

Sixty percent of the world's tropical peatlands are found in Southeast Asia covering an estimated area of between 21 to 23 million ha. They occur mainly as peat swamp forests - one of the region's most important wetland ecosystems. Peatlands are important for socio-economic development and provide support for the livelihoods of local communities. They provide timber and non-timber forest products, help to maintain our water supply, control floods and provide potential for tourism and recreation.

Drainage and unsustainable management practices have made the peatlands vulnerable to fire. Peatland fires are now a major problem of regional and global significance which has negatively impacted human health, food production and biodiversity as well as contributed to global climate change. More than 2 million ha of peatlands have burnt in the past 10 years resulting in thick smoke and haze blanketing the region inflicting damage worth an estimated USD9 billion.

In 2003 ASEAN Member Countries established the ASEAN Peatland Management Initiative (APMI) as a framework for fire prevention and sustainable management of peatlands. A broad range of actions are underway including the development of a regional strategy for the period 2005 - 2020.

MYANMAR has a small peatland area in the higher elevations of Mandalay Division and Shan State. With a total area of 4,167 ha, the three distinct peatland areas are in the townships of Pyin Oo Lwin, Heho, and Kalaw. Most of the peatlands are used for agricultural purposes.

Small areas of peatlands have also been recorded in **LAO PDR, CAMBODIA** and **THE PHILIPPINES** - but further work is needed to assess their values and management issues.



THAILAND has approximately 64,000 ha of peatlands mainly in the southern part of the country, particularly in Narathiwat province. Peatlands are a source of livelihood for the local communities as they provide forest products and support agricultural activities. Many of the peatlands have been degraded by fire with the small remaining intact peat swamp forest protected as a conservation area. Recent fires affected over 2,000 ha.



With 18-20 million ha, **INDONESIA** has the largest area of tropical peatland in the world. The major peatlands are found in Kalimantan, Sumatra and Papua. Peatlands in Indonesia sustain a wealth of forest resources, regulate water supply and provide flood control in many regions. They are also critical for the conservation of globally significant biodiversity and regulating global climate. More than 2.1 million ha has been damaged by fire in recent years.



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 Main Peatlands
 Areas where extensive peatland fires have occurred
*There are also other areas of peatland fires that are not indicated above

Note: Map is not drawn to scale

Fiery Southeast Asia

Our resources, lives, future under threat



MALAYSIA

has about 2.5 million ha of peatlands with the majority in Sarawak. Peatlands in Malaysia are important for forest industries as well as for biodiversity conservation, recreation and tourism. Peatlands also provide water supply for irrigation and domestic purposes, as well as flood control. They are also recognised for their carbon storage role. Approximately 20,000 ha of peatland has been severely damaged in recent fires.



A high proportion of the 126,000 ha of peatlands in **BRUNEI** Darussalam are still pristine. They have significant value for biodiversity conservation. In recent years a small proportion of the peatlands which have been opened up by roads or drains have been affected by fire.

Fight against Fire

Actions need to be taken to protect the peatlands as well as their natural functions and resources. Additionally, measures need to be implemented to prevent fires and transboundary haze pollution.

Here's what you can do:

- Promote the protection and sustainable use of peatlands by local communities and other stakeholders.
- Involve local communities in fire prevention and control activities.
- Develop integrated land use plans for peatland areas to guide future development activities.
- Identify and monitor high risk areas for peatland fires.
- Stop or control drainage of peatland areas.
- Rehabilitate degraded and burnt peatlands to prevent further fires.
- Implement zero burning techniques for land conversion for forestry, agriculture, etc.
- Conduct controlled burning techniques for communities where zero burning is not applicable.
- Document and share experiences as well as best management practices for peatlands.
- Support implementation of the ASEAN Peatland Management Initiative, ASEAN Regional Haze Action Plan and the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution.