

Using Local Knowledge to Better Support Mangrove Ecosystem Management: Experiences from the Ranong Biosphere Reserve, Southern Thailand

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There has been growing recognition by the international and scientific communities regarding the value and role of traditional knowledge to support coastal resources management. Until recently, insufficient attention has been given to this source of knowledge, also termed traditional wisdom, despite its acknowledged potential contribution to mangrove ecosystem management. Traditional knowledge is a valuable, but under utilized, tool for the restoration or rehabilitation of mangrove habitats, and for sustainable management of coastal resources to support local livelihoods. This paper discusses the role of traditional knowledge for mangrove ecosystem management and how the gaps between scientific and traditional local knowledge can be bridged. It further investigates innovative ways in which coastal communities can gain access to, and make use of, scientific data. The case study presented in this paper demonstrates that with participatory approaches, and by interpreting community knowledge in terms of scientific hypotheses, scientific and local knowledge can be used in a complementary manner to promote more effective long-term sustainable use of mangrove ecosystems. The paper concludes by recommending that scientists should play a more active role as a link between communities and policy-makers for successful mangrove management.

