YOSIA GINTING. 2010. Interaction of local community in Gunung Leuser National Park: A case study toward Tangkahan Ecotourism Area, North Sumatera. Under the supervision of ARYA HADI DHARMAWAN and SOEHARTINI SEKARTJAKRARINI

The background of this research is the existence of the national park that had brought about a limitation on the local community access to exploit any natural resources to meet the community’s life needs. There was a conflict between the conservation interest and the local community’s interest. To solve this problem, there are some option available to be chosen. One of these options is ecotourism that ensures continuing profits for the local community as well as preserving the environment. The goals of the research are 1) to identify any interactions done by the local community who lives in Tangkahan, 2) to find out the influence of the interactions to the tourism object, 3) to identify any kinds of income earning activities that could be gained by local community, and 4) to identify any conservation acts that had been done by the local community to preserve the environment. This thesis has been developed by using data gained in a framework that was conducted in the ecotourism area of Tangkahan. The area is located just in the edge of Gunung Leuser National Park. A series of fieldwork activities was conducted in Namo Sialang village which was then be focused on its three sub-village, they are: Kuala Buluh, Kuala Unggas, and Rimo Kayu. The data collection was done from December 2009 to January 2010. In this research, the researcher used descriptive qualitative method in the form of a case study. Based on the results of the study, the study conclude that there are two kinds of interactions done by the local community in Gunung Leuser National Park that namely ecotourism activities and non ecotourism activities. This research limits itself on the study of conservation activities merely. Hence, it is said that ecotourism activities which were conducted already worked well in the effort to preserve the environment, but they did not work quite well since they had not given any great impacts yet to the raising of the standard living of the community. From the analysis of local community income from the ecotourism activities, we may also found that the ecotourism activities had contributed around 18,98 percent to the average income of the household of the local community living in Kuala Buluh, while in Kuala Unggas around 6,04 percent. This means that ecologically, the role of the ecotourism had not given enough contribution to the welfare of the local community residents. Thus, it could be mentioned that the ecotourism economy had not been able to be one of the alternative ways to conserve the forest resources in Gunung Leuser National Park (Tangkahan Ecotourism Area).

Keywords: local community, national park, ecotourism