

Fined for clearing riparian reserve

Published on: Wednesday, May 11, 2016



SUKAU: A 67-year-old man who cleared 0.53 hectare of riparian reserve in Kinabatangan was slapped with a RM5,000 compound as compensation to the Forestry Department which had since replanted forest trees on the damaged land.

The department thought that the compound was sufficient given that the man is a senior citizen with low income.

Furthermore, it was his first offence and the compound was intended to teach him a lesson as well as to create awareness among the local community and companies in the vicinity.

With the establishment of Kinabatangan Corridor of Life Riparian Patrol Unit, encroachment on riparian reserves can be closely monitored and appropriate action can be taken against offenders from time to time.

Department Director Datuk Sam Mannan urged all related departments namely Land and Survey Department, Wildlife Department, Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID), Environment Protection Department (EPD), Department of Environment (DOE), Kinabatangan District Office and representatives from Corridor of Life Tourism Operator Association Sabah (KiTA) to work together to protect the riparian reserve along Kinabatangan River.

"Other than preserving a stable ecology, indirectly we will be looking after an area which is one of the most renowned tourism destinations in the State.

"Therefore, any case of land clearing and tree felling in the riparian reserve must be stopped and stern action must be taken against its perpetrators," he said.

Meanwhile, any person involved in activity such as cutting, felling, removing, damaging, destroying or setting fire to any tree or protected plant in a park or natural reserve under Sabah Parks is guilty of an offence under the Parks Enactment 1984.

Crocker Range Park Manager Thomas Yussop said on conviction, the offender can be imprisoned up to five years or fined up to RM500,000, or both.

"Whereas those who entered the park without permission can be jailed up to a year and fined up to RM10,000," he said.

Regarding complaints of some quarters that a group of individuals have built their houses or cleared lands for farming purposes on park lands, Thomas said he had ascertained that the areas are not within the jurisdiction of the Crocker Range Park.

He has also received two complaints of illegal logging in Agudon and Ulu Taman Bandukan and will send his officers to investigate the matter.