

Pelestarian Harimau Sumatera Kerinci-Seblat

Kerinci Seblat Sumatran Tiger Protection & Conservation

**Report on activities conducted with the
support of Dreamworld Conservation
Funding**

2010-2011

by

Fauna & Flora International



Program Objective

To maintain, strengthen and further refine actions to stop the poaching and trafficking of Sumatran tiger, conserve tigers, prey and habitat in and bordering Kerinci Seblat National Park, support implementation of the Government of Indonesia's 2007-2017 Sumatran Tiger Conservation Strategy and demonstrate that a focused and practical field-based approach to species conservation can stem and, when maintained, reverse population declines.

Summary of Activities

Five Tiger Protection & Conservation Units (TPCU) were active during the period 2010-2011 and conducting forest patrols and other activities, mainly in eight districts of three of the four provinces surrounding Kerinci Seblat National Park.

A total of 90 forest and species protection and conservation patrols, including patrols monitoring the situation in and around areas where human-tiger conflicts were occurring, were conducted during the project period covering a total walking distance of 1533Km

The number of patrols was lower than planned due to the need to combine units for patrol purposes on occasion to cover for staff sickness and leave periods and due to four of the team's five TPCU providing support, for much of November, to a combined law enforcement operation which was proposed to resolve serious, organised encroachment into the national park in a key tiger habitat.

A total of not fewer than 68 Sumatran tiger records were made by TPCUs in the course of forest patrols and frequency of encounter with tiger showed a slight improvement over the same period 2009-2010 at 1 tiger record per 22.54Km walked compared with 1-24.5Km in 2009-10.

Full law enforcement actions against wildlife and forest crime by TPCUs within and outside the forest were severely impacted by (verbal) policy advisories on the advisability of law enforcement actions by park staff, including the PHS team, issued by the National Park director.

As a result, only one full law enforcement action, resulting in the arrest and prosecution of a Sumatran tiger poacher was conducted and a second action by a TPCU patrol which resulted in the arrest and prosecution of an illegal logger .

Investigations were conducted in all four provinces bordering Kerinci Seblat National Park with the focus moving, from the first quarter of 2011 from actions to identify incidents of tiger crime and secure evidence for subsequent law enforcement to identifying and collecting information on the activities of trade syndicates, routes used and individuals and their roles within the syndicate

Trend monitoring identified a huge surge in black market prices reportedly secured or offered for tiger pelts in a number of areas. Discussion with other tiger

conservation programs in Sumatra and other Tiger range states advised this was a phenomena not limited to the Kerinci landscape alone.

A total of only 17 human-wildlife conflicts were mitigated directed by TPCU rangers, 15 relating to Sumatran tiger, one which, upon investigation was found to relate to predation of dogs and a goat by Asiatic golden cat and one incident relating to Sumatran elephant.

The program facilitated a limited number of conflict mitigation training and conflict interventions by a national park officer who was formerly a TPCU leader with strong skills and extensive experience in conflict mitigation.

Conflict mitigation activities were impacted by a national park policy-maker's stance on conflict mitigation actions outside national park borders and his instruction that TPCUs should report conflicts to other forestry agencies rather than conducting an immediate response as has been program policy since inception.

The program adopted a flexible response to this particular instruction, in particular where the reported conflict was occurring in areas where tiger were known to be at risk from poaching, there was a likelihood of imminent escalation or the conflict was occurring in locations difficult for KSDA colleagues to access quickly.

In November 2010 the team also worked with colleagues from West Sumatra Unit for Conservation of Natural Resources (KSDA) following the rescue of a sub-adult male Sumatran tiger after its accidental capture in a pig-tail macaque pit trap in farmland to the immediate north of KSNP.

TPCU teams surveyed sites previously identified as suitable for tiger relocations to establish current occupancy, if threat was active and assess accessibility status and, after the animal was fitted with a GPS radio collar, he was released in park-edge forests in a district of West Sumatra to the immediate north of Kerinci.

This animal survived to establish a home range, albeit in an area where encroachment is a serious problem, and was monitored through the GPS radio collar until, in August 2011 the GPS radio collar began to malfunction and then stopped sending routine GPS positions and contact was lost.

The project period also saw international ratification of the St Petersburg accord on tiger conservation which was backed by tiger range states across Asia and development of National Tiger Recovery plans to support international agreement reached at St Petersburg.

The Indonesia National Tiger Recovery Plan identifies Kerinci Seblat National Park as one of the five key tiger landscapes in Sumatra where actions will be focused from 2011-2022 and the Indonesia NTRP proposes replicating this program's integrated and collaborative approach to tiger protection and conservation to other landscapes through supporting development of TPCUs in other tiger landscapes

In mid 2010, the director of Kerinci Seblat National Park approved, in principal, legalisation of a road already constructed into the national park to provide disaster relief to a remote enclave village after a major earthquake in late 2009.

This program and local NGO colleagues did not openly protest the park director's decision, not least because the enclave village in question has been in existence for more than 500 years and did not enter restricted or high protection zones of the national park. However, we were deeply concerned that this permit would trigger a

new round of attempts by park-edge governments to construct roads through the national park.

Unfortunately this is exactly what subsequently transpired and in early 2011 the Bupati (head of Kerinci local government), with support of the then acting head of Sungaipenuh town government, submitted a proposal to the Minister of Forestry requesting permission for a network of roads from Kerinci to other districts and provinces through core zones of the national park using the rationale of Disaster Evacuation routes.

Initially it was assumed that the proposal would be quickly rejected by central government given the dubious rationale, core challenge to the basic principles of protected area law and pledges made, only a few months earlier, regarding the inviolate nature of core tiger habitats. However, by late April 2011, it became clear that the proponents of the roads networks had secured powerful political backing at national level for these proposals including from decisions makers within the department of forestry.

The program then commenced to mobilise local conservation NGOs, in particular from the AKAR network of park edge NGOs and worked with the Harimaukita Sumatran tiger conservation forum to conduct advocacy against the roads proposals.

In July, following detailed briefings to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee by the FFI Asia Pacific Director, Tony Whitten, Kerinci Seblat, Bukit Barisan and Gunung Leuser National Parks which form the Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra were placed on the Register of World Heritage sites In Danger, citing both the roads building pressures but additionally unresolved encroachment issues and a growing threat from large-scale commercial mining for gold and other minerals in buffer-zones of these parks. .

The roads building proposals remain active and the program has learned that political interests remain determined to secure a 'green light' for at least some of these roads in time for the 2014 Presidential and parliamentary elections.

Meanwhile FFI and its local NGO partners in Merangin district of Jambi on the eastern edges of the national park secured Ministerial approval for a network of Village Forests (*Hutan Desa*) covering more than 30,000ha of lowland hill and hill forests bordering Kerinci Seblat National Park which have significant tiger and other biodiversity values and which will form an important buffer to the national park.

This is an area which continues to be seriously threatened by organised illegal forest conversion for coffee plantations farmed by settlers from southern Sumatra and was proposed, in 2009, to be converted to a pulp timber plantation by a subsidiary of the Sinar Mas group of companies.

Forest Patrols

Patrols and patrols supporting conflict mitigation or law enforcement were conducted in national park forests in eight districts and three of the four provinces bordering the national park but with the main focus to tiger and tiger habitat protection in five key districts of the provinces of Jambi and Bengkulu.

A total of 68 tiger records were made by patrol teams with a total walking distance, recorded by GPS way points, of 1534Km although actual distance walked was greater in practice in the very hilly landscape that composes the majority of this national park.

Frequency of encounter with tiger by patrol units, park wide, was 1-22.54Km during the project period compared with 1-24.5Km in the same period 2009-2010 and 1-23.91Km in 2008-2009 .

Analysis of camera trapping records and other monitoring surveys by the NPA's monitoring team and other researchers advises that tiger populations in KSNP have risen from 136-144 in 2005-6 to at least 177 individuals over the period 2010-2011.

While Frequency of Encounter with tigers on patrol was stable, park-wide, tiger records reduced in two sub-districts of KSNP, in particular in an area close to the provincial borders of Bengkulu and West Sumatra province in the western edges of the national park and in the extreme west of Merangin district in Jambi province.

