

PEMSEA News

Let a Thousand Mangroves Bloom

Kampong Preah, Cambodia – Near the Kampong-Preah Sihanouk Province border in Cambodia is a quiet fishing area of Kampong Smach. Kampong Smach is one of the longest river systems in Preah Sihanouk Coastal Province, and was once "famous" for a major French Development project in the 1990s. Saltwater intrusion rendered rice paddies almost uncultivable but polders were soon rehabilitated which enabled families to again cultivate around 10,000 ha of rice paddies.

Today, the Kampong Smach estuary area is a rich fishing ground of about 1,500 ha of mangroves and mudflats - a main fishing ground for about 6,300 families living in the surrounding area. An early morning boat tour around the estuary provides a glimpse of how important it is to the locals. Several families are involved in mussel culture, gathering eels, and hook and line fishing. During rainy season, the mudflats turn into rice paddies. Scenic, yes, but when you arrive at a guardhouse in the middle of the estuary, which one begins to question if the site is as tranquil as it looks.

"With tourism expansion and problems on land titling in Cambodia, we are worried that the rich fishing ground will fall prey to businessmen, and families living in the area will no longer benefit from this", says an official of the Fishery Administration. Several businessmen have been spotted "inspecting" the site as a potential tourist and "business" spot. Although the number of tourists in Preah Sihanouk Province has gone down due to the global recession, nature-based tourism continues to thrive. It is estimated that the province captures 87 percent of the coastal tourists.

A solution being considered is the immediate declaration of the site as a protected area. As a protected area, the entire site would be considered public property, which will possibly discourage land grabbing and encroachment and allow the regeneration of resources.

An important management component is community organizing to allow the interaction and collaboration of various stakeholders in the process of resource management and protection, thereby establishing a vigilant block of local stakeholders that could potentially "balance" the interests of rich and powerful businessmen.

"We need to inform the communities of their role in protecting the mangrove, and we need to emphasize how we can continue benefiting from these resources," says Mr. Sin Sotharath Deputy Director of the Fisheries Administration Office. With this in mind, the Provincial Government led by the Fishery Administration is putting up a comprehensive plan to manage the site. The first step to conduct a resources and ecological assessment is to determine the status of resources and the utilization patterns. This will provide the Fisheries Administration and the communities with the necessary information to determine appropriate management responses. By combining both scientific and social analysis, the communities and the Provincial Government would be able to effectively define the boundaries of the core, buffer and multi-purpose zones for the protected area.

"We need all the technical support we can get," continues Mr. Sotharath. While we have undergone several trainings in the past, we still need to improve our skills, especially in mangrove rehabilitation.

Fortunately, recent national laws and policies provide support to such local initiatives. The passage of the 2007 Fishery Law in Cambodia delegated the management and protection of fishery resources including mangroves to Fishery Administration. Meanwhile, in May this year, Prime Minister Hun Sen also declared a ban on sand exports in response to the outcry of villagers near estuaries, rivers and coastal areas.

The Kampong Smach estuary project is an initiative being undertaken in Sihanoukville, within the framework of ICM and the Sihanoukville Coastal Strategy.

An Alliance that Endeavors to Save Macajalar Bay

Northern Mindanao, Philippines – Macajalar Bay is an important fishing ground and major industrial center in Northern Mindanao in the Philippines. Twelve coastal municipalities and two cities surrounding the Macajalar Bay recently forged an Alliance - the Macajalar Bay Development Alliance (MBDA) – in which parties agree to collaborate and pool their resources to ensure the sustainable development of the Bay. The Alliance establishes and sets in motion a Bay-wide ICM program.

The MBDA actively promotes networking activities involving key stakeholders, including the private sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), civil society and people's organizations (POs), academe and youth, in order to encourage multisectoral and multi-agency cooperation in managing the Bay. Xavier University-McKeough Marine Center (XU-MMC), PEMSEA's ICM Learning Center in Mindanao, plays a crucial role as it provides the necessary scientific and technical support to the Alliance. A number of research activities that are being undertaken by XU-MMC in collaboration with a number of partners, including the resource and ecological assessment of the Bay, community-based coral reef rehabilitation, sea turtle conservation, giant clam stock enhancement, watershed management, seaweed farming for livelihood development and an indicator-based study on climate change, are directly benefiting the Bay and the Alliance.

