

Carbon credit scheme for Indonesia's rainforest launched

A new standard to measure carbon for rainforests was launched Thursday at the West Bali National Park, an initiative that designates the island's forest conservation site as the pilot project for research to develop a carbon credit mechanism. Launched by the Consortium for Rainforest Standards in Indonesia, this landmark initiative is expected to help reduce the loss of Indonesia's tropical forests and biodiversity.

It is also to provide a new way of generating income for the management of protected areas on a large scale, with full engagement of the private sector in its implementation. The Rainforest Standard (RFS) is the world's first carbon credit standard to fully integrate requirements and protocols for carbon accounting, sociocultural and socioeconomic impact, and biodiversity outcomes.

It was built from the ground up by Columbia University's Center for Environment, Economy and Society; Bolivia's PUMA Environmental Fund Foundation; Brazil's Fund for Biodiversity; Colombia's Environmental Action Fund; Ecuador's National Environmental Fund; and Peru's Trust Fund for National Parks and Protected Areas, to accommodate the ecological conditions and social realities of the Amazon region and the demands of emerging carbon markets.

To examine the RFS to be implemented in several types of site conditions, the consortium — the University of Columbia, University of Indonesia and Sustainable Management Group (SMG) with USAID funding support — agreed to undertake action research to develop REDD+ carbon credit using RFS. Jatna Supriatna, head of the University of Indonesia's Research Center for Climate Change, explained to The Jakarta Post that the RFS was modified to adjust to conditions in Indonesia, including the local community and the forest model.

"This model will be tested/tried out at the West Bali National Park, considering that the park already has good management, with support from Sustainable Management Group."

"We have set a target that within the next one year or two, we will have discovered the appropriate and standardized mechanism to develop carbon credits using the RFS system," he said. West Bali National Park is located on the north-western side of Bali, covering around 190 square kilometers, of which 158 sq km is land and the remainder sea.

Indonesia's forest is the third largest tropical rainforest in the world. It is therefore important not only for the national economy and local livelihoods but also for the global environment. The Indonesian rainforests are also among the world's richest in terms of biodiversity, and cover a significant proportion of the planet's tropical deep peat.

Forestry Minister Zulkifli Hasan said that Indonesian forests were ready to experience such an integrated standard of carbon credit that would reach the goals of conserving natural forest, its biodiversity and sustainable livelihood, as well as permanent reductions in carbon emissions.

"The Rainforest Standard is based on the fundamental understanding that the environment, economy, and society are 'in it together'. This model was adapted with Indonesia's ecology, economy and sociocultural context, and will be ready to be used in Indonesian forests." to the National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB). One person in Tombulu, Minahasa, was still missing as of Wednesday.

BNPB spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho said low air pressure in the Philippines had affected weather in North Sulawesi and caused flash floods, landslides and high waves in the province's waters. The agency has worked with the police, the Indonesian Army, the National Search and Rescue Agency (Basarnas) and the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) to evacuate residents.

Public Works Minister Djoko Kirmanto said various efforts, aside from infrastructure projects, should be carried out simultaneously to minimize the impact of annual flooding in the capital. "Among the biggest challenges is changing residents' bad habits such as littering or building houses on the riverbanks," Djoko said. The ministry has earmarked Rp 1.6 trillion this year for the capital's flood mitigation projects, lower than the Rp 2 trillion last year. The Public Works Ministry's mineral water resources director general, Mohammad Hasan, said the budget might increase in this year's revised state budget.

"However, this all depends on the land acquisition process conducted by the city administration," Hasan said. The projects include the restoration of four major rivers in the city — the Pesanggrahan, Angke, Sunter and Ciliwung rivers — and the Jakarta Emergency Dredging Initiative. Data from the ministry showed that the restoration of Pesanggrahan, Angke and Sunter rivers was set to be completed this year, while the Ciliwung River dredging project is due to be completed in 2016. (nai)