Reduced or negative encounters with tiger in these two areas strongly correlates to snare seizures in 2010-2011 and detailed information secured on a number of individuals believed to be actively poaching and trading Sumatran tiger

A small number of patrols were conducted in national park forests in Lebong and Rejang Lebong districts of Bengkulu province in the southern edges of the Kerinci Seblat National park where, as reports since 2005 advise, a very low frequency of encounter is recorded and where patrol analysis conclusions is correlate strongly with camera trapping and density surveys conducted since 2005-6, firstly by the FFI/DICE Tiger monitoring team and, since 2010, by the national park.

This very low density of tiger in the far south of the park is likely to be a combination of topography and historic poaching pressure which would require a lengthy and focused investment in time and resources unlikely to be available in the immediate future given the world economic climate.



Map: Kerinci Seblat National Park showing locations where tiger poaching and/or substantial (>6) deer poaching was recorded by TPCUs on patrol

A total of 12 active tiger snares were detected and destroyed by patrol units over the project period and an additional 14 heavy-duty snare cables of the type generally used by tiger poachers found and confiscated during searches of suspicious farm sheds in or bordering national park forests.

Patrols also found evidence of nine non-active tiger snare placements, at one of which sites a *felid* either an adult Sumatran clouded leopard or a juvenile tiger, had been caught in forest close to the Kerinci-Merangin district border. The partial skeleton of a sub-adult or large juvenile tiger which had died and been left to rot in a deer snare in a rarely patrolled and remote area in the foothills of Mt Seblat in Lebong district of Bengkulu was recorded by a Bengkulu TPCU patrol unit

A total of 322 active snares placed for sambar deer, muntjak or Sumatran serow were found and destroyed by TPCUs and an additional 630 wild bird snares or 'liming' positions for ground or song birds destroyed, an indication of the growing pressure on wild bird populations in this area of Sumatra, in particular to supply an insatiable domestic market for song birds.

The trade in wild birds for the cage bird market is causing increasingly disturbing impacts on wild bird populations – in particular on laughingthrushes, shamas and leafbirds - in many areas of the national park and a number of species which were

previously abundant both in the national park forests and adjoining farmland are now increasingly rarely encountered even deep inside the protected area.

Four patrols were cut short due to actions against illegal logging within or bordering the national park and seizures of chainsaws by TPCU members and one patrol was aborted on the second day due to a close encounter with a tiger that showed excessive interest in the patrol team.

Given the policy directives issued by a senior policy maker in the national park regarding the inadvisability of national park rangers conducting law enforcement, only one of the illegal logging actions proceeded through to formal arrest and prosecution and in the other incidents the illegal loggers 'escaped' but their chainsaws were confiscated as evidence.

The percentage of patrols recording tiger presence on their patrol routes increased marginally from 50.7% of forest patrols conducted in 2009-2010 to 52.6% over the same period between 2010-2011 and would potentially have been higher had not some patrols been aborted due to law enforcement actions or seizures and difficulties in securing tiger sign in July and August 2011 due to drought conditions across much of this national park.



Investigations

Investigations into suspected tiger poaching and trade and to identify areas where threat to tiger and tiger prey was suspected active were conducted in 10 of the 13 local government districts and four provinces bordering Kerinci Seblat National Park.

Direct evidence of poaching and trade in Sumatran tiger, substantial enough to permit follow-up law enforcement action was secured in two cases by team investigators.

The destruction of eight active tiger snares in forest on the border between Kerinci and Muko Muko district, Bengkulu came as a direct result of a TPCU investigation into a poaching syndicate operating out of Pesisir Selatan district of West Sumatra on the north-western flanks of the national park.

TPCU rangers also worked undercover to record the illegal upgrading of a footpath from Lempur in the south of the Kerinci valley to the traditional Renah Kemumu enclave with funds disbursed by a staffer of a Jambi city-based NGO who cited the need, to villagers, for an evacuation route to Kerinci in the event of a volcanic eruption of Mt Sumbing.

The source of funds for the upgrade (which was conducted by labourers from another park-edge sub-district is unconfirmed, at present, although there are grounds to suspect a connection with proposals for a network of roads through core zones of the national park under the auspices of 'disaster evacuation'.

Unfortunately no instructions have been issued by the park management authority to proceed to a formal investigation of this case which clearly breaches protected area law and the spirit of the St Petersburg tiger conservation declaration.

