Map 1 with photos).



**Map 1.** Investigators observed large area of exposed peat after clearance of HCVF identified for protection by the Tropenbos HCV assessment (red boundary) (location 1) and three excavators cutting and collecting MTH from the HCVF clearance (location 2). Photos taken by GAPETA Borneo on 19 April 2014.

Investigators discovered at least 5 excavators at coordinates 3°33'21.7948"N, 117°4'25.8401"E (location 2 in Map 1) in the process of cutting, collecting, and transporting MTH from the HCVF clearance. The team also discovered piles of freshly cut MTH in other areas. The team estimated that deep peat canals had been constructed in the past 1 - 2 months, they were approximately 7 to 8 meters wide and more than 4 meters deep.

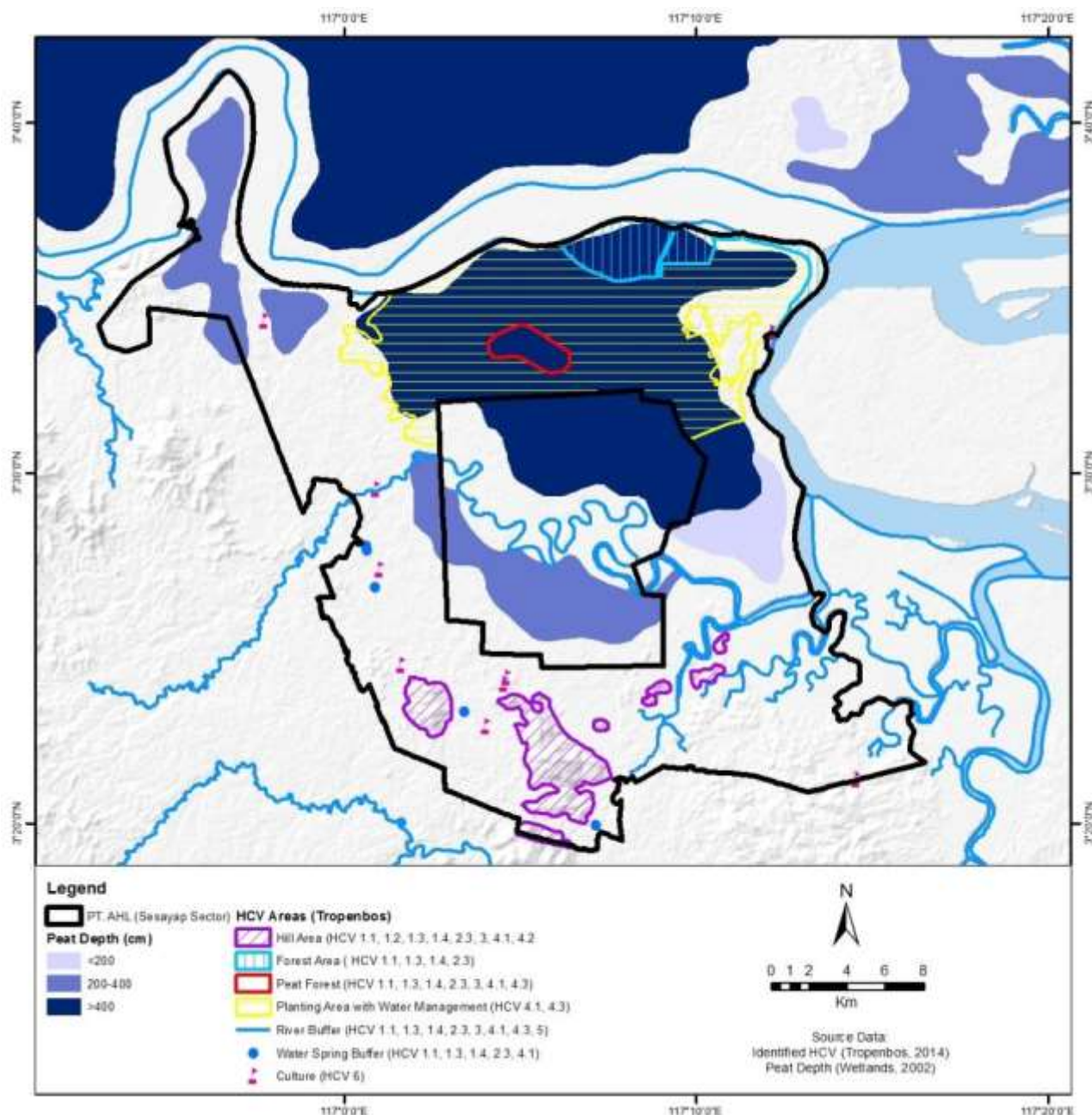
The Annual Cutting Permit (RKT) issued in 2013 and 2014 for this Sesayap Sector concession area allowed natural forest clearance of more than 3,000 ha. Landsat image analysis confirms that natural forest and HCVF clearance continued after the issuance of APRIL's SMFP on 28 January 2014 (Map 2 and 4).



