Until the coming of palm oil cultivation in the early 1990s, Buayan River, a tributary of Kapuas of West Kalimantan, served as the main transportation path to connect the town market of Meliau and the bigger world with hamlets in the hinterlands of Buayan area. All of this function decreased to a very low level with the building of plantation axis road to carry palm oil harvest from fields to processing plant located on the south bank of Kapuas. In no time villagers seized the road as their new path of transportation and river was left for bathing, fun fishing and trash bin. Shift of transportation path from river to road facilitates fast social change in the hinterlands as transfer of goods and people moves quicker than ever. People keep telling their wonder how Meliau market is now only a half day trip back and forth on motorbike, while in the not so distant past they had to spent at least three days to get something from the town. During peak of dry season the trip became much slower as river dried up and canoe had to be dragged up stream. Following Schumpeter (1942) decline of river transportation may be seen as creative destruction, “the essential fact about capitalism” of replacement an older production activity with a new and more productive one. If it is the case, who then bear the cost of the replacement who reap the benefit, is the change lead to a rural based capitalism and whether reduction of transportation pressure on the river lead to the Buayan River ecological well being?

Pujo Semedi
(Gadjah Mada University):

"Buayan River: Decline of water transportation system and emergence of rural trucking business in West Kalimantan"