From the second quarter of 2011, investigations were primarily focused to securing information on areas at threat from poaching so that a patrol intervention could be launched and to collecting information on poacher and dealer activities rather than to securing evidence to support immediate subsequent law enforcement.

This was due to lack of positive support for law enforcement action against tiger poaching and trade by the senior policy maker at National Park Headquarters who ordered the program to cease using the methodologies pioneered since 2000 to respond to tiger and other serious wildlife crime.

Two key trends emerged during the reporting period and are almost certainly linked:

- (i) the re-emergence of 'closed' syndicates of poachers from one particular district in the west of the national park who are hunting Sumatran tiger with the financial support of a local 'boss' providing capital for their activities. Poached tigers are strongly believed to then be shipped on, using a courier system, to a neighbouring province and then to a city in eastern Sumatra. An individual known to this program since 2001 but against whom no valid legal evidence to support law

enforcement has been secured is known to be involved in this syndicate.

- (ii) Startling, increases in the price of tiger body parts, in particular tiger skins with prices increasing by approximately 100 per cent for an adult tiger between the period (roughly) November-March 2011. This dangerously changes the Risk-Reward Ratio for poachers and others involved in the illegal wildlife trade and is strongly suspected to be closely related to (i) above..

In early 2011, team investigators began to report some highly aberrant prices claimed to have been secured or offered for tiger pelts.

Initially these claims were dismissed as being related to 'barang antik' fraudsters who habitually inflate prices for (frequently) non-existent 'curiosity' items however by early March 2011, with similar and consistent reports being secured from sites in all four provinces bordering the national park, concern began to mount. Not least since almost identical prices were being cited across four park edge provinces and the normal price differential between districts around the national park was no longer recorded.

The FFI team leader contacted colleagues from other tiger conservation programs in Sumatra who also conduct routine investigations into suspected wildlife crime and was advised they too had started to receive reports of 'extraordinary' prices being secured or touted for tiger pelts.

Discussions with these two programs advised that, as in the Kerinci landscape area, local price differentials had essentially evaporated and had been 'standardised' not only at local (tiger landscape) level but, apparently, across Sumatra.

The FFI team leader then contacted tiger protection and conservation programs overseas with extensive experience in anti-poaching and trafficking investigations and law enforcement and was advised that similar unprecedented increases in black market prices have also occurred in Nepal and some areas of India.

Analysis of data held by this and other programs in Sumatra advises that the escalation in black market prices for tiger skins appears to have commenced towards the end of the third quarter of 2010, initially in Aceh province of northern Sumatra and then feeding south, to tiger landscapes (including Kerinci) in central and southern Sumatra in the last month(s) of the fourth quarter of 2010. Senior police officers representing the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (WEN) at Indonesia National Police headquarters advised the program that what has occurred is a 'classic' example of structured, organised crime.

The trigger for this dangerous phenomena, which we believe has resulted in a increase in direct threat to Sumatran tiger is unclear and it is probably coincidental that the first indications of this surge in black market prices coincided with the final, widely publicised preparations for the St Petersburg tiger summit in Russia in November 2010 which secured agreement from tiger range states on a variety of actions to secure wild tiger populations including actions against poaching and trade in tiger products.

Human tiger and other human-wildlife conflict

A total of only 17 human-wildlife conflicts were mitigated directed by TPCU rangers, 15 relating to Sumatran tiger, one which, upon investigation was found to relate to predation of dogs and a goat by a pair of Asiatic golden cat and one incident relating to Sumatran elephant.

Additionally the program facilitated low-grade (tiger moving in forest-edge farmland and rubber gardens) mitigation and counselling actions on three occasions in 2011 in two sub-districts of Merangin district through a former TPCU Leader who resigned from the program in August 2010.

Predation of livestock (a water buffalo calf, dogs, goats) occurred in five of the 15 human-tiger conflicts to which the program was able to respond, other cases related to tigers moving in and through farmland, on occasion far from national park forest edge

The number of direct field interventions conducted reduced in comparison with previous years after the National Park director instructed the program to 'report' conflicts occurring outside national park forests to the relevant provincial KSDA unit

This instruction was treated with some flexibility, in particular where an urgent intervention was considered necessary and in sites bordering priority areas for tiger conservation.

