

POTENTIAL INFLUENCE OF PALM OIL AND CARBON POLICIES ON ORANGUTAN CONSERVATION AND FOREST COVER

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Orangutans (*Pongo* sp), Asia's only great apes, are (critically) endangered and innovative conservation strategies and funding sources are needed to mitigate current threats. For orangutans the main threats are large scale legal and illegal logging; the often subsequent conversion to plantations such as those for palm oil and paper; and hunting. As a result only about 6,600 Sumatran orangutans and 54,000 Bornean orangutans are left in increasingly degraded and fragmented forest patches. Although protected areas in some parts of Indonesia seem to be less deforested than areas outside of protected areas, the majority of orangutans occur outside of protected areas such as national parks. To reduce habitat loss and degradation outside national parks urgently requires strong conservation action and innovative management solutions. Here we will lay out what the current status of orangutans is, what the threats are and which strategies could be used to potentially mitigate some of these threats. The most promising opportunity to provide new funding and strategies for orangutan conservation are the current climate change discussions where carbon offset payments for forest conservation might become reality and lead to performance based payments for forest conservation. Orangutans might be particularly important with respect to carbon stocks because they occur on some of the world's most carbon-rich forests, the peat swamps of Sumatra and Borneo. Opportunities for such projects will be discussed as well as whether such projects can offset lost opportunity costs of other land-uses. In addition, additional potential solutions for orangutan conservation will be addressed such as reduced impact logging in certain parts of their range.

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