Serving as the interim Project Management Office of the Alliance, XU-MMC requested PEMSEA's assistance in the conduct of bay-wide ICM planning, in order to develop a roadmap for the management of the Bay. The planning workshop was conducted on 20-22 May 2009 with the participation of the members of the MBDA-Technical Working Group, the private sector, NGOs, civil society and POs, youth and observers from the academe and NGOs. An initial assessment on the status of Macajalar Bay was prepared, providing the necessary information for identifying and confirming priority issues and concerns of the stakeholders. It was also agreed that the existing Coastal Resources Management Plans of the various municipalities will be consolidated into the bay-wide plan. This will not only address transboundary concerns but also facilitate the delineation and agreement among the municipalities of their respective municipal boundaries.

Work is ongoing to develop a detailed action plan for the Bay.

Vietnam Celebrates World's Oceans and Environment in Week-long Activity

Vietnam joined the rest of the world in celebrating the World Environment Day and the World Oceans Day from 1-8 June. The Vietnam Administration for the Seas and Islands (VASI) under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) spearheaded the week-long celebration.

The week-long celebration started with a seminar on the "Oceans, Climate Change and Ecological Security", which was participated by managers and scientists from VASI. The results of the World Ocean Conference in Manado were presented, including the Manado Ocean Declaration. VASI also organized a series of activities designed to build greater awareness and appreciation of the important role of the seas and islands, including a photo and art contest, essay writing and a musical show.

The celebration gravitated on the theme of the 2009 World Oceans Day, "Our Oceans, Our Responsibility".

The Philippines Celebrates Earth Day 2009

Manila, Philippines – The Philippines' Earth Day 2009 celebration carried the theme "Tubig at Lupa Buhayin, Hangin Linisin, Batas Tuparin" (Revive Water and Land, Clean the Air, Enforce Laws).

The event kicked off with a welcome message by former Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary and current Chair of the Earth Day Network Philippines, Elisea G. Gozun. United States Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie Kenney, in her opening remarks, encouraged everyone to help protect Mother Earth. DENR Secretary Jose Atienza delivered the State of Philippine Environment address with a focus on actions to rehabilitate the Manila Bay.

Performances from a rondalla group, a dance group and storytelling sessions by local TV personalities entertained the audience composed mostly of school children. The song "Let's Sing What is the Ozone Layer" also made its debut in the Filipino language, with mascot Ozzy Ozone leading the dance.

PEMSEA participated in the celebration by leading an origami session during the fair and displaying a climate change-themed exhibit.

Professor Koh to Address East Asian Seas Congress

Quezon City, Philippines – Professor Tommy Koh, Singapore's Ambassador-At-Large, joins the roster of speakers who will keynote the East Asian Seas Congress 2009. Prof. Koh will share experiences on negotiating and resolving disputes between and among diverse cultures and regions with a focus on Ocean and Coastal Governance.

Throughout his professional career, Prof. Koh has promoted international environmental cooperation while serving as president of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea and as chair of the Main Committee of the UN Conference on Environment and Development where he presided over the negotiations on Agenda 21. He has also done significant work in the protection of the environment and sustainable development having been recognized as one of seven Champions of the Earth by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

"The organizers of the EAS Congress 2009 are truly grateful and honored with the addition of Prof. Koh as a keynote speaker. He will bring inspiration and a wealth of experience to all participants," notes PEMSEA Executive Director and Head of the EAS Congress Secretariat Raphael P. M. Lotilla.

Hosted by the Government of the Philippines, the EAS Congress 2009 is organized by PEMSEA and DENR and supported by the Global Environment Facility, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Office for Project Services and the Coastal Management Center. It will be held on 23 – 27 November 2009 at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), Manila.

Learn more about the East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress at www.pemsea.org/eascongress. For information about the workshop, exhibition or sponsorships, contact the Secretariat at congress@pemsea.org.

Regional Photo Contest Winners Announced - Philippines and Malaysia Take Top Honors

Quezon City, Philippines – The East Asian Seas Congress organizers today announced the winners of the EAS Congress 2009 Regional Photo Contest, which was organized by PEMSEA and co-sponsored by HP Philippines. Running from July 2008 to February 2009, the contest received more than 500 photographs submitted by 187 photographers from 12 countries in the East Asian region, namely Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Lao, Malaysia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

The three grand prizewinners are: Youth Category - Mr. Rogie Eloise Abala (Philippines) for his photograph "Seaweed Planting," an interesting photo depicting seaweed farming as an alternative livelihood to fisher folks and their families; Hobbyist Category - Mr. Ee Cheng Lee (Malaysia) for his untitled photo that captured amazing details of a clean, serene river while a woman collects floating soda cans and Professional Category - Mr. Tan Ee Long (Malaysia), for his rendition showing interdependence between man and nature entitled "People and Birds Living Together in Peace".

