

Fidelis E. Satriastanti | July 06, 2011, The Jakarta Globe

Seventeen million hectares of peatland like this will be off limits to loggers under a \$1 billion agreement with Norway. (AFP Photo/Romeo Gacad)

Just ask for your money back Norway and put it to better / some / any use elsewhere.

A new map that identified 72 million hectares of primary and peatland forest as off limits to loggers failed to highlight key details necessary for ensuring its usefulness, activists said on Wednesday.

The Ministry of Forestry's Moratorium Indicative Map was described during its release on Monday as an integral part of the country's two-year forestry moratorium, in exchange for which the Norwegian government has promised \$1 billion in funding for schemes to reduce carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

But Yuyun Indradi, a Greenpeace Southeast Asia campaigner, pointed out that although the map identified the 55 million hectares of primary forest and 17 million hectares of peatland where no logging was permitted, it did not highlight the vast swaths of degraded areas available to businesses.

"The map was drawn up halfheartedly because it just colors in the areas of primary forest and peatland, but it doesn't include the 35.4 million hectares of degraded land," he said.

"It's just as important to see where these degraded areas are that the government keeps talking about, so that businesses can manage them."

He also said that simply coloring in an area on the map did not necessarily mean that the area in question was still pristine forest.

"The map still doesn't distinguish between primary and secondary forests," he said. "It shows primary forests in green, but there's no guarantee that these areas will remain forested. The map should have been overlaid with maps for concessions, especially for mining, logging and plantations."

The map comprises 921 smaller maps of forest areas on a scale of 1:250,000, and is a revised version of a similar map released in May that garnered criticism from environmental activists because it was on a far smaller scale of 1:19,000,000.

The total combined area of protected forest is also much lower than the previously announced figure of 96.1 million hectares, including 64.2 million hectares of primary forest and 31.9 million hectares of peatland.

Hadi Daryanto, the Forestry Ministry's secretary general, said his office had already released a map of degraded areas two years ago.

"So what we're doing now with this new map goes above and beyond our agreement with Norway," he said.

"Under the terms of the letter of intent signed between the two countries, we are required to do four things for the transformation phase starting in February 2011. One of them is to set up a database of degraded lands, and we've had that in place since two years ago."

Hadi said there were 42 million hectares of open areas but only 35.4 million hectares were considered economically feasible for investment.

He added that the ministry had opted not to include the degraded land data in the moratorium map because it could have made it seem that Norway was being too pushy in imposing terms on Indonesia.

"We'll keep those maps separate, otherwise everyone will start making a fuss, saying that it's all being done on Norway's orders and not on our own initiative," he said.

Abdon Nababan, secretary general of the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN), said the map was still far from ideal because it failed to show ownership of the land.

"It lists the areas as state forests, but within these forests are large areas of ancestral forests," he said, referring to areas where indigenous groups are permitted to carry out subsistence logging and farming.

"And we don't have the kind of technology to interpret the map," he said. "We're still checking whether the map shows any overlaps between state and ancestral forests."