Two NFA top officials fired over clearing forest reserve

By Gerald Tenywa

Two officials of the National Forestry Authority (NFA) in western Uganda have been suspended over conversion of part of Kalinzu forest reserve into a eucalyptus plantation.

NFA's spokesperson Julie Mubi yesterday named the suspended officers as Judith Ahebwa, who has been acting range manager for western Uganda, and Lucky Agaba, a supervisor for Kiyanga sector in Kalinzu.

Bruno Okwili, who has been working under plantations, has replaced Ahebwa as acting range manager. The range manager was fired at the beginning of this year.

The 14,000-hectare Kalinzu forest is home to about 250 chimpanzees which are described as endangered species. It is also a migratory corridor for elephants moving within the Democratic Republic of Congo, Maramagambo within Queen Elizabeth National Park and Kashoha-Kitomi forest reserve.

According to Levi Etodu, the director of natural forests at NFA, some of the people who were given permits to plant trees in Kalinzu have expanded planting of eucalyptus into areas they were not authorised to plant. This has resulted in conversion of part of the natural forest into plantation of eucalyptus.

The cleared forest was home to 250 chimpanzees which are described as an endangered species.

Etodu said the malpractice, which has been going on for some time, remained unreported until recently when massive clearing was observed at Kiyanga, where Agaba has been the supervisor.

Investigations carried out by the Environment Protection Police Force attached to the NFA confirmed that parts of the natural forest were cut down in favour of eucalyptus trees.

New Vision recently encountered large parts of the natural forest cleared at Nswazi planted with eucalyptus.

There were also expansive swathes of the forest being cleared by local residents who retreated to their villages when they noticed the team from *New Vision*.

At Kiyanga sector facing the ridges of Bunyaruguru is a place known as Kisunju, where expansive clearances of the parts of Kalinzu forest reserve have been registered in the past few months.

Scanned with CamScanner