

Surabaya set to restore damaged coastal areas

The Surabaya administration in East Java plans to improve the economy of hundreds of fishermen and fish farmers in four districts located along the east coast of Surabaya (Pamurbaya) through the cultivation of mangrove trees. Fishing and fish-farming communities in the four coastal districts — Mulyorejo, Sukolilo, Rungkut and Gunung Anyar — are called on to not only engage in fishing and fish-farming activities, but also to actively participate in converting the coastal areas into mangrove forests.

The residents in the four districts have been asked to provide mangrove seedlings, so they can be sold to institutions that are concerned with coastal conservation efforts in Surabaya. The communities have also been asked to take care and maintain the seedlings until they mature.

“If these places become interesting areas for visitors, they [the residents] would be the ones who would manage the ecotourism areas. They would get benefits from these areas, for example from entrance tickets, selling food and drinks and boat rentals to cruise around the mangrove swamps,” Surabaya Mayor Tri Rismaharini said.

The approach offered by Rismaharini is regarded as a good opportunity and a win-win solution for the municipality and the coastal communities in Pamurbaya, as 26 kilometers of the 47.7-kilometer-long coastline is in a damaged condition.

Indonesian Development of Education and Permaculture (IDEP) Foundation program coordinator Imanuel Harjo Pradoto, who provides advocacy for four fishing and fish-farming communities in Pamurbaya, said they have planned methods to conserve the areas and at the same time boost the local economy.

According to Pradoto, the local communities agreed to cut Rp 5,000 (50 US cents) from the price of entrance tickets, as long as visitors want to take part in planting the mangrove seedlings they sell. The visitors are also obliged to help collect garbage carried by the tide that gets stuck among the mangrove trees as a form environmental conservation.

Pradoto added the Pamurbaya fishing and fish-farming communities, which receive support from the IDEP Foundation, were able to produce up to 80,000 mangrove seedlings every three months. The price of each mangrove seedling is set at between Rp 1,000 and Rp 1,500, provided it is directly planted at the location and not for resale. However, for those who wish to resell the seedlings, the price is set at around Rp 3,000 each.

Rismaharini said it would take less than five years to convert the Pamurbaya area into a mangrove forest spanning around 2,500 hectares. Separately, Henny Susanto, the head of stakeholder relations at PT HM Sampoerna, said her company had planted more than 50,000 mangrove seedlings in a 1,600-hectare mangrove conservation area in Pamurbaya, which now functioned as a habitat for 120 wildlife species and the breeding place of marine animals.

The mangrove planting activity, Henny added, was part of the Planting 99,000 Trees program that the company had initiated to promote the conservation of nature in eight regencies and mayoralities in Indonesia.