This instruction was based on the formal jurisdictions established by the department of forestry under which KSDA is responsible for nature conservation and management activities, including human wildlife conflict outside national parks.

To resolve this issue, the program in 2011-2012, hopes to facilitate an agreement between the National Park Authority and KSDA divisions in provinces bordering the national park which will allow both KSDA, NPA staff and TPCUs to implement a more flexible and practical approach to human-wildlife conflict mitigation which is not primarily based on areas of jurisdiction

In November 2010, with all TPCUs in the field supporting the national park and the Jambi SPORC teams in an ultimately disappointing (see Law Enforcement) action to resolve illegal forest clearance, information was received regarding a Sumatran tiger caught in a pit trap set for pigtail macaques in forest-edge farmland in Pesisir Selatan district, West Sumatra to the north-west of the national park.

The PHS team leader was able to organize anesthetics through the kind support of another program donor and these were dispatched by courier to the KSDA West Sumatra tiger emergency team and their vet, who then were able to 'dart' and evacuate the tiger, a sub-adult male aged 15-16 months old..

The tiger, nicknamed Bujang (Batchelor Boy) by the rescue team was held in isolation at a facility in Sawahlunto, West Sumatra while Zoological Society of London's tiger monitoring specialist, Dolly Priatno organized and calibrated a GPS radio collar and then traveled to West Sumatra to fit the collar.

'Bujang' was subsequently relocated to forest in the north-west quadrant of the national park in a joint exercise between the program and KSDA West Sumatra. The tiger was monitored through its GPS radio collar through until August 2011 when the collar began to malfunction and then finally failed. Local information advises that 'Bujang' is still within the range he began to establish in the second quarter of 2011 however it is disappointing that mechanical failure means that detailed information on this relocation and the animal's ongoing movements ceased after only nine months

Law enforcement

Law enforcement action, under the management of seconded National Park officers is a key program activity where evidence of crime is secured to support the program goal of reducing threat to tiger and so allowing tiger populations to stabilise and recover.

Law enforcement against tiger poachers and traders, to date, has always occurred outside national park forest borders following investigations by TPCU members.

Such actions are conducted in partnership with the government agency holding legal jurisdiction over the area where law enforcement is conducted, usually the relevant district Police division as this facilitates the subsequent legal process and builds experience in wildlife crime issues among park-edge police divisions. In such cases, the program co-ordinates with KSDA and that agency subsequently takes the leading role as Expert Witness in the subsequent legal process.

This results in an integrated approach to serious wildlife crime whereby institutional jurisdictions are respected but the TPCU teams are able to launch and command a rapid, effective and flexible response to tiger crime as and where required.

Unfortunately, during the program period the current NPA director instructed the team's field manager and the program manager that formal procedures should be followed in future rather than the methods successfully pioneered by the PHS since 2000 and that suspected or confirmed tiger crime outside national park borders should be reported to the relevant provincial KSDA division and a response not implemented directly by the program in a joint operation with local police.

Primarily as a result of this instruction only one tiger related law enforcement action was successfully conducted during the project period and resulted in the arrest, in February 2011, of a 53-year old man from Bungo district on the eastern edges of Kerinci Seblat National Park who is believed to have previously hunted and traded 23 tigers before his arrest following a TPCU investigation.

In line with the park director's instruction, this law enforcement action was conducted in coordination with KSDA Jambi and in partnership with rangers from the SPORC Brigade. Two of the SPORC rangers seconded to join this action were former TPCU Leaders who had been posted to SPORC in Jambi City in early 2010 by the National Park director and so were highly experienced in wildlife law enforcement and the poacher was arrested in possession of the skin of an adult Sumatran tiger.

SPORC legal officers then took over the preparation of the prosecution case which was heard, not at Muara Bungo district court, as would have occurred had the program conducted the action in co-ordination with district police, but in Jambi city.

A custodial sentence of only three months was made against the poacher by the Jambi City court. It is possible that this very light sentence was a consequence of legal arguments by a lawyer retained, by an unknown individual, to act on behalf of the poacher

Also in February 2011, a TPCU ranger secured evidence of tiger crime relating to the poaching of two Sumatran tigers in park-edge forests in North Bengkulu district.

