
[The HCVF Application in Indonesia](#)

Indonesia has some of the most biodiverse rainforests in the world, but also the highest deforestation rate. The HCVF (high conservation value forest) concept has taken hold in Indonesia as a means of reconciling economic pressures to open up forest areas with the need to reduce the rate of forest loss.

Several NGOs have actively encouraged the use of the concept, integrating HCVF within their ongoing work on conservation, sustainable forestry and land use management, in collaboration with government ministries, the private sector and local communities. The urgent objective of applying the concept, as far as many are concerned, is to help pre-empt forest conversion and the loss of biodiversity and social values that accompanies it.

HCVF assessment represents an embryonic concept introduced and promoted by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) – originally intended for site specific Forest Management Units (FMUs) – and now adopted further such as by the Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). The basic premise is that all forested areas possess biological, environmental and social values with identifiable conservation attributes. If these attributes are identified, then management should ensure maintenance and/or enhancement of High Conservation Values (HCV) described by these conservation attributes.

The Indonesian HCVF toolkit was the first national version to be produced, in 2003, and various arms of government are currently studying how HCVF can fit into existing government policies and planning processes. If this integration of HCVF into government policy goes ahead, it will help to align government land-use decisions with demands from international markets for 'HCVF-free' paper products and sustainably-produced palm oil.

To date, HCVF work in Indonesia has included a considerable number of HCVF assessments at the concession level by pulp, palm oil and timber companies, including more than a dozen in Sumatra and a handful in Kalimantan. WWF (in Sumatra, Kalimantan and Papua), The Nature Conservancy (in East Kalimantan), Tropenbos (East Kalimantan), Flora and Fauna International (West Kalimantan) and Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme (North Sumatra & Aceh) have been working with companies and local governments to designate, manage and monitor HCVFs within plantations and logging concessions.

Several landscape-level HCVF assessments have also been undertaken in, for example:

- The Trans-fly region of southern part of Papua Province, where the HCVF assessment identified priority conservation areas and important indigenous social/cultural areas, and helped WWF to influence local government to incorporate this in its planning process;
- Riau Province, Sumatra, where the coarse-scale HCVF assessment provided the basis for negotiation to secure the conservation of the few remaining large intact forest blocks such as the Tesso Nilo Forest complex;

- West Kalimantan Province, Kalimantan, where HCVF assessment provided the arguments for WWF and other NGOs to sustain remaining forest areas and protect the 'Heart of Borneo'.

The HCVF landscape analysis is predominantly approached through the generation of maps and spatial analysis. In Papua and West Kalimantan cases, the HCVF landscape level assessments have been strengthened by the efforts to acknowledge and incorporate social and cultural values. This part of assessment was undertaken through a series of consultative meetings and a workshop with social experts and representatives of indigenous communities.

In the case of timber plantations, WWF has been urging pulp and paper companies APP and APRIL to protect the HCVFs in their concessions in Riau, Sumatra. In response, APP appeared to commit to protecting the HCVF found in one of its concessions and commissioned Smartwood to map HCVFs in three of its other FMUs in the area. On the basis of this mapping, APP announced that it would protect the HCVFs identified and signed an agreement with Smartwood to track how well it is managing its HCVFs over the next five years. However, recent monitoring reports have shown that APP has failed to protect these areas from fires, illegal logging and further forest conversion, despite its earlier pledges.

For its part, APRIL conducted its own HCVF assessments in several of its FMUs, with support from local and international experts. APRIL also commissioned Proforest to conduct additional HCVF assessments. Furthermore, the company pledged it would not convert any HCVFs, as identified through application of the Indonesian toolkit, in any of its new concessions and would not source wood from HCVFs anywhere in the world for any of its mills. However, in April 2006, an investigation found that natural forest in a concession associated with APRIL was being logged, causing disturbance to elephant habitat.

In oil palm concessions, three of Indonesia's major palm oil producers, PT SMART Tbk., PT Astra Agro Lestari Tbk. and PT. London Sumatra Tbk. have signed Memoranda of Understanding with WWF to undertake pilot HCVF assessments with WWF in some of their concessions. Both companies have agreed to implement the protection and management prescriptions identified in the HCVF work, and to apply the lessons learned in their other concessions throughout Indonesia. The companies hope to apply the lessons-learned from this pilot to their other concessions. However, the effectiveness of HCVF application in this sector is yet to be seen.

The overall HCVF application in Indonesia still raises several key challenges, which include: The first version of Indonesia HCVF toolkit was developed by a relatively small group of interested practitioners and experts. Since then, much experience in HCVF assessment has been gained and many more stakeholders have become involved. The challenge now is to involve a wider group of stakeholders in a process to strengthen the toolkit based on this experience, including stronger social/cultural analysis and lessons-learned from the oil palm experience;

The results of HCVF assessment at landscape and provincial-wide levels need to be further used to influence government's land use and development planning – for instance, by being gazetted in the provincial and/or district spatial planning;

The cases with pulp and paper and oil palm companies highlight the need for active stewardship of HCVFs if company commitments are to make a real difference in practice.

Article compiled and re-written by Fitriani Ardiansyah, WWF-Indonesia (fardiansyah@wwf.or.id) based on several articles on HCVF written by WWF-International and WWF-Indonesia