**Map 2.** Deforestation cronology of PT. Adindo Hutani Lestari Sesayap Sector concession between 12 December 2013 and 5 May 2014. This RGE/APRIL supplier has cleared more than 3,000 hectares of natural forest since 2013, including 290 hectares of HCVA identified by Tropenbos for protection (red boundary).

The peat depth in the area where AHL continued to clear natural forest is estimated to be more than 4 meters deep (Map 3, compare with the forest loss February-May 2014 in Map 4). Based on the Government Regulation PP No. 26 Year 2008 on National Spatial Planning<sup>2</sup>, the area is protected and no forest clearance is allowed. Deep peat conversion for plantation development causes huge greenhouse gas emissions through drainage or fire and serious haze which continue to be the regional problem in South East Asia.





**Map 3.** Peat depth at PT. Adindo Hutani Lestari–Sesayap Sector  
(data source: Wetlands International, 2002<sup>3</sup>).

### History of failed HCVF protection by APRIL

Since 2005, APRIL has already been committed to protect HCVF<sup>4</sup>. However, WWF-Indonesia and other NGOs have consistently criticized its implementation. Rainforest Alliance even failed APRIL's interim FSC Chain of Custody certificate in 2010 because APRIL did not stop clearance of natural forests for which no professional HCVF assessments had been done or for which the APRIL's HCVF delineation was disputed by stakeholders<sup>5 6</sup>. The key issues have been:

1. APRIL's HCV assessments of many concessions in Riau province were based on APRIL's own flawed definition of HCVF and without proper peer-review. The assessments consistently identified small fraction of natural forest in concessions as HCVF for protection. For example, another HCV assessment by Tropenbos conducted in Kampar Peninsula was criticized by the Forest Peoples Program as: "only a

*truncated and very preliminary HCV assessment process has been undertaken by Tropenbos, and the conclusions of which have been disputed by the communities<sup>7</sup>". Local NGO network Jikalahari and Greenpeace also said: "this Tropenbos assessment serves to try and legitimize the ongoing conversion of large amounts of forests in Kampar, while setting aside minimal patches of 'HCV'<sup>8</sup>".*

2. Even those small HCVFs identified by APRIL commissioned assessments or HCVFs identified by independent parties were later cleared by their suppliers<sup>9 10 11 12 13</sup>. The latest of such violation was conducted by PT. Triomas FDI in Riau<sup>14</sup>.

