

Conservation of Southeast Portion of North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest Phase 1 - Bukit Belata (Ext) Forest Reserve (BBEFR) Project

A Brief Progress Update from April until November 2021

1. Introduction

The Global Environment Centre (GEC), a Malaysian non-profit organisation with expertise in peatland conservation, and Prosper Oil Palm (Prosper), a Malaysian oil palm company, signed an Agreement in March 2020 to establish a recovery project to support the conservation of the Southeast portion of the 81,000ha North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest (NSPSF), which is the largest contiguous peat swamp forest in Peninsular Malaysia. Phase 1 of the project (2020-2023) is focused on Bukit Belata (Ext.) Forest Reserve (BBEFR), which covers 3,140 ha. It has been designed by Prosper as part of its Recovery Plan. The work is undertaken in the framework of the MoU between GEC and the Selangor State Government, which has facilitated joint forest conservation actions in NSPSF since 2010. This brief report describes the progress of the activities conducted from April until November 2021 according to the project implementation plan.

2. Progress of the activities according to the project implementation plan from April until November 2021

The following table outlines the progress of the activities from April until November 2021 according to the project implementation plan:

Code	Activity	Progress and accomplishment of the activities
Activity 1 : To assess location and scale of degradation in the identified forest compartment areas		
Act 1.1	Undertake appropriate assessments on key issues including fire incidents and their root causes affecting biodiversity, water management, and so on – community baseline and livelihood support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Food packages comprised of sixteen (16) food items worth RM 130 were prepared and delivered to twelve (12) selected KWHSTS members and FSTS communities affected by both COVID-19 and the implementation of Full MCO (Figure 1)
Activity 2 : Rehabilitation of 200 ha through rewetting and assisted natural regeneration and selected planting in priority portions of the BBEFR		
Act 2.2	Seedling procurement and nursery establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A community nursery was established by KWHSTS community members from September - October 2021 at Felda Sungai Tenggi Selatan to support the rehabilitation programme at BBEFR (Figure 2). ▪ The nursery has planted and raised about 670 Tenggek Burung (<i>Melicope lunu-ankenda</i>) and Pulai (<i>Alstonia angustiloba</i>), peat swamp forest pioneer species that will be planted at FC 3 and 25, BBEFR. ▪ The wildings were collected from the nearby oil palm estates and along the forest boundary to be planted and raised in the nursery. ▪ GEC will work along with the KWHSTS members to monitor the progress of their activities from time to time throughout the project implementation period.
Act 2.5	Maintenance of planted trees (20 ha)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Field observations at one (1) ha of the planted site on peat soil highlighted that the planted saplings were growing well, bigger, healthier and registered a good survival rate of more than 80%.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The maintenance activities such as thinning, weeding, fertilizer application and replacement planting were conducted at five (5) ha of the mineral site in FC 25, BBEFR in smaller scales from June until September 2021 by three community members of KWHSTS (Figure 3). ▪ A total of 1,300 dead saplings were replaced at the planted sites.
Activity 3 : Enhance the understanding of community and stakeholders on peat hydrology, sustainable management on peatland and fire prevention with local communities and landowners		
Act 3.5	Establishment/guidance of local fire prevention and monitoring team to monitor and communicate with relevant authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two patrollers of KWHSTS from Felda Sg. Tengi Selatan were selected, trained and appointed as the local community patrollers who undertook community-based patrolling and monitoring activities at fire-prone peatland areas from April until November 2021 in BBEFR (Figure 4). ▪ The patrollers updated the Fire Danger Risk Warning Signboards according to the Fire Danger Rating System (FDRS) received in patrollers' WhatsApp working group on a daily basis. ▪ The appointed patrollers undertook the water table monitoring activities at the forest and adjacent oil palm plantations twice a week/ 8 times a month.
Act 3.6 & Act 3.7	Boundary signage and protection post establishment (Act 3.6) & Installation of Fire Danger Risk warning signs in fire prone sites (Act 3.7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Printed and installed forty-one (41) units of signboards at BBEFR and other adjacent areas as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two (2) units of Rehabilitation Project signboards; - Twenty-three (23) units of 'No Entry' signboards (big and small-sized); - Twelve (12) units of Fire Danger Risk Warning signboards; and, - Four (4) units of National Forestry Act (Adoption) Enactment 1985 signboards. ▪ The installation of the remaining 32 units of small-sized 'No Entry' signboards is being conducted with the involvement of Forestry Department sub ranger office in Bestari Jaya.

3. Problems encountered during the implementation period (April – November 2021)

3.1 Full Movement Control Orders (FMCO) and cancellation of outdoor activities due to COVID-19 outbreak (June to September 2021)

The FMCO or Total Lockdown was implemented in Selangor State from June till September 2021 and all the outdoor activities were cancelled to reduce the risk of the spreading of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, this has resulted in some challenges to conduct the planned project activities on site as per the project implementation plan such as carrying out planting and planted site maintenance activities, canal block constructions, the establishment of a nursery as well as the installation of signboards. During this time, GEC along with KWHSTS members concentrated on the preparation of the execution plans, the designing and printing of signboards, selection of the contractors and raising seedlings in the temporary nursery while waiting for the government's announcement on the lifting of FMCO. The work associated with the signboard installation and nursery establishment were mainly conducted after the government announced the shifting of FMCO to the National Recovery Plan Phase 3 (NRP 3). However, activities such as the planting site maintenance and raising of nursery trees were conducted on a small scale by the KWHSTS community members who are residing near BBEFR with strict adherence with COVID-19 SOPs.

3.2 High water tables due to periodical rain associated with the transitional monsoon and northeast monsoon season (September – December, 2021)

Periodical rain episodes associated with the transitional monsoon and northeast monsoon season starting since September 2021 caused the water tables at the rehabilitation site of FC 3 proposed for 14 ha tree planting and 9 units of canal block construction to remain high. The high water level conditions of the peatland reduced the accessibility into the planted sites and hindered the tree planting and canal block construction activities. Therefore, the tree planting and canal blocking activities have to be temporarily postponed until the high water level has subsided. Meanwhile, regular site inspections will be conducted to monitor the site conditions and the planned activities will be immediately restored once the sites are back to normal condition.

4. Pictorial report of the activities implemented from April until November 2021



Figure 1. Provision of food and other necessities to local communities s=during Covid-19 pandemic.



Figure 2. The establishment of KWHSTS nursery at Felda Sungai Tengi Selatan that has raised 670 Tenggek Burung (*Melicope lunu-ankenda*) and Pulai (*Alstonia angustiloba*) to support the rehabilitation programme at BBEFR.



Figure 3. The maintenance activities such as thinning, weeding, fertilizer application and replacement planting were conducted at five (5) ha of mineral site in FC 25, BBEFR in smaller scales from June until September 2021 by three community members of KWHSTS.



Figure 4. Forest patrolling and monitoring activities, including updating FDRS colour codes and monitoring water tables at BBEFR (Pictures taken on September 27, 2021 during the patrolling and water table monitoring activities).



Figure 5. Selected pictures on the installation of signboards (Rehabilitation Project signboards, 'No Entry' signboards, Fire Danger Risk Warning signboards and National Forestry Act (Adoption) Enactment 1985) in BBEFR and other adjacent areas.