



LAW ENFORCEMENT AGAINST DEFORESTATION IN THE RAWA SINGKIL WILDLIFE RESERVE

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Environmental Law Enforcement; Deforestation in the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve continues to intensify despite its formal legal protection. This research aims to analyze the existing forms of legal protection governing the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve and to examine the major obstacles hindering the implementation of environmental laws against deforestation. This Research using a normative juridical method with juridical, conceptual and statutory approaches. Data were obtained through extensive literature review and analyzed qualitatively using descriptive analysis. The study show that strengthening environmental governance has become increasingly urgent. Legal reforms such as Law Number 32 of 2024 amending Law Number 5 of 1990 are found to be inadequately enforced. Although the national legal framework provides administrative and criminal sanctions, overlapping authority, weak inter-agency coordination, limited supervision, and corruption in permit processes significantly undermine enforcement. Strengthening preventive legal mechanisms should be promoted through clearer boundary demarcation, improved community based environmental education, and stricter, digitally monitored licensing supervision. In addition, it is essential to ensure effective law enforcement and sustainable governance of the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve.

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A. Introduction

Indonesia is recognized as one of the world's megabiodiversity countries, possessing extraordinary biological wealth and a wide range of unique ecosystems, including tropical rainforests, peatlands, wetlands, and coastal areas. This biodiversity is reflected in the vast variety of flora and fauna endemic to the archipelago. However, despite this richness, Indonesia continues to face serious environmental challenges. Rapid development, economic expansion, and human exploitation of natural resources have frequently resulted in the degradation and loss of natural habitats. Human activities driven by economic interests, particularly land conversion and deforestation, have significantly threatened the survival of wildlife and disrupted ecological balance. Consequently, effective mechanisms are urgently needed to protect, preserve, and

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conserve the habitats of flora and fauna. One of the primary legal instruments established for this purpose is the designation of wildlife reserves.

A wildlife reserve is a type of nature conservation area specifically intended for the protection of wild animals and their natural habitats. According to Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 68 of 1998 on Nature Reserve Areas and Nature Conservation Areas, a wildlife reserve is defined as a protected area characterized by the diversity and/or uniqueness of animal species, where habitat development activities may be carried out to support the survival of these species. The establishment of wildlife reserves represents the state's commitment to biodiversity conservation by restricting exploitative activities while allowing controlled management aimed at maintaining ecological integrity.

One of the most important wildlife reserves in Indonesia is the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve, which covers an area of approximately 102,500 hectares and is located across three administrative regions, namely Aceh Singkil Regency, South Aceh Regency, and Subulussalam City (Hanafiah, 2024). The legal status of this area was formalized through the Decree of the Minister of Forestry Number 70/Kpts-II/1989 dated June 2, 1980. Rawa Singkil is internationally recognized as one of the largest remaining peat swamp forest ecosystems in Sumatra, making it a conservation area of strategic ecological importance.

The Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve contributes significantly to global climate change mitigation. One of its primary ecological functions is its role as a major carbon sink. Peat swamp forests have the capacity to absorb and store vast amounts of carbon over long periods. The peat ecosystem in Rawa Singkil plays a critical role in reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations and regulating the global climate. According to the Aceh Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA Aceh), the preservation of this area is essential for climate regulation (Tim Redaksi Digdata, 2023). Destruction of peat forests, through drainage or burning, releases stored carbon into the atmosphere, thereby exacerbating climate change.

In addition to carbon storage, the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve functions as a natural water regulator. The peat swamp ecosystem absorbs water during the rainy season and releases it gradually during dry periods, thereby reducing the risk of floods and droughts in surrounding areas. This hydrological function is crucial not only for biodiversity conservation but also for the well-being of local communities. Furthermore, Rawa Singkil serves as a critical habitat for several endangered species, including the Sumatran orangutan, Sumatran elephant, Sumatran tiger, and Sumatran rhinoceros. The protection of this habitat contributes to maintaining ecosystem balance and supports broader efforts to slow biodiversity loss and climate change (Oktavianto, 2023).

Despite its protected status, the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve is currently facing serious threats from escalating deforestation. Unauthorized land clearing, primarily for palm oil plantations, along with other forms of encroachment, has caused significant habitat degradation. Deforestation in this area not only endangers endemic and rare

species but also increases the risk of ecological disasters such as peatland fires and flooding. The impacts of deforestation are not limited to environmental damage; they also threaten the livelihoods of Indigenous and local communities who depend on forest ecosystems for their survival.

From an international perspective, law enforcement against deforestation in conservation areas remains a major challenge. Many countries, including Indonesia, struggle to meet biodiversity protection targets due to weak legal implementation, overlapping institutional authority, limited coordination among agencies, and inadequate capacity of law enforcement officers. These challenges undermine the effectiveness of conservation policies and allow illegal activities to persist (Kim & Bosselmann, 2013).

In response to these threats, Indonesia has strengthened its legal framework. Article 19 paragraph (1) of Law Number 32 of 2024, which amends Law Number 5 of 1990 on Conservation of Biological Natural Resources and Their Ecosystems, explicitly prohibits activities that alter the integrity of nature reserves. Paragraph (2) further specifies prohibited acts, including reducing reserve areas, burning land, altering landscapes, introducing non-native species, and conducting activities inconsistent with conservation objectives. These provisions demonstrate the state's legal obligation to protect conservation areas such as Rawa Singkil.

At the international level, Indonesia is a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) of 1992, which provides a global framework for biodiversity conservation. Article 8 letter (h) of the CBD obliges member states to prevent, control, or eradicate alien species that threaten ecosystems and habitats. Additionally, the CBD emphasizes ecosystem-based approaches and equitable conservation, reinforcing the importance of effective law enforcement at the national and local levels.

However, in practice, the protection of the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve has faced significant obstacles. Changes in legal designation and boundary reductions, as reflected in ministerial decrees issued in 2015 and 2016, have reduced the officially recognized area of the reserve. Data from the Aceh Forest, Nature and Environment Foundation (HAKA) indicate continuous forest cover loss from 2016 to 2023, demonstrating persistent deforestation despite legal protections. This environmental degradation has led to habitat loss for approximately 1,270 Sumatran orangutans and other endangered species, increased carbon emissions from peatland degradation, heightened risks of flooding and drought, and rising social conflicts between humans and wildlife.

Therefore, strengthening law enforcement against deforestation in the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve is not only a national legal obligation but also an international commitment. Aligning local enforcement mechanisms with national legislation and international environmental agreements such as the CBD and the Ramsar Convention is essential. This requires clearer boundary demarcation, stronger institutional capacity, effective supervision, and collaboration among government agencies, local communities, and international partners to ensure sustainable conservation and environmental justice.

B. Method

This research employs normative legal research with a juridical, conceptual, and statutory approach. Normative legal research focuses on the analysis of legal norms, principles, doctrines, and statutory regulations that govern a particular legal issue (Fajar & Achmad). The juridical approach is used to analyze positive law regulating conservation areas, while the conceptual approach examines legal doctrines and theoretical concepts related to environmental protection and state responsibility. Meanwhile, the statutory approach is applied to review and interpret national and international legal instruments governing wildlife conservation and deforestation prevention.

The legal materials used in this study consist of primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. Primary legal materials include binding legal instruments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), Law Number 32 of 2024 amending Law Number 5 of 1990 on Conservation of Biological Natural Resources and Their Ecosystems, Law Number 41 of 1999 on Forestry, Law Number 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management, the Ramsar Convention (1971), and regulations issued by the Minister of Environment and Forestry related to forest monitoring and administrative sanctions. Secondary legal materials comprise legal journals, academic books, research reports, seminar proceedings, and scholarly articles that provide analysis and interpretation of environmental law and conservation governance (Mahanum, 2021). Tertiary legal materials, such as legal dictionaries, encyclopedias, and the Indonesian Dictionary, are used to support conceptual clarity and terminological consistency.

Data collection in this research is conducted through library research using document study techniques. Relevant legal documents, statutes, international conventions, and academic literature are collected and examined through careful reading and interpretation. The collected data are then analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis, which involves organizing, classifying, and interpreting legal materials to answer the research problems. This analytical method allows the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of legal protection mechanisms and identify obstacles to law enforcement against deforestation in the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve. The qualitative approach is applied by linking legal norms with environmental law theories, particularly the theory of environmental governance and sustainable development, to produce comprehensive and scientifically accountable conclusions (Habsy, 2017).

C. Result & Discussion

1. Form of Legal Protection in Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve

Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve is formally designated as a wildlife reserve under Indonesia's national protected area system and is registered in the Protected Planet

database, reflecting its status as an area receiving the highest level of legal protection under Indonesian conservation law. This designation establishes a comprehensive and integrated legal framework aimed at safeguarding the long-term sustainability of its peat swamp ecosystem and biodiversity through substantive legal norms, institutional authority, and enforcement mechanisms derived from national environmental, forestry, and conservation regulations. Nevertheless, despite this strong legal status, the reserve continues to face severe deforestation pressures, making it a crucial case study for assessing the effectiveness of conservation law enforcement. Accordingly, legal protection in the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve is understood as consisting of two interconnected dimensions—national and international legal protection—where domestic laws are reinforced by international legal commitments to biodiversity conservation, forming a unified foundation for the sustainable preservation of the Rawa Singkil ecosystem.

a. National Legal Protection

National legal protection constitutes the primary foundation of environmental governance in Indonesia, establishing rights, obligations, institutional authority, and enforcement mechanisms through formally enacted legislation. Legal protection operates through preventive (non-penal) measures aimed at preventing violations and repressive (penal) measures designed to address violations after they occur (Riadi, Sunardi, & Setiono, 2023). In the context of the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve, national legal protection is derived from conservation, environmental, and forestry laws that collectively regulate ecosystem preservation, land use, and law enforcement. These legal provisions are not merely normative frameworks but must be analyzed in relation to empirical realities such as ongoing deforestation, illegal palm oil expansion, unclear boundary demarcation, weak supervision, and limited enforcement capacity.

The central legal instrument governing the protection of Rawa Singkil is Law Number 32 of 2024, which amends Law Number 5 of 1990 concerning Conservation of Biological Natural Resources and Their Ecosystems. This amended Conservation Law significantly strengthens Indonesia's conservation regime by addressing deficiencies in the previous framework, particularly regarding weak sanctions and limited enforcement authority. The law establishes conservation as an effort to preserve the sustainability and ecological balance of biological resources and ecosystems, providing the legal basis for the designation and management of wildlife reserves such as Rawa Singkil. Importantly, the amendment expands conservation responsibility to include regional governments, enabling decentralized and more responsive conservation governance while maintaining coordination with the central government (Argawati, 2024).

The amended law introduces a clearer classification of conservation areas, encompassing Nature Reserve Areas, Nature Conservation Areas, conservation areas in waters and coastal regions, and Preservation Areas. This categorization ensures that conservation principles apply not only within forest conservation zones but also to ecologically significant areas outside state forests. Rawa Singkil, as a wildlife reserve

(suaka margasatwa), falls within Nature Reserve Areas where activities that alter ecological integrity are strictly prohibited. The law emphasizes in-situ conservation as the primary approach, reinforcing the obligation to protect ecosystems within their natural habitats.

Strengthened enforcement mechanisms are a key feature of the amended Conservation Law. Civil Servant Investigators (PPNS) in the conservation sector are granted expanded powers, including investigation, arrest, detention, search, and seizure in conservation-related criminal cases. This enhancement is intended to overcome previous enforcement weaknesses where investigators lacked authority and independence (Abrar, 2025). The law adopts a tripartite enforcement framework combining administrative sanctions, civil liability, and criminal penalties, with substantially increased sanctions for corporate offenders. In the context of Rawa Singkil, where deforestation is largely driven by illegal palm oil plantation expansion and canal construction, these provisions provide a robust legal basis for prosecution and deterrence.

Article 19 of the amended Conservation Law explicitly prohibits activities that reduce the integrity of conservation areas, including land clearing, burning, landscape alteration, and activities inconsistent with conservation functions. These prohibitions directly address the deforestation patterns observed in Rawa Singkil, where more than 1,300 hectares of forest cover have been lost since 2016. Despite the clarity of these norms, enforcement has been weak, as evidenced by the limited application of administrative sanctions and the absence of effective criminal proceedings. This enforcement gap highlights the central challenge facing conservation governance: the discrepancy between strong legal norms and weak implementation (Wirawan, 2025).

The Conservation Law also recognizes the importance of community participation in conservation. Local and Indigenous communities are acknowledged as key actors with traditional ecological knowledge and direct exposure to environmental impacts such as flooding caused by peatland degradation. The law mandates government facilitation of community involvement through education, supervision, and reporting mechanisms. However, in Rawa Singkil, these participatory rights remain underutilized due to the absence of formalized community-based monitoring and reporting systems, limiting the law's practical effectiveness.

Criminal sanctions under the amended Conservation Law are significantly enhanced. Individuals and corporations that damage conservation areas face severe penalties, including long-term imprisonment and substantial fines. Corporate liability is further strengthened through provisions that allow sanctions not only against corporate entities but also against decision-makers, controllers, and beneficiaries. Additional sanctions include compensation payments, ecosystem restoration costs, permit revocation, business closure, and corporate dissolution. These provisions are particularly relevant for addressing large-scale deforestation driven by corporate actors in Rawa Singkil, where ecological damage exceeds the capacity of administrative responses alone.

Complementing the Conservation Law, Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management provides an integrated framework for preventing and addressing environmental damage. This law recognizes the right to a good and healthy environment as a constitutional right and embeds sustainable development principles into environmental governance. It establishes preventive instruments such as Environmental Impact Assessments (AMDAL), prohibitions on land burning, and public participation rights, alongside administrative and criminal enforcement mechanisms (Setiawati & Ajie, 2025). In Rawa Singkil, illegal land clearing and burning for palm oil plantations without AMDAL approval constitute clear violations of this law, underscoring its relevance for law enforcement.

The Environmental Law grants broad supervisory powers to government authorities and environmental supervisors, enabling monitoring, evidence collection, and enforcement actions. Administrative sanctions such as permit suspension and revocation allow swift responses to violations, while criminal provisions target serious environmental damage, land burning, and unlicensed activities. Corporate criminal liability provisions ensure that companies and responsible individuals can be held accountable, addressing a key driver of deforestation in Rawa Singkil.

In addition, Law Number 41 of 1999 concerning Forestry reinforces legal protection against deforestation by regulating forest functions, prohibiting unauthorized logging and land conversion, and providing criminal sanctions for forest destruction. This law emphasizes the conservation and protection functions of forests, forming a legal barrier against activities that degrade protected forest ecosystems. Together with technical regulations and regional policies, these national legal instruments form a layered legal framework intended to safeguard Rawa Singkil from deforestation. However, persistent enforcement challenges—such as weak coordination, economic pressures, and tolerance of violations—continue to undermine their effectiveness.

b. International Legal Protection

Beyond national legislation, the protection of the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve is reinforced by Indonesia's commitments under international environmental agreements. As part of the Leuser Ecosystem, Rawa Singkil holds ecological significance at the global level, making international legal instruments an essential complement to domestic law. These agreements establish principles, obligations, and cooperation mechanisms that strengthen biodiversity conservation and environmental protection.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), ratified by Indonesia through Law Number 5 of 1994, forms the primary international framework for biodiversity conservation. The CBD obligates states to conserve biological diversity, promote sustainable use, and ensure equitable benefit-sharing. Its emphasis on in-situ conservation directly supports the legal designation of Rawa Singkil as a wildlife reserve. National biodiversity strategies and action plans developed following CBD ratification integrate these principles into domestic policy, reinforcing Indonesia's obligation to

prevent ecosystem degradation, restore damaged habitats, and involve local communities in conservation management. In the context of Rawa Singkil, CBD commitments strengthen the legal and moral basis for enforcing conservation laws against deforestation (Ningrum, 2025).

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, ratified by Indonesia in 1991, provides an additional international framework specifically relevant to Rawa Singkil's peatland ecosystem. Ramsar principles emphasize the "wise use" of wetlands and their conservation as critical ecological assets. National regulations on peatland protection and restoration operationalize these commitments, including the establishment of institutions responsible for peatland and mangrove restoration. For Rawa Singkil, Ramsar obligations highlight the importance of protecting peat soils as carbon sinks and hydrological regulators. However, implementation challenges persist, particularly regarding coordination between central and regional governments and public participation in policy formulation.

Indonesia's ratification of the Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC further links the protection of Rawa Singkil to global climate change mitigation efforts. Indonesia's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) commits the country to significant emission reductions, with forestry and peatland conservation identified as key mitigation sectors (Proforest, 2020). Protecting Rawa Singkil's peat swamp forests contributes directly to these commitments by maintaining carbon stocks and preventing emissions from deforestation and peat degradation. Thus, enforcement against deforestation in Rawa Singkil is not only a biodiversity obligation but also a climate responsibility.

Additionally, the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme provides a framework for balancing conservation and sustainable development. As part of the Gunung Leuser Biosphere Reserve, the Rawa Singkil area benefits from international recognition that encourages integrated ecosystem management, scientific cooperation, and community participation (Pusparini, et al, 2023). The biosphere reserve model emphasizes zoning systems that combine strict protection with sustainable use, aligning conservation objectives with socio-economic development. This framework offers opportunities for strengthening conservation governance through knowledge exchange and capacity building, although its effectiveness depends on strong national enforcement and local engagement.

2. The Challenges of Law Enforcement Against Deforestation in the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve

This study analyzes the obstacles to law enforcement against deforestation in the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve by grouping them into two broad dimensions, namely internal institutional challenges and external structural challenges. This approach emphasizes that deforestation is not merely the result of individual violations, but rather reflects systemic weaknesses in governance, enforcement capacity, and political-

economic structures that collectively undermine conservation efforts (Global Conservation, 2024).

a. Internal Institutional Challenges of Law Enforcement

The first major challenge lies within the institutional framework responsible for enforcing environmental and forestry laws in the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve. One of the most fundamental problems is the absence of clear, legally recognized, and consistently enforced boundary demarcation. Since its establishment in 1998, the reserve has experienced persistent spatial uncertainty due to conflicting ministerial decrees and incomplete boundary marking. The reduction of the reserve's official area from 102,500 hectares to 82,188 hectares through Ministerial Decree No. 6616/2021 has intensified legal ambiguity and weakened enforcement certainty. These unclear boundaries provide opportunities for illegal operators to claim that their activities fall outside protected zones, a claim that is difficult to refute in the absence of physical markers and comprehensive public information.

This spatial uncertainty is compounded by weak governance coordination. Law enforcement authority over the reserve is divided among multiple agencies operating across three administrative regions—Aceh Singkil, South Aceh, and Subulussalam—each with different priorities and limited capacity. Agencies such as BKSDA Aceh, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry's Law Enforcement Directorate, forestry police, and local police often operate in isolation, resulting in fragmented enforcement, overlapping mandates, and inefficient use of resources. These coordination failures allow offenders to exploit jurisdictional gaps and procedural inconsistencies, while harmonization between central regulations and local implementation remains difficult to achieve (Rohim, et al, 2022).

Another internal challenge arises from unresolved customary land claims. Several indigenous and local communities have occupied and managed land in the Rawa Singkil area long before its designation as a wildlife reserve. The lack of formal recognition of customary land rights creates a dual problem: traditional livelihood practices risk criminalization, while commercial actors misuse customary claims as a shield for illegal oil palm expansion. This situation places law enforcement agencies in a difficult position, as distinguishing legitimate customary use from organized commercial deforestation requires detailed investigation, cultural understanding, and legal clarity that exceed current institutional capacity.

Law enforcement practices also remain largely reactive. Monitoring has traditionally depended on field reports and complaints, resulting in delayed responses that allow rapid land conversion following forest clearing. Although satellite-based monitoring tools provided by organizations such as Global Forest Watch have identified extensive illegal palm oil development within the reserve, these technologies are not fully integrated into official enforcement systems (Ardiani, et al, 2024). As a result, there is a

persistent gap between detection and prosecution, reducing the deterrent effect of monitoring efforts.

A further internal constraint is the severe shortage of personnel and resources. BKSDA Aceh operates with only 14 officers responsible for managing more than 82,000 hectares of protected area, making effective surveillance and rapid response nearly impossible. Geographic isolation, difficult terrain, and logistical limitations further weaken patrol effectiveness. This imbalance between enforcement responsibilities and available capacity allows illegal activities to continue largely undetected until significant ecological damage has already occurred.

