



Media Release

Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, Indonesia: Why planned relocation of the Sun Bears at Balikpapan's Environmental Tourism and Education Centre by the City government is a bad idea.

In 2002, the Sun Bear was proposed as the mascot of Balikpapan. Since 2004, the City Government has collaborated with private donors and wildlife experts to develop a non-profit Environmental Tourism and Education Centre (known as the "KWPLH"), the centerpiece of which is a 1.3ha natural enclosure housing 6 sun bears that can never be released into the wild. This enclosure is widely recognized as one of the best of its kind in Asia, and increasing numbers of tourists (70,000 in 2012), domestic and foreign, can see the mascot of Balikpapan in a natural environment.



In 2009, a Sun Bear information exhibit, the largest and most comprehensive of its kind in Asia, was opened at the Centre. Plans are under way to develop further exhibits with environmental themes, such as endemic species of Borneo (currently under development), forest functions, and forest fires. The Centre has also developed a rescue facility for stray and abandoned cats and dogs, also providing the public with information on pet care. In addition, over the years, attractive gardens and outward bound facilities have been developed, and visitor numbers have increased steadily. The majority of visitors are local schoolchildren, community groups and families wanting to escape the hustle and bustle of the city for a few hours.



To date the site developments have largely been funded through donations, while the basic running costs have been funded by the city government. The site currently employs 41 staff, 80% of whom are from local communities.

Perversely, at the end of 2012, the City legislature refused to approve the 2013 operating costs (about US\$160,000) for the center in the budget proposed by the City

Government. This was not because of shortage of funds: in 2012 the City budget was underspent by many millions of dollars. The City legislature is headed by Andi Burhanuddin Solong, who has been widely reported as saying wanting to change the City mascot because bears are "lazy".

So the City Government has now announced plans to close the KWPLH and convert it into a camping ground, and relocate the Sun Bears, possibly to an Inhutani site at km 10. At the

very least this will cause enormous stress for the bears, and building any facility on a par with the current enclosure would require a large investment.

In summary, the Balikpapan City Government is planning to destroy the finest Sun Bear enclosure in Asia and a free environmental education and tourism facility that has been steadily developing and improving for 8 years, visited by 70,000 people in 2012.

We consider this plan to be both a waste of public and donor money, and contrary to the interests of the people of Balikpapan, who will be deprived of an important public facility. We call on all concerned persons and organizations to express their opposition to this plan and request the Government of Balikpapan to continue to support the KWPLH in its current function and form. Your support is essential if we are to save this unique facility for the people of Balikpapan and Indonesia.

Prepared by the Management and Staff of KWPLH, and its supporters,

January 2013

Notes:

1. For those willing to express their support for the KWPLH, please use the letter formats provided on our website (www.beruangmadu.org), using your own letterhead. Please feel free to modify the contents of the draft letters to personalize your or your organization's letter of support. For organizations, if possible your letter should be signed by the leader of your organization and include your organizations stamp/seal. Letters can be faxed or sent directly to the Mayor of Balikpapan and the Head of the Balikpapan Legislature (but do send us a copy).
2. We can also gladly help with collating and hand delivery of letters of support. Please send letters either by e-mail to kwplh.balikpapan@beruangmadu.org and we will print and deliver it to the right hands

Or send by post to the following address:

Kantor KWPLH, Jalan Soekarno-Hatta KM.23 Kelurahan Karang Joang RT.42 Balikpapan, Telp. +62- 542 – 7108304,

3. For further information, please feel free to contact:
 - Hamsuri Indra : +62 811-5012375
 - Dandy Irawan : +62 811-536755
4. Visit our website: www.beruangmadu.org to support our online petition and to download example letters, fax numbers, and to obtain updates!