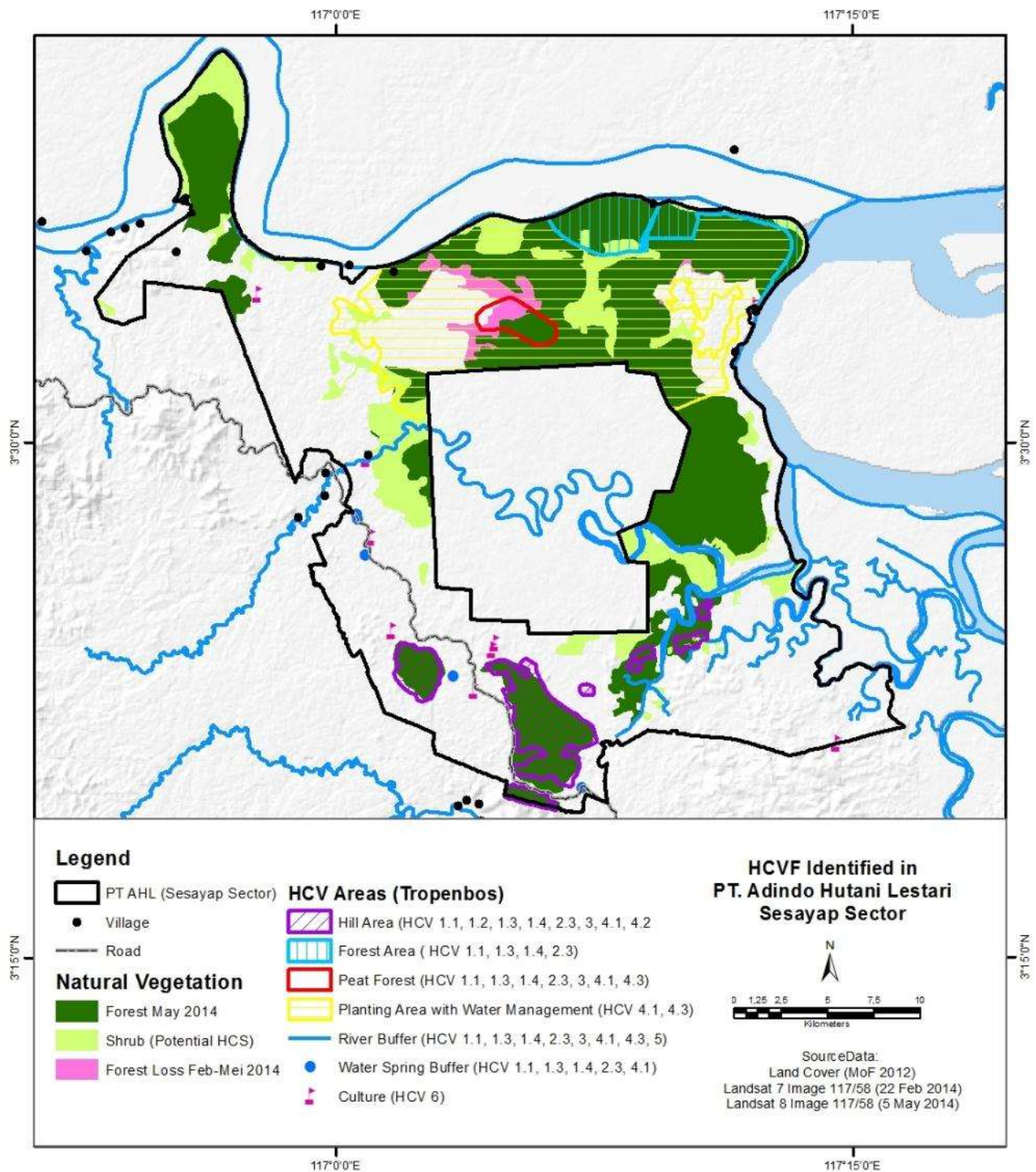
The HCV assessment report of the AHL concession by Tropenbos seems to be similar to those assessments. It was never properly peer-reviewed and its quality is questionable. A lot of the HCV areas delineated by Tropenbos are allowed to be cleared and converted into plantations and, even the small "Peat HCVA" to be protected ended up being cleared, even after the SFMP announcement (Map 4).

Is APRIL really committed to change? Or was the SFMP publication just a PR exercise?



**Picture 2.** Piles of MTH waiting for transport near the location 1 in Map 1.  
*Photo taken by GAPETA Borneo on 19 April 2014 at 3°33'50.06"N, 117°4'23.78"E.*





**Map 4.** Natural forest loss between February and May 2014 (pink area) compared with various HCV areas identified by Tropenbos in the AHL Sesayap Sector. Natural forest in two HCV areas, “Planting Area with Water Management” and “Peat”, was cleared since 2013, even after the SFMP publication on 28 January 2014.