In line with the instructions of the Park director, the Bengkulu team co-ordinator, who previously has successfully directly led five actions to arrest poachers and traders of Sumatran tiger, reported this case to the relevant KSDA division. The case was then reported to Provincial police headquarters with a request for assistance and then referred from provincial police headquarters first, to district police headquarters and then to sub-district police.

During this process, the poachers or their associates appear to have learned of the planned action - almost certainly due to an accidental leak – and the suspects withdrew and the evidence was lost. Information was subsequently secured advising that the two tiger pelts were transferred to a town on the Bengkulu-West Sumatra borders and thence to a town to the east of Kerinci Seblat National Park in Jambi province.

Following these two cases, the program prioritised collection of information on at least two organised poaching syndicates now known to be actively threatening Sumatran tiger in and around KSNP and their methods and routes rather than securing evidence for immediate law enforcement.

It is anticipated that a policy review at NPA will subsequently permit the program to return to using flexible and appropriate partnerships when conducting species law enforcement actions. However to ensure this occurs, the program plans to seek to facilitate an MoU between the national park authority and provincial KSDA so that agreement is reached on a less jurisdictional focus in implementing actions against wildlife crime and human-wildlife conflicts. .

In June, TPCU rangers on a patrol, accompanied by two officers of Indonesian Special Forces who were taking part in the 'Bukit Barisan Expedition' and who had been seconded to the TPCUs approached a farm shed within national park borders in the south of the Kerinci valley. The farmer, a known deer poacher showed signs of extreme anxiety. Suspicious, the patrol unit, accompanied by the Bukit Barisan Expedition officers, searched the shed and found it was being used as a workshop to construct muzzle-loader guns for sale. Four complete or under-construction firearms were seized. The gun maker 'escaped.'

Only one illegal logging law enforcement operation proceeded through the legal process due to policy advisories issued by the national park authority director and was a response to illegal logging made by a TPCU on a routine patrol.

Patrol teams also seized a total of seven chainsaws from illegal loggers in the course of three patrols but the perpetrators 'ran away' so that units were able to respond

to threat to tiger habitat even though a full response to forest crime could not be launched.

Program rangers also took part in what was proposed as a major law enforcement operation to resolve extensive and organized conversion of national park and adjoining protected buffer zone forests by coffee farming syndicates in November 2010

The action, led not by the national park but by the Jambi-based SPORC brigade was proposed to secure more than 1400ha of national park forests cleared, illegally, since 2006 and up to 8000ha of adjacent protected state forests and TPCUs were requested to take part on the basis of their local knowledge of the area.

Unfortunately the results of the action, which involved more than 100 forest rangers from KSNP and SPORC rapid response unit under the command of Jambi KSDA were disappointing, not least due to the activities of three rogue Jambi NGOs who successfully lobbied provincial police to withdraw support for the action, repeatedly sought to provoke violent confrontations with rangers and conducted a deeply dishonest and misleading campaign through the internet and press.

Numerous encroachers did leave the area, however due to lack of any practical subsequent follow-up action by either the national park or by SPORC, any benefits gained have been lost and local conservation NGOs and villagers who sought to support forest protection in this area have subsequently been subjected to intimidation and smear campaigns by organizations supporting the coffee syndicates

Other Activities

Training and capacity raising:

PHS Field Manager Dian Risdianto attended a month long MIST and SMART Training for Trainers program in Thailand organised by the Smithsonian Institute in partnership with the Global Tiger Initiative. Software issues which, we hope will shortly be resolved, delayed training of TPCU personnel in use of MIST-based patrol systems however we hope to shortly implement MIST training both for PHS personnel and some key national park officers in provincial and section offices as well as key park headquarters staff.

In line with long-standing program policy, national park rangers were routinely invited to join patrols and other program activities to build confidence and capacity. However the posting of almost half the national park's ranger team by the National Park director to the Jambi SPORC Brigade in 2010 severely depleted the number of park rangers of an age and physical condition to join PHS TPCU field activities

Indonesia National Tiger Recovery Plan:- The With colleagues from the Harimaukita Sumatran tiger conservation forum, the FFI team leader provided technical advice to the forestry department in development of the Indonesia National Tiger Recovery Plan which was formally presented at the St Petersburg tiger summit in November 2010.

