

WETLAND FORESTS MAPPING

A Tool for Socio-Economic Development
and Poverty Reduction



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Foreword

The wetland forest is one of forest types which provide vital ecosystem for fauna and flora and environmental benefits such as flood control and coastal protection. It is one of the most productive natural renewable ecosystems in the state of Perak. However, over the years the wetland forest particularly the peat swamp forest in Perak were losing their habitats, as most of the areas have been developed and converted to other land uses especially agriculture. To date the total wetland forests in Perak is about 41,666 ha comprising mangrove and freshwater swamp forests and there is no more peat swamp forest left in the state. The depletion of wetland forest is a serious environmental and economic concern to the state. This stems from the fact that the wetland forest is a fragile ecosystem and once it is disturbed, it is very difficult and costly to be restored. For instance mangroves play a pivotal role in moderating monsoonal tidal flood and in coastal protection as exemplified by the recent tsunami in 2004 which originated from the Indian Ocean. At the same time their primary production supports numerous forms of wildlife and avifauna as well as estuarine and near-shore fisheries. Consequently, the continuing degradation and depletion of this vital resource will reduce not only terrestrial and aquatic production and wildlife habitats, but more importantly, the environmental stability of coastal forests that provides protection to inland agricultural crops and villages will become seriously impaired. The wetland forest is also contributing in terms of socio-economic development and poverty reduction in this state. Mangroves in the Matang for example play significant roles for fishing industries and become important source for piling and charcoal production, not only for Perak but also for the country. Mapping of the wetland forest in this state is crucial in providing current information of the areas and planning of socio-economic development. I would like to congratulate the Institute Darul Ridzuan Perak and the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) for their joint effort in determining the information on the distribution of wetland forest in Perak. I also wish to thank all the officers and staffs who have contributed one way or another to the preparation of this document. It is my hope that outputs of the study is useful for the state authority to wisely manage the remaining wetland forest on sustainable manner.

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Executive Summary

This study found that the main wetland forest in Perak is mangrove and freshwater swamp forest. Perak has big chunk of mangroves of about 40,887 ha mainly in Larut & Matang and Kerian Districts, however, relatively very small size of freshwater swamp of about 779 ha that exist mainly in Kerian District. In fact, Matang Mangrove in Perak is recognised as the best managed mangroves in the world and has been managed sustainably since 1904. As for the peat swamp forest, there is no more since all of the peatland in Perak have been developed. This study is important in determining the current status of the mangroves and freshwater swamp in the state by providing information on its location and their general status. The information obtained are directly and indirectly support towards sustainable development and resource protected through strong emphasis on the awareness, cooperation practice and adequate data. In conducting this project, close collaborations with Forestry Department of Perak has been made, more over managing the wetland forest is under the forestry department's jurisdiction. The ultimate goal of this project was achieved by producing maps on distribution of wetland forests and their current status in the state of Perak. It had been attained by identifying and maps the distribution of the existing wetland forest in the entire state of Perak, and produce complete report comprising information on the status and area extent. The maps produced could serve as a platform for assessment and monitoring of wetland resources. The information obtained in this study is necessary and crucial to be used in managing the wetland forest in Perak. The wetland forest, mainly the mangroves indirectly contributes to the fishing industries that involving a lot of peoples. For example, the Matang Mangrove that had been managed sustainably more than 100 years is directly important for piling and charcoal production, which also contributes for socio-economic development for the surrounding areas. Outputs of this study justify the existence of the wetland forest for socio-development and poverty reduction in the state.

