
Executive Summary

The Pin-Supu Forest Reserve (PSFR), is located in the mid-reaches of the Lower Kinabatangan Floodplain. This forest reserve has a number of very special features, which makes it significant for conservation in Sabah, such as its diversity of unique and unusual forest types, its numerous limestone caves, its picturesque oxbow lakes and high diversity of wetland birds and wildlife. This reserve has an extraordinarily high diversity of wildlife, having representatives of all lowland wildlife of Borneo.

The Pin-Supu Forest Reserve (PSFR) holds a unique position for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in Sabah. This reserve is not only special in terms of its inherent natural features, diverse forest types, and significant wildlife populations, but more so this reserve is special in terms of the opportunity that exists to involve the surrounding local communities in the forest reserve's management.

This unusual situation has been developing quietly for more than eleven (11) years, since the establishment of the MESCOT Initiative by WWF and the Sabah Forestry Department in early 1997. Today, more than eleven years later, this initiative has yielded a solid and progressive community organisation in the form of a community cooperative – KOPEL Bhd. Since its inception KOPEL Bhd has supported forest conservation and management in the PSFR through activities such as:

- Volunteer forest fire fighting (during the 1998 fires)
- Forest restoration and tree planting within the reserve – in the order of 54,000 trees and more than 60ha being restored.
- Ecotourism and volunteer tourism, and generating income to alleviate rural poverty and alternative sources of livelihood in this once forest dependent community.
- Raising funds for conservation and forest management activities within the PSFR.

To date KOPEL has already planted more than 60,000 trees in the reserve, and has helped rehabilitate over 70ha of forest within PSFR. Further to this, since starting ecotourism and volunteerism activities in the community, KOPEL has taken care of more than 5,200 visitors and generated more than RM1.5million in income, all of which has gone to local people in the surrounding four villages of the area.

KOPEL's income is 100% generated from tourists, students and volunteers who visit the area and participate in KOPEL's conservation programs. KOPEL has also sourced its own funding from external sources to contribute to forest and wetland rehabilitation work. All of KOPEL's conservation activities focus on the protection, conservation and rehabilitation of forest within the Pin-Supu Forest Reserve. KOPEL's main objective is to utilise ecotourism and volunteerism activities to fund forest restoration and conservation work in this reserve into the distant future.

KOPEL today, not only provides a strong platform to support the Sabah Forestry Department in the management of visitors and forest recreation activities within Pin-Supu FR, but more so this organisation has the potential to go a step further and support other key forest resource management activities.

In order to support this unique initiative, the Sabah Forestry Department in 2005 provided funds to develop essential infrastructure for tourism at the fringes of the Pin-Supu Forest Reserve. The main rationale for this development was to provide basic facilities for the community cooperative KOPEL to launch its ecotourism activities, and in doing so generate income for the local community and the Sabah Government, but also to support forest conservation in this forest reserve.

The key objective of this FMP is to outline a "plan of action" for the management of this reserve, namely for the next ten years (2008-2017). In order to prepare this "plan of action" (termed "Management Prescriptions", see Part 3, p45) problems and issues associated with this forest reserve and its past management have had to be evaluated. The key management prescriptions, outlined in this FMP include:

- Boundary demarcation
- Creating an ongoing presence in the reserve
- Raising public awareness
- Surveillance of the reserve's resources
- Restoration of degraded forests
- Enhancing the Community Based Ecotourism Activities in the reserve.
- Monitoring activities in and outside the reserve (especially environmental indicators)
- Forest fire prevention and control
- Controlling activities in the reserve (such as edible birds nest collection)
- Developing signage
- Minimising pollution and other negative impacts on the forest ecosystem

These activities are outlined in detail in Part 3 of this document (p45). Some of the management interventions mentioned in this document have already been tabled prior to the preparation of this document, and are already receiving funding support from the 9th Malaysia Plan Forestry Development & Sustainable Forest Management Funds. All present RMK9 activities have been married into this Forest Management Plan. It is vital that these activities are carried out in a timely and appropriate manner.

The key (and fundamentally NEW) management interventions outlined in this FMP are summarised as follows:

1. The NEW and key management approach outlined in this FMP, is to eventually share the management responsibility for this forest reserve with the community cooperative KOPEL Bhd. In this way, the cost of managing this resource will be shared with KOPEL (and potentially totally borne by KOPEL Bhd. in the long-term).
2. This proposed situation comes about because there needs to be a workable mechanism to manage the recreation & ecotourism activities within the PSFR, and collect revenue from visitors who enter this forest reserve. Given that these activities have already been established, a concrete partnership between SFD and KOPEL Bhd. is essential to move this arrangement to the next level.

3. How this works in practice is that KOPEL will continue to manage visitors entering Pin-Supu Forest Reserve and in addition to this, **collect** entrance fees to the forest reserve for the Sabah Forestry Department. To enable this, a formal agreement will be drawn up between the Sabah Forestry Department and KOPEL Bhd. to manage all visitor and recreation activities within PSFR.
4. This proposed management approach, is very much a "smart partnership" and a "win-win" situation for all concerned. This approach does not cost the State Government anything and the Sabah Forestry Department does not need to change the way it is doing things on the ground. This activity creates revenue for the State Government having the estimated potential of returning over RM0.5 million annually. Further to this, in turn this activity directly and indirectly helps supports needed income generation in the rural community of Batu Puteh, adjacent to the PSFR.
5. This present situation being developed at PSFR is considered a major opportunity for the Sabah Forestry Department and forest resource management in Sabah, and hence why the situation at Pin-Supu FR is considered so unique, in terms of forest management in Sabah. There are many potential spin-offs from this simple development, such as (a) increasing the income generation capacity of the local community, (b) generating a major and sustainable increase in revenue for the State Government, (c) both directly and indirectly supporting the conservation and protection of this forest reserve, and (d) this initial partnership has great potential to be up-scaled to involve increased responsibility in the overall management of Pin-Supu FR.
6. This development is expected to increase the present annual income of RM300,000 per year, earned by the local community based ecotourism activities, to RM1.61million per year, while providing a further 79 full-time jobs in the local community. An estimated potential revenue of more than RM540,000 can also be generated per year, in perpetuity, for the State Government of Sabah as an outcome of these activities at Pin-Supu FR.