Under the Indonesia NTRP, Kerinci Seblat National Park and the surrounding Tiger landscape forms one of five tiger priority intervention areas for tiger conservation under the NTRP.

The Indonesia NTRP also proposes to replicate this program's Tiger Protection & Conservation Units model to spearhead field protection and conservation actions in other target landscapes in Sumatra and the FFI team leader provided input to draft planning for replication and extension of units to other tiger landscapes prioritised under the NTRP.

In mid 2011, the national park confirmed there is a strong probability that nine of the program's most experienced community team members may be absorbed into the national park as fully-recognised, as opposed to honorary, park staff in early 2012.

It is hoped that at least four of these long-serving and highly experienced personnel will be seconded back to the program as TPCU leaders so resolving growing problems in identification and selection of TPCU leaders as a consequence of posting younger and more able park ranger staff to SPORC.

Those long-serving staffers not seconded back to the program will be in a position to make a strong contribution to developing park capacity to conserve and protect species and habitat at local level through their long experience of working with this program.

Working with other tiger conservation groups and local NGOs

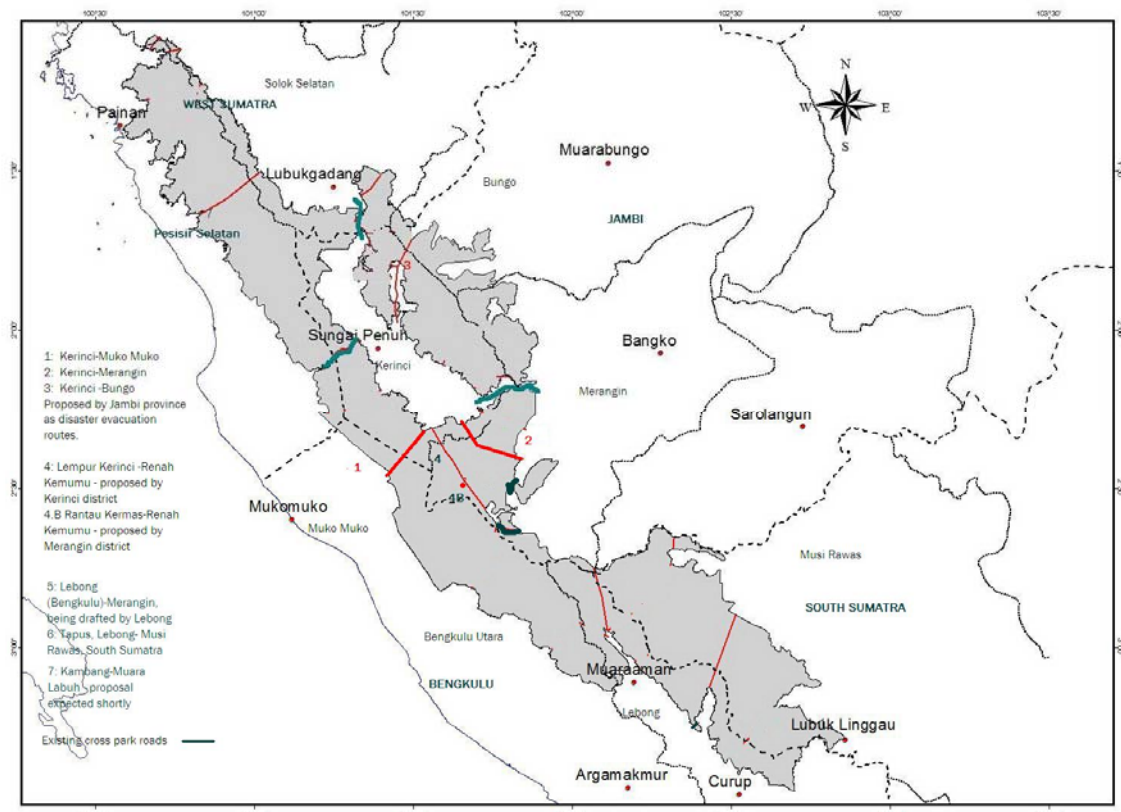
The program has always prioritised working closely and collaboratively with other tiger and species conservation programs and local NGOs to build a strong and united approach to species and habitat protection in and around this national park and elsewhere.