The grand prizewinners win an expense-paid trip to attend the East Asian Seas Congress 2009 including airfare, allowance, accommodations, and conference materials. HP printers will also be awarded to the 3 winners.

The entries underwent two rounds of evaluation and were assessed based on relevance to the theme (35%); composition and creativity (35%); and clarity and technical quality (30%). The preliminary evaluation was conducted by each country's PEMSEA National Focal Point. Photos were narrowed down to the best entries to represent each country in the final evaluation. Thirty-three final entries then moved to the concluding evaluation carried out by a panel of judges comprised of respected environment photography experts and enthusiasts, namely Mr. Jose Ma. Lorenzo Tan of World Wildlife Fund (WWF-Philippines), Dr. Gil Jacinto of University of the Philippines - Marine Science Institute and Dr. Cora Claudio of EARTH Institute. Co-sponsor HP Philippines also participated in the judging, represented by its General Manager, Ms. Jenny Sotto-Siquioco.

"The array of photographs we received captured the actions and initiatives in sustainable coastal and ocean protection, development and management in the region," said PEMSEA Executive Director Raphael P. M. Lotilla. "We are happy with the response to the contest from such a diverse group of photographers, cultures and experiences. We are looking forward to showcasing the winning entries in the SEAnergies exhibit of the EAS Congress."

Special awards are also given to entries that received the largest number of votes via online voting conducted in April. The Online Favorites are: Youth - Child/Odion 01 (Philippines); Hobbyist - Dried Fish at the Shore (Philippines) and Professional - Bakawan/Mangrove (Philippines).

Total (Philippines) becomes EAS Congress Sponsor

Quezon City, Philippines – Total (Philippines) Corporation has become one of the sponsors of the East Asian Seas Congress 2009 to be held 23-27 November, Philippine International Convention Center, Manila, Philippines.

Ms. Anna Whitehouse, President and Managing Director of Total (Philippines) and Prof. Raphael P.M. Lotilla, Executive Director of the PEMSEA Resource Facility signed the Letter of Agreement on 11 June at the Total Corporate Center.

Total will also be participating in the conference workshops and other activities of the Congress.

Having Total Philippines as one of the sponsors of the EAS Congress 2009 serves as an affirmation of Total's desire to contribute to the sustainable development of marine and coastal resources.

NOWPAP Updates (June 2009)

Dr. Young-Woo Park, Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), visited the NOWPAP RCU Busan office on 9 June 2009; and NOWPAP Marine Environmental Emergency Preparedness and Response Regional Activity Centre (MERRAC) approved the workplan and budget for the 2010-2011 biennium.

UNEP ROAP Director Visit to NOWPAP RCU

Dr. Young-Woo Park, Director of UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), visited NOWPAP Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU) Busan office on 9 June. Dr. Park attended the 3rd International Conference on Children's Health and the Environment, held in Busan, RO Korea, on 7-10 June, where he delivered an opening statement and chaired one of the sessions. During his short visit to the Busan office, Dr. Park shared his ideas related to NOWPAP implementation, e.g., using information technologies and geographic information systems (GIS) for internet training, as well as information on research being done in RO Korea on using algae for carbon sequestration and also for biomass production. Dr. Park also stressed the importance of coordination with government agencies to get any relevant information that might help in implementing NOWPAP activities. NOWPAP RCU staff members briefed Dr. Park on recent projects implemented by NOWPAP Regional Activity Centers and the RCU.

Conference participants congratulated UNEP on its work related to mercury (including GC 25 decisions). Partnership between WHO and UNEP on environment and health linkage was also highly appreciated.

NOWPAP MERRAC Update

At its 12th Focal Points Meeting (FPM) and the 4th Competent National Authorities (CNA) Meeting for NOWPAP Regional Oil and HNS Spill Contingency Plan held in Daejeon, RO Korea on 1-3 June, the NOWPAP Marine Environmental Emergency Preparedness and Response Regional Activity Centre (MERRAC) approved the workplan and budget for the 2010-2011 biennium. In conjunction with the FPM and CNA Meeting, an International Workshop on the Response to Marine Pollution in the NOWPAP region was also held on 5 June in Incheon, where representatives from the NOWPAP member states shared information and practices on oil spill preparedness and response.