## Conclusions

RGE/APRIL supplier, PT. Adindo Hutani Lestari in North Kalimantan Province, has continued clearance of natural forest on deep peat, even the small HCVF identified by a questionable HCV assessment, after APRIL issued its SFMP on 28 January 2014. APRIL has thus failed to fulfill its own commitments:

- *“APRIL sources fibre from non High Conservation Value Forest (“HCVF”) areas that have been identified through independent HCV assessments, based on Indonesian HCV toolkit and peer-reviewed by HCV Resource Network” (Commitment I.a. of the SFMP)*
- *“APRIL and its fibre suppliers protect and manage forested peatland areas identified as HCVF and HCS.” (Commitment III.a.)*
- *“APRIL engages with peat experts to implement best practice management to reduce and avoid greenhouse gases (GHG) emission in peat land landscape.” (Commitment III.c.)*

## Recommendations

WWF Indonesia, GAPETA Borneo and RPHK urge RGE/APRIL to:

- Immediately start a forest clearance moratorium and discontinue the operation of heavy equipments in all APRIL suppliers’ concessions, even if APRIL had commissioned HCV assessments already, so the proper HCV assessments could be conducted and peer-reviewed by the HCV Resources Network;
- Issue a clearance moratorium on areas that are potential HCS.
- Immediately discontinue the opening and conversion of peat land forest.
- Immediately develop its detailed plan to implement its restoration and conversion 1:1 commitment, including rehabilitation of the destroyed HCVF and peat areas, and execute it.
- Immediately resolve social conflicts through FPIC mechanism by involving stakeholders.
- Expand the policy to cover all companies associated with the RGE group and its founder and shareholders, including PT. Toba Pulp Lestari.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.aprilasia.com/news/APRIL%20SFMP%20POLICY.pdf>

<http://www.aprilasia.com/news/Press%20release%20Sustainability%20Policy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.bkprn.org/peraturan/the\\_file/PP\\_26\\_Tahun\\_2008.pdf](http://www.bkprn.org/peraturan/the_file/PP_26_Tahun_2008.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://wetlands.or.id/PDF/buku/Atlas%20Sebaran%20Gambut%20Kalimantan.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.aprilasia.com/images/stories/hcvf.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://ran.org/indonesian-paper-giant-april%E2%80%99s-certification-status-suspended>

<sup>6</sup> [http://awsassets.wwf.or.id/downloads/wwf\\_position\\_on\\_april\\_december\\_2010\\_.pdf](http://awsassets.wwf.or.id/downloads/wwf_position_on_april_december_2010_.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/publication/2010/05/indonesiaaprilfpplettermay10eng.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.eyesontheforest.or.id/?page=news&action=view&id=279>

<sup>9</sup>

<http://eyesontheforest.or.id/attach/EoF%20%28Jan%202007%29%20PT%20Bina%20Daya%20Bintara%20affiliated%20to%20APRIL%20clearcuts%20peat%20forest%20in%20Libo%20block.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.eyesontheforest.or.id/attach/EoF\\_Report\\_July2010\\_pulp\\_industry\\_continues\\_clearance%20B.pdf](http://www.eyesontheforest.or.id/attach/EoF_Report_July2010_pulp_industry_continues_clearance%20B.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [http://eyesontheforest.or.id/attach/EoF\\_Inv\\_Report\\_PT\\_CSS\\_APRIL\\_Aug2010\\_March2011.pdf](http://eyesontheforest.or.id/attach/EoF_Inv_Report_PT_CSS_APRIL_Aug2010_March2011.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [http://awsassets.wwf.or.id/downloads/wwf\\_position\\_on\\_april\\_december\\_2010\\_.pdf](http://awsassets.wwf.or.id/downloads/wwf_position_on_april_december_2010_.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Other reports published at <http://eyesontheforest.or.id/>

<sup>14</sup>

<http://www.eyesontheforest.or.id/attach/Laporan%20EoF%20%28April2014%29%20APRIL%20menebangi%20HCVF%20Kampar%20OPT%20Triomas.pdf>