This approach was crucial when proposals were lodged with the department of forestry by Kerinci district government in the second quarter of 2011 for a network of roads through core tiger habitats of Kerinci Seblat National Park

Ironically, the cross-park roads proposals were lodged with the Department of Forestry in April 2011 just five months after Indonesia became a signatory to the St Petersburg tiger accord which states that core zones of national parks should be inviolate from infrastructure and other development activities.

The roads proposals were almost certainly initially triggered by a decision by the NPA director in mid 2010 to formalise upgrading of a traditional footpath in western Merangin district to a two-metres wide hard-surface road using disaster mitigation and emergency responses legislation.

Basic work on this road between Rantau Kermas village and the Renah Kemumu enclave settlement, a village with a history dating back more than 500 years, had already been conducted in late 2009 to allow emergency relief materials to reach Renah Kemumu after a major earthquake which caused widespread damage.



Map: Kerinci Seblat National Park showing roads actively proposed by local governments in 2011 to cut through core zones of the national park. As a result of the roads network proposed by Kerinci district, three more roads proposals were activated by districts in West Sumatra and Bengkulu provinces (see map above)

This road was approved formally by the Minister of Forestry early in 2011 and came at almost the same time as demands were lodged by Kerinci district, for four new inter-district and inter-provincial highways through core zones of the national park allegedly required to provide disaster evacuation routes in the event of volcanic eruptions

Initially it was assumed that the Ministry of Forestry would rapidly reject the Kerinci roads proposals however, when this did not happen and information began to be secured indicating high level political backing for these and other roads, the program commenced liaison with Harimaukita forum and local NGOs to develop a national campaigning strategy to secure rejection of the proposals which, if approved, threaten not only this but every protected area in Indonesia.

The program collected extensive and detailed information for the campaign against roads building both for local NGOs and the Harimaukita forum and to inform the National Park's response to the proposals.

Data collected included securing detailed geological data on risks posed by volcanic eruptions and from tectonic fault lines and probable impacts on key watershed forests and data collected clearly showed that the basis for the proposed roads building was not based on sound or valid data.

Unfortunately it also rapidly became clear that these proposals had, and continue to have, strong political support from certain political and business interests and, to date, have not been rejected by the Minister of Forestry

In addition to frequent meetings and discussion with AKAR NGO members on a wide range of issues relating to species and habitat conservation in three provinces of the national park, the FFI team leader also provided technical support to a local NGO partner focusing on reducing threat to a key block of the national park which forms a corridor through to the neighbouring Batang Hari Protected Forest, a protected forest previously identified as protecting a significant tiger population.

ICS conducted field surveys to identify and record threat (primarily forest conversion by small holder farmers and an oil palm plantation, illegal logging and gold mining) and secure data on tiger presence in a critically-threatened area of the national park. Field surveys reported the presence of four adult tigers resident or primarily resident in these highly disturbed forests and secured one breeding record and developed communications between the local national park section and a village which has become established in the area since 1985.

Our local NGO partner also secured extensive and detailed data and documentation on illegal forest conversion and illegal logging in the national park and the individuals responsible. Unfortunately, local park officers were not supported by park headquarters in making an effective response to these threats.

However ICS was able to facilitate law enforcement against illegal loggers on one occasion with the support of special forces officers accompanying the Bukit Barisan Expedition to Kerinci Seblat National Park who arrested four illegal loggers in what is believed to be the first ever law enforcement action conducted in this district against illegal logging.

At date of this report a proposal by the AKAR network has reached the 'second round' of proposals to the Tropical Rainforest Conservation Act with five members of the AKAR Network submitting a consortium proposal to establish forest edge collaborative community patrol teams and a range of other actions to support improved local protection and conservation of forest and species in key areas of four districts in three provinces bordering the park.

If the three-year grant is made, the proposed AKAR activities will provide urgently needed-back up both for the national park and for the TPCUs who will work with the consortium members to develop mutually supportive field strategies for protection and conservation of tiger habitat in the AKAR members' individual operating areas