

The Troubles with Gold Mining

By Brendan Casey

Regions

Freeport's Grasberg mine in Indonesia's province of Papua is one of the world's richest mining operations for copper and gold.

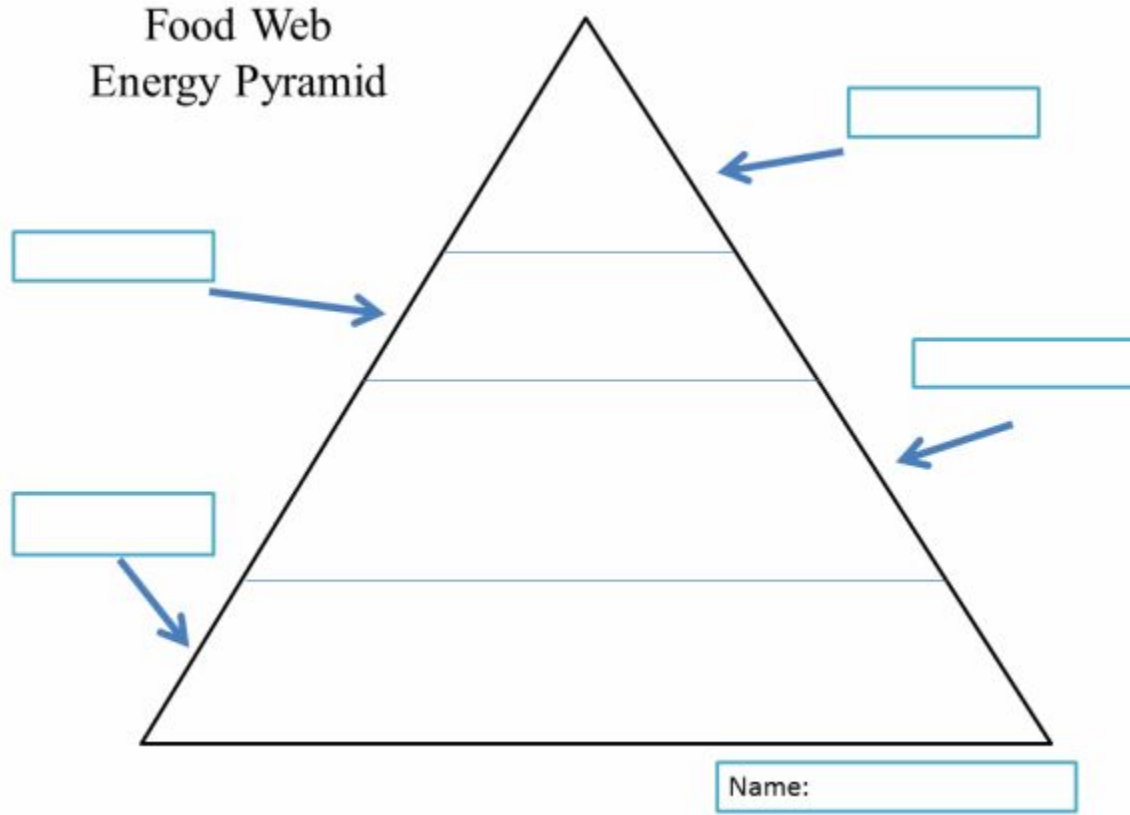
But while the site has generated colossal profits for its parent company and the Indonesian government, the mine's history is marred by ongoing controversy.

Biome

Tropical rainforest - The **tropical rainforest** is a hot, moist biome found near Earth's equator. The world's largest **tropical rainforests** are in South America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. **Tropical rainforests** receive from 60 to 160 inches of precipitation that is fairly evenly distributed throughout the year. (COTF.EDU, 2014)

