

Assessing the ecological Inputs in selected forestry related Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reports in Sabah, Malaysia

Abstract

Logging activity is one of the prescribed activities for Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) reporting in Sabah. Ecology is a component of EIA and studies on ecological input in EIAs have identified a number of shortcomings. As there has been no review of the EIA in logging activity, this study sets to investigate the ecological input in the forestry related EIA reports. By knowing this, there is an opportunity to advance the current ecological component inclusion in EIA reports related to forestry projects for future improvements. Four main review areas were assessed in this study: (1) description of the development, the local environment and the baseline conditions (2) identification and evaluation of key ecological impacts (3) alternatives and mitigation and (4) communication of results. Results showed that the quality of the ecological components for three out of four main review areas generally met the satisfactory level of ecological components in EIA report. Review area 3 showed the highest level of poor ecological component quality compared to other scores, solely due to the reports lacking feasible alternatives to the proposed forestry project. However, this aspect is not required as compliance with the local EIA guidelines by the Sabah Environmental Protection Department (EPD). Nonetheless, it is still a good practice to include all mitigations and alternatives of project operations related to ecological components in the EIA report.