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Link: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/02/17/riau-jambi-prepare-forest-land-fire-prevention.html>**UNNATURAL DISASTERS**

# Riau, Jambi prepare forest, land fire prevention

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THE JAKARTA POST/PEKANBARU/JAMBI

Riau and Jambi are preparing efforts to prevent forest and land fires that have caused annual disasters in the provinces.

Acting Riau Governor Arsyadjuliandi "Andi" Rachman on Monday issued Gubernatorial Decree No. 5/2015 on forest and land fire mitigation and prevention action plans, which is aimed at freeing the province from the disasters that have been taking place for the past 17 years.

Witnessed by Environment and Forestry Minister Siti Nurbaya and National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) head Syamsul Ma'arif, the ordinance, which regulates the duties and responsibilities of relevant agencies in forest and land fire mitigation in Riau, Andi immediately handed tasks to the 12 regents and mayors in Riau.

"There are 16 actions plans that greatly require support from the relevant stakeholders at the central, provincial, regency and mayoralty levels, including from the private sector," said Andi.

The action plans include the designation of peat land as a protected area in Riau spatial planning, canal blocking to maintain the wetness of peat land, document evaluation and environmental licensing for plantation and forestry companies in preventing and mitigating forest and land fires, law enforcement against companies disobeying audits and the establishment and provision of incentives for fire-aware communities in fire-prone areas.

The managing director of PT Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper (RAPP), Tony Wenas, said the company would help the administration to overcome forest and land plantation.

"We have prepared a helicopter at Roesmin Nurjadin Air Forces base in Pekanbaru," Tony said.

Meanwhile, some 350,000 hect-

ares of peat lands in Jambi have been reportedly damaged mostly because of conversion into plantations or industrial forests (HTI), but also because of annual forest fires during dry seasons.

The executive director of the Indonesian Forum for the Environment's (Walhi) Jambi branch, Musri Nauli, said the damaged areas accounted for about 50 percent of the total peatlands in the province.

"The damage is spread throughout the three regencies of East Tanjungjabung, West Tanjungjabung and Muarojambi," Musri said on Sunday.

He said Walhi had helped propagate measures for anticipating peat land fires during a recent study on peat land and field management in the Sungai Bungur subdistrict, Kumpehilir district, Muarojambi.

Saving peat lands in Jambi, according to Musri, would be very difficult to do as long as their conversion into plantations and HTI continued unabated.

He said Jambi would even completely lose the vast peat lands in its eastern regions, especially in East and West Tanjungjabung regencies, if the government kept issuing licenses for oil palm plantations and HTI businesses.

To help save the fields and peat lands in the province, Musri said, local people should be given the rights and the chance to manage them. People's involvement in the management of peat lands would help prevent the peat lands from being damaged.

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