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This monthly news bulletin is produced by Sarawak Timber Association (STA) to disseminate information to our counterparts on training, research and other relevant areas.

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Capacity Building for Monitoring of Environmental Status in the Forestry Sector



Photo: Dr Tay explaining water sampling protocols at one of the water sampling sites.

The *Natural Resources and Environment (Audit) Rules, 2008* [NRE (Audit) Rules, 2008] require companies in the private and corporate sectors in Sarawak to transition from conventional regulatory requirement towards self-regulation in environmental management and protection of the State.

In doing so, responsibility of monitoring environmental status at project site and reporting on the project's compliance to the terms and approval conditions is transferred from environmental consultant to project proponents themselves.

To date, two (2) Pilot Projects for Environmental Compliance Audit (ECA) involving fourteen (14) STA members from the Hill Logging as well as Forest Plantation Categories have been carried out. Initiated by the Natural Resources and Environment

Board (NREB) and supported by Sarawak Timber Association (STA), these Pilot Projects are aimed to ensure smooth implementation and better understanding of the compliance audit requirements.

Recognising that monitoring environmental quality provides valuable information about the general status of environment at project site which is required to be reported in the ECA report, STA and NREB began organising Trainings on Environmental Quality Monitoring (EQM) to train personnel with proper protocols in collecting water samples, handling of water sampling equipment as well as impart knowledge on potential source of contaminants affecting the quality of river water sampled.

Three (3) Trainings on EQM have been successfully organised throughout 2018.

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The recently concluded 4th Training on EQM, held from 2 to 3 July 2019 at RH Hotel, Sibu, is an affirmation of the continued commitment from STA and NREB. The Training was conducted by a team of trainers from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS).

With participation of 28 representatives from STA member companies consisting of forest management certification (FMC) executives, water treatment operator, chemist, forest surveyor as well as operation manager and general manager in the 4th Training on EQM, the pool of trained personnel in the forestry and timber industry totalled to 95.

The participants were given an introduction to *Natural Resources and Environment Ordinance* (NREO) as well as *Natural Resources and Environment (Prescribed Activities) Order, 1994* by Mr Tsai Koh Fen, Senior Environmental Control Officer (Environmental Regulation Section), NREB. He highlighted that the NRE (Audit) Rules, 2008 was made in 2008 under Section 18(q) of the NREO. Ms Elizabeth Nyomek, Senior Environmental Control Officer (Compliance & Enforcement Section), NREB, further elaborated that the NRE (Audit) Rules, 2008 commenced in 2013 and is currently undergoing phased implementation with Pilot Projects in the forestry sector.

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Regional Consultation on Enquiry Draft of MC&I (FMC)

The Malaysian Criteria and Indicators for Forest Management Certification (Natural Forest) [MC&I (Natural Forest)] which was adopted as certification standard in 2012 to assess the management practices of natural forests under the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS) is currently undergoing review process. The review is in line with the international requirement for the development of timber certification standards.

As of July 2019, four (4) Standard Review Committee (SRC) Meetings were held to review the MC&I (Natural Forest). As a result, in the Enquiry Draft of the Malaysian Criteria and Indicators for Forest Management Certification [MC&I (FMC)] was formulated and is presently undergoing 2nd Public Consultation until 19 July 2019. The Enquiry Draft is a revised and merged standard that combines the requirements of both the

Following the presentation on legislative requirements, Mr Mathew Losey, Senior Assistant Environmental Control Officer (Audit Unit), NREB, briefed the participants on format of reporting environmental quality which is included as Chapter 5 (Environment Status) in the Internal ECA report.

On the second day of Training, participants were brought to a river in Kanowit, approximately an hour's drive away from Sibu where Lead Trainer, Dr Tay Meng Guan demonstrated proper water sampling protocols.

Environmental protection is crucial and the responsibility not only lies with the authority, such as NREB. This was mentioned by Mr Justine Jok Jau Emang, Controller of Environmental Quality Sarawak, NREB, who arrived from NREB Headquarters, Kuching to grace the closing of Training and deliver his Closing Remarks. He thanked STA for extending assistance continuously to its members in capacity development. He also conveyed his confidence that the series of Trainings conducted since 2018 have been successful in equipping industry players with necessary tools to drive to completion their transformation journey towards self-regulation in environmental management and protection in the State.

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MC&I (Natural Forest) and MC&I Forest Plantation.v2. As part of the on-going Public Consultation on the Enquiry Draft, the Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC) had conducted three (3) Regional Consultations in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak respectively to update relevant stakeholders on the status of standard review, introduce the Enquiry Draft and highlight the major updates from previous standard.

The Regional Consultation in Sarawak was held on 4 July 2019 at Imperial Hotel, Kuching. It was attended by approximately 50 stakeholders from relevant forestry agencies, forest management units (FMUs) holders, non-governmental organisations, SRC members and STA Secretariat.

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Did you know that....

Southeast Asia has the greatest percentage in the world for plastic pollution. In 2015 alone, primary plastics production was 407 million tones, and every day, 8 million pieces of plastic pollution find their way into our oceans. Many looked at the plastic as opportunities, such as fishermen in South India that are using recycled plastics to strengthen asphalt for paving road, a concept that are being experimented elsewhere in the world, such as Australia and the US.

Source: *Environmental Progress News* – July 2019. Available at http://warmheartworldwide.org/environmental-news-2/?gclid=EALalQobChMluOeHtaKF1QIVFIWPCCh20OQI-EAAYASAAEgLy7fD_BwE

Did you also know that....

More than 600 million people lack clean drinking water and drought affects more than 35 million every year. Climate change is shifting precipitation patterns and speed glacial melt, altering water supplies and intensifying floods and droughts. It is predicted that by 2050, 1.3 billion people will live in flood-prone areas. Besides building dams, water treatment plants, integrating green infrastructure can help solve the problem. For example, green roofs that can capture rainwater and mangrove forest that can complement sea walls by reducing storm surge.



Source: Debunking Myths: 5 Things to Know About Green Infrastructure. Available at <https://www.wri.org/blog/2019/03/debunking-myths-5-things-know-about-green-infrastructure>

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In his Welcoming Remarks, Mr Yong Teng Koon, Chief Executive Officer of MTCC shared that MTCC was established in 1998 to develop and operate a voluntary and independent national certification scheme known as MTCS. In 2009, the MTCS was endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).

He further explained that the review of MC&I (Natural Forest) 2012 had started in October 2015 but was put on hold for about a year. This was to allow the completion of review of the PEFC international benchmark standards so that the reviewed MC&I could conform to the international requirements and continue to be endorsed and recognised in the global market.

Ms Siti Syaliza Mustapha, Senior Manager (Forest Management), MTCC, presented on the process and progress of the review as well as provided further clarification on the changes that have been made. Amongst the main changes are:

- i. Incorporation and streamlining of the requirements under Principle 10 of the MC&I Forest Plantation.v2 into the corresponding Principles 1-9 of the MC&I FMC;
- ii. Inclusion of requirement on conversion of degraded forest to forest plantation that is not subjected to the cut-off date of 31 December 2010 for conversion of natural forests to other land uses;

- iii. Inclusion of Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972, Universal Declaration on Human Rights 1948, as well as International Labour Organisation's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989 (C169);

- iv. Incorporation of requirements that provide guidance for internal audit and management review and improvement; and
- v. Improved clarity on the requirements for communicating claims from certified areas.

During the Regional Consultation, stakeholders raised their concerns on the inclusion of *Manual, Procedures and Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management Certification*, also known as the "Green Book", to be a verifier in the Enquiry Draft. It has been quoted as a verifier without reference to any particular manual, procedures or guidelines in the Green Book. Besides that, there were also concerns raised by the stakeholders on the inclusion of internal audit, management review and action plan into the Enquiry Draft.

Ms Siti Syaliza informed that the written comments and proposals received from the stakeholders during the 2nd Public Consultation period will be compiled and considered by the SRC at its 5th Meeting scheduled to be held in October 2019. The review of MC&I (Natural Forest) 2012 is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2019.



Photo: Stakeholders present at the Sarawak's Regional Consultation Session

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Course on Risks and Threats of Diseases to Forest Plantation in Sarawak

Forest Department Sarawak (FDS), in collaboration with Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), Sarawak Forestry Corporation (SFC) and Sarawak Timber Association (STA) organised a *Course on Risks and Threats of Diseases to Forest Plantation in Sarawak* from 16 to 18 July 2019 in Bintulu. The Course, co-funded by FDS and STA, was attended by about fifty (50) participants from various State forestry agencies, Licence for Planted Forests (LPF) companies and STA Secretariat.

Tuan Jack Anak Liam, Deputy Director of Forests, FDS, informed participants in his Opening Remarks that the Course were conducted to provide hands-on training on disease survey and identification, assessment plot establishment for long term disease monitoring, as well as disease management and control strategy which include tree breeding method to develop disease resistant clones.

He added that the lack of research information and knowledge in tree plantation development including pest and disease control was one of the issues highlighted by the LPF holders which affects tree planting progress. The effective management and control of any disease depends

on prompt and accurate diagnosis and identifications of the pest or pathogen. However, Sarawak is still short on experienced and trained personnel, particularly forest pathology, to perform this job.

He also pointed out that collaboration between the LPF holders and scientists from research institutions are much needed in the future for intensifying research and development (R&D) in areas of common interests in order to spur the growth of tree plantations in the State.

A total of seven (7) papers on identification of pests and diseases affecting trees, mitigation control and management, aerial and ground surveillance, etc., were delivered by researchers from FRIM, FDS and SFC during the theoretical session held on the first day of the Course.

Field practical was conducted on the second day at LPF 0014 Samling Reforestation (Bintulu) Sdn Bhd where participants got to perform ground assessment at *Acacia* and *Eucalyptus* tree planting plots. During the three-day Course, the participants shared their knowledge and experiences in managing and control of pest and disease infection in their respective tree plantations.

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