



KERATAN AKHBAR

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Welcome move to strengthen Wildlife Act

WWF-Malaysia welcomes the Water, Land and Natural Resources Ministry and Department of Wildlife and National Parks' (Perhilitan) on-going amendment exercise to the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010.

The amendment includes imposing higher minimum penalties for offences, higher penalties for repeat offenders, suggested ban on hunting in more areas to conserve wildlife, and the need to conduct a Wildlife Impact Assessment for projects that have an impact on wildlife habitats.

A recent report in *The Star* states that Perhilitan is currently reviewing the recommendation to expand no-hunting zones to include all forest reserves listed under the state enactments, water catchment areas and dams ("Beefing up prey for the predators", June 3, online at bit.ly/star_hunt).

This is with hopes that it will allow more room for wildlife, particularly mammals that are prey to tigers, to breed better. The suggestion is for a total of 289 forests in Peninsular Malaysia to be gazetted as no-hunting zones. This is indeed a welcome move.



MIKAAIL KAVANAGH/WWF

Our critically endangered Malaysian tiger is on the verge of extinction and various other wildlife are under threat. Poaching is the greatest scorch to wildlife conservation in Malaysia. Although ongoing efforts to address poaching has increased, there remains great demand for exotic wildlife and wildlife parts. If deterrent penalties are insignificant and culprits do not

face the full extent of the law, Malaysia will suffer from an Empty Forest Syndrome. Therefore, the move to strengthen the Wildlife Act is indeed promising. To curb poaching, funds are needed to intensify enforcement. We urge the government to find ways through the law to channel fines collected for offences back to Perhilitan for enforcement purposes.

es. We also urge the government to explore the possibility of removing the maximum limit of fines for serious wildlife offences.

WWF-Malaysia also suggests that provisions to appoint Honorary Wildlife Wardens are included in the Act, similar to the Sabah Wildlife Conservation Enactment. Appointing indigenous peoples and local communities who know the landscapes well as honorary rangers to assist the department can be beneficial in increasing patrols, as well as empowering them to be involved in wildlife conservation.

Protecting our wildlife is not just the responsibility of enforcement agencies. It is truly a joint effort, which requires collaboration across NGOs, government and corporate stakeholders, local communities, as well as members of the public.

Therefore, we strongly urge all Malaysians to visit the ongoing online consultation at upc.npc.gov.my and provide your feedback to strengthen the Wildlife Conservation Act by June 14.

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