www.cotf.edu/ete/modules/msese/earthsysflr/rforest.html

Healthy Trophic Pyramid and Food Web

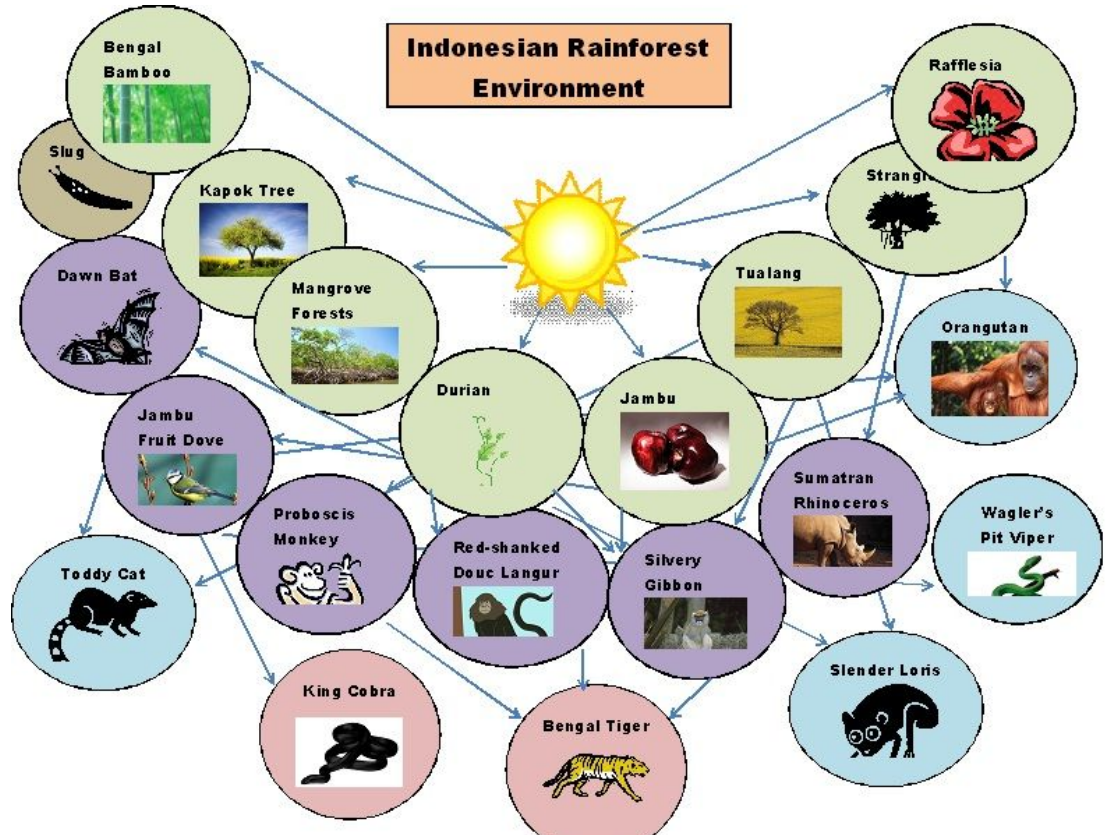


Food Web Vulnerabilities

The keystone species are

The species most in danger

is...



Disruptions to the Environment

Freeport's legacy in Papua Province

Environmental impacts on community health and livelihoods have been a persistent problem in the area of the Freeport mine, and as such have been widely documented in the national and international media:

- **Deforestation and pollution**
- Tailings are dumped directly into the Agabagong River, which discharges into the Aikwa River and then into the Arafura Sea, south of New Guinea. Deposition of mine tailings directly into the Aikwa River caused a flood in 1991, which destroyed a large area of lowland forest and continues to threaten the town of Timika.
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- **Flooding**
- Dumping of mine waste into Lake Wanagong has resulted in 2 floods, the most recent causing the death of company workers, and there are ongoing concerns about the long-term viability of settlements below the lake.
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- **Acid rock drainage**
- There have been claims of acid rock drainage (ARD) impacts which threaten to contaminate local water supplies in watersheds adjacent to Freeport operations. Reportedly, there has been an increase in levels of copper in the marine fauna.

Disruptions to Communities

Dissent and bloodshed over the mining spoils

While the lion's share of profits are being pumped to Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, and across the Pacific to the US, people living in the area surrounding the mine are seeing very few benefits trickle down their way.

In addition, there have been a considerable number of incidents involving conflict with local communities. Few locals are being hired to work in the mine while work opportunities are being granted to outsiders, which causes much local resentment.

Taking matters in their own hands, some locals have resorted to demonstrations to express their resentment, leading to clashes with authorities and demonstrations that persist in 2006.

Some of these incidents include:

- The extrajudicial killing of as many as 200 people between 1975 and 1997, in and around the Freeport area, almost all of them unarmed civilians.
- Disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture.
- Intimidation, harassment, rape and other forms of sexual abuse.
- Loss of land and livelihood without negotiation and without adequate compensation.
- Forced resettlement.
- Destruction of ritually or culturally significant sites without consultation or compensation.

The case of Freeport spans more than 3 decades and involves a broad range of stakeholders. As one of the world's largest

Bibliography

Ballard C. 2001. **Human Rights and the Mining Sector in Indonesia: A Baseline Study**. IIED. Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development, No 182. 53 pp.

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