As the region has high risk of oil spill incidents demonstrated by the real disaster of Hebei Spirit in December 2007, NOWPAP member countries pay great attention to regional cooperation on the issue and aim to be better prepared. In 2008, the Second NOWPAP Oil Spill Exercise was held in Qingdao, PR China. In 2009, two NOWPAP BRAVO exercises were conducted to check the communication efficiency among member countries in response to oil spill under the NOWPAP Regional Oil and Hazardous and Noxious Substances Contingency Plan (RCP). In addition, MERRAC has shared its experiences recently with the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) in order to assist them in getting their oil spill contingency plan adopted.

NOWPAP Recent Developments (May 2009)

NOWPAP Data and Information Network Regional Activity Centre (DINRAC) has recently completed its 8th Focal Points Meeting in Beijing, where the workplan and budget for 2010-2011 that is to be submitted to the NOWPAP 14th IGM was approved; NOWPAP representatives attended the World Ocean Conference in Manado, Indonesia on 11-15 May 2009 and the Global Gathering 2009 in Busan, Korea on 23 May 2009; NOWPAP has developed a cooperative relationship with the Korea UNEP National Committee, initially starting with information exchange, website linkage and publication-sharing; and NOWPAP announces new programme officers at the RCU offices.

Eighth DINRAC Focal Points Meeting Convened

NOWPAP Data and Information Network Regional Activity Centre (DINRAC) has recently completed its 8th Focal Points Meeting in Beijing. During the three-day meeting on 19-21 May 2009, DINRAC Focal Points approved the workplan and budget for 2010-2011 that is to be submitted to NOWPAP 14th IGM at the end of this year for adoption. DINRAC will form a working group to develop an activity on alien species, visualize the current DINRAC website using the web-based GIS and maintain its internet communication system among member states. In addition to DINRAC Focal Points and national experts, Directors of each NOWPAP RAC and representatives of NOWPAP RCU also attended the meeting where they had sideline interviews with a consultant for NOWPAP RCU performance review.

NOWPAP Representatives Attended the World Ocean Conference

NOWPAP representatives attended the World Ocean Conference. The NOWPAP representatives attended the World Ocean Conference in Manado, Indonesia on 11-15 May 2009. The Conference was aimed at creating a forum for the world community to discuss current marine and ocean issues which are related to climate change. The Manado Declaration was adopted at the conference by the participating governments and the outcomes from the conference will be brought to the current climate change negotiation process at the UN Climate Change Conference in December 2009 in Copenhagen. The Coral Triangle Summit was also held at the same time. In addition, there were also parallel International Science, Technology and Policy Symposium, Exhibition and UNEP workshops which the NOWPAP representatives also attended and distributed NOWPAP publications and promotional items.

NOWPAP Participation in the Global Gathering 2009 in Busan, Korea

NOWPAP participation in the Global Gathering 2009 in Busan, Korea NOWPAP participated in the Global Gathering 2009 in Busan, Korea on 23 May 2009. A NOWPAP exhibition booth was set up at the event which was designed by Busan municipal government as a cultural exchange event to promote international cooperation.

This is the second time that NOWPAP has participated in this annual event since 2008.

Cooperation with Korea UNEP National Committee Developed

Starting from information exchange, linking websites and sharing publications, NOWPAP has developed cooperative relationship with the Korea UNEP National Committee. After attending and delivering a lecture at a workshop organized by the Committee last year on the oil spill in Taean, Korea, NOWPAP representative will participate in another event sponsored by the Committee: international video conference on Global Green New Deal in Seoul on 5 June 2009.

New Programme Officers at the NOWPAP RCU

Recruited by UNEP as NOWPAP Administrative Officer and Scientific Affairs Officer, Mr. Masakatsu OHYAMA and Mr. Sangjin LEE have recently reported respectively to NOWPAP RCU offices in Toyama (Japan) and Busan (Republic of Korea).

Mr. Ohyama, a Japanese national, had been working at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs for more than 10 years, being in charge of financial and programme management before joining NOWPAP. He also worked at an investment institution for four years, dealing with corporate finance and investments. His rich experience with the UN system and financial affairs will benefit NOWPAP administration and finance management.

Dr. Lee, a Korean national, had been a branch director and research centre manager in the Korean Coast Guard, responsible for oil spill preparedness and marine pollution related project management since 2004. He was also involved in university research projects on toxic waste management. His academic achievements and project management skills will contribute to successful implementation of NOWPAP activities.

With the arrival of the two new staff members, NOWPAP RCU will continue to provide its assistance to the member states and Regional Activity Centers.