Legal and judicial weaknesses also undermine enforcement effectiveness. Although Indonesia's environmental laws, particularly Law Number 32 of 2024, provide a comprehensive framework of administrative, civil, and criminal sanctions, enforcement remains inconsistent and often lenient. Administrative sanctions dominate enforcement practice, while criminal prosecution is rare and generally targets low-level actors rather than corporate beneficiaries. Corruption within licensing and enforcement processes further erodes legal certainty, enabling illegally obtained permits to remain valid even after violations are proven. Court decisions frequently impose light sentences that fail to reflect the scale of environmental harm, thereby weakening deterrence and reinforcing a perception of impunity.

b. Corruption and Institutional Weakness

Corruption represents a central internal barrier that permeates the entire forestry governance system. It is most prevalent during licensing and permitting processes, where bribes facilitate illegal plantation development and wildlife exploitation within protected areas. Corruption also affects law enforcement officers, leading to inadequate investigations, weak evidence collection, and minimal sanctions. Although Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has successfully prosecuted numerous corruption cases, forestry-related cases remain relatively rare, despite the sector's high corruption risk (Jayantiari, et al, 2024).

Even when corruption cases are successfully prosecuted, enforcement outcomes remain limited. Financial recovery is prioritized over ecological restoration, and companies that benefit from corrupt licensing practices rarely face meaningful legal consequences. Illegally issued permits are seldom revoked, allowing corporate actors to continue operations despite proven violations. This situation reflects regulatory capture, where enforcement institutions fail to challenge powerful economic interests, undermining the rule of law and environmental justice (Sofyan, et al, 2020).

c. External Challenges of Law Enforcement

Beyond institutional weaknesses, law enforcement in Rawa Singkil is constrained by broader external factors that operate at economic and political levels. One of the most significant external challenges is the complexity of palm oil supply chain traceability.

Palm oil harvested from illegally cleared land is commonly laundered through networks of smallholders, brokers, and intermediary mills, obscuring its origin. Transactions at the smallholder level are largely informal and undocumented, making it extremely difficult to link palm oil products to deforestation inside the reserve.

As a result, illegally produced palm oil enters legal domestic and international markets, supplying multinational corporations and global brands. Despite corporate commitments to sustainability, traceability to plantation remains incomplete, particularly for independent smallholders. The absence of comprehensive traceability systems enables illegal production to persist with minimal risk of detection or accountability (Lubis, 2024).

Political and economic pressures further weaken enforcement efforts. Local economies in Aceh Singkil and surrounding regions are heavily dependent on palm oil cultivation, creating strong incentives for officials to prioritize economic growth over conservation. Political leaders may hesitate to support strict enforcement measures that could reduce employment or tax revenue, while influential companies exert pressure to resist regulatory reforms. This dynamic leads to selective enforcement, where smallholders and local communities are disproportionately targeted, while large-scale operators often avoid prosecution.

Inadequate remuneration for enforcement personnel and weak administrative sanctions also increase vulnerability to corruption. Combined with high global demand for palm oil and limited enforcement capacity, these conditions create a governance environment that tolerates ongoing deforestation. Consequently, law enforcement against deforestation in the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve remains constrained not only by institutional shortcomings but also by entrenched economic interests and political trade-offs that prioritize short-term gains over long-term ecological sustainability (Mursyid, et al, 2021).

D. Conclusion

Legal protection of the Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve is formally supported by a comprehensive national and international legal framework that provides administrative, civil, and criminal sanctions and assigns authority to multiple institutions; however, its implementation remains weak and inconsistent. Although Indonesia's conservation, forestry, and environmental laws—reinforced by international commitments such as the CBD, Ramsar Convention, and CITES—establish a strong normative basis for protecting Rawa Singkil as a vital wetland and biodiversity area, enforcement on the ground is constrained by serious internal and external obstacles. Internally, unclear spatial boundaries, weak inter-agency coordination, limited human and technological resources, and fragmented authority significantly reduce monitoring and deterrence capacity. Externally, corruption, poor permit governance, opaque palm oil supply chains, and political-economic dependence on plantation activities undermine firm law enforcement.

The increasing reliance on administrative sanctions has further weakened accountability, allowing corporate actors to evade meaningful punishment and leaving ecological restoration inadequately addressed, thereby preventing the legal framework from achieving effective and sustainable conservation outcomes.

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