

GREENING SARAWAK

Forest Landscape Restoration

Updates and The Way Forward

GREENING SARAWAK
(FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION)



Forest Landscape Restoration

The programme has gained global support over the last couple of years and the initiative has been growing rapidly. The growing awareness of the importance of FLR globally has drive the State to take serious step forward in committing to the national and global initiative. Therefore, Forest Department Sarawak has become the forefront of implementing FLR campaign in national-level, in which protect, sustainably manage and restore its forest and degraded lands.

Background

Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) as defined by IUCN, is a long-term process of regaining ecological functionality and enhancing human well-being across deforested or degraded forest landscapes. Since its official launch on 15th June 2019, the Chief Minister of Sarawak has assured all that the Sarawak Government would continue to maintain 63% of its forest cover, the largest in the nation. This is to ensure that Sarawak will always be sheltered by green trees in its pristine forest.

The state government, through Forest Department Sarawak (FDS) has intensify the FLR program, with aim to enrich degraded forest areas with high value timber species. It seeks to restore a forested ecosystem, especially degraded Permanent Forest Estates, alleviate livelihood of forest-dependent communities as well as reduce pressure on natural forests by shifting timber production towards plantations of indigenous fast-growing species.

Sarawak aims to plant 35 million trees from the year 2021 to 2025 throughout the State with average of 7 million trees per year. This tree planting effort also in line with the national campaign '*Greening Malaysia: 100 Million Tree-Planting*', as initiated by the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources.

The programme will be implemented through various planting programmes covering logging areas, forest plantations, forest reserve areas, fully protected areas, native customary rights (NCR) land and privately-owned land.







FLR APPROACH BY FDS

The FLR practices is not unheard of. In fact, the principles, techniques and components in its approach have been in existent in Sarawak as early as 1920's through the reforestation activities by Forest Department, as well as the gazettement of Totally Protected Areas (TPAs) and Permanent Forest Estates (PFEs).

In upholding its policy on Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), Sarawak state government is also committed and determined in addressing forest landscape restoration issues to ensure the greenery state as well as for betterment of the future generations. Since then, in January 2019 the Director of Forests Sarawak, Datu Hamden Haji Mohammad, has issued a directive for restoration programme to be established within all timber licence area using only indigenous trees in which the number of trees planted should be equivalent to the number of trees harvested. These include tree plantings, managing natural regeneration through silviculture management, agroforestry and also improving land management to suit a mosaic of different land uses.

FLR is a forward-looking approach that aims to strengthen the resilience of forest landscape that can benefit both human well-being and biodiversity.



For FDS, however, the main focus is active restoration activities at degraded area within the Permanent Forest Estate and State Land. Apart from that, supporting planting activities in other areas such as Totally Protected Area (TPA), HEP and water intake catchments, buffer zone, ex-mining/quarry areas as well as parks and greens. To ensure that these restoration activities become possible, an FLR Task Force was established at Department's level that comprises different working group, each with specific roles.

FDS advocates inclusive FLR participatory process, hence the Department encourages stakeholders and local communities to be the catalyst for FLR growth within the state through their active participation in any restoration activities. Among other approach included to revive and establish new nurseries, aggressive tree planting activities, leverage on technology and data management, enhance communication, education and public awareness, and intensifying the R&D.



WAY FORWARD

For a successful implementation of FLR in Sarawak, FDS is focusing on strengthening diverse restoration strategies and other dynamic approaches. The Chief Minister of Sarawak in his launching speech of the state-level Malaysia Greening Programme has called on more local communities to be actively involved in the greening programme to make it a success, including getting involved in setting up nurseries to supply commercial local tree seedlings or to provide planting and silviculture treatment services.

FDS aims to strengthen partnerships and collaboration with more corporate agencies, government bodies, NGOs as well as local communities that supports the mission. Apart from the implementation aspects, the engagement also involves in planning and decision regarding policies, land-use, restoration goals and methods, benefit sharing as well as monitoring and reviewing processes.

Today, FDS has revived and established 6 nurseries in Sarawak, and plan to established more regional nurseries to overcome the shortage for high value indigenous species. In addition, an establishment of Centre of Excellence for FLR are also in the works, in which one of the Heart of Borneo area, Sabal Forest Reserve.

The center can houses up a forest nursery that will accommodate 150,000 seedlings at one time. Besides that, the R&D programs as well as effective performance and database system will be systematically integrated and further enhanced.

The aspect of local community rights is naturally highlighted when discussing about FLR approach within the state. Hence, FDS plans to actively involving surrounding communities during the entire FLR implementation. By engaging with local communities, it will raise awareness among the youths on the benefits and importance of restoring the forests, and will empower them to become their own 'Green Ambassadors'.

IN SUMMARY, THIS EFFORT WILL BALANCE OUT AND REDUCE THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS FROM THE EXPLORATION OF FOREST FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND HELP TACKLE THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS. EACH TREE PLANTED IS A VOICE FOR CHANGE, A MONUMENT TO HEALING OUR PLANET AND A MESSAGE THAT WE CAN DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY.



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