



# Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme

**MEDIA RELEASE**

## **National Wildlife Conservation Day celebrated in Attapeu Province**

*Attapeu, Lao PDR, 12 July 2005*

The Mekong Wetland Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP), in collaboration with the Attapeu Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO), will host a National Wildlife Conservation Day celebration ceremony in Xaysettha district on 13 July 2005.

The celebration of National Wildlife Conservation Day signifies that wildlife conservation is a main issue of concern for the Government of Laos, as well as the people of Attapeu province.

13 000 fish will be released into the wild to raise awareness about wildlife and aquatics conservation and their sustainable use, and to increase food stock in the natural environment. MWBP will also conduct this event in another two target districts, "We plan to have a fish conservation zone in every village along the river basin in order to keep the indigenous fish for sustaining our livelihood and balancing the eco-system" said Mr Watsady Khoumphetsavong, Xaysettha District Governor. "Conservation is a priority of our district, we are still rich in natural resources and we want our people to use these resources wisely to ensure sustainable use while generating income."

A quiz on the importance of wetlands and related topics will take place during the ceremony in order to provide wider information and knowledge for the audience, and to create a fun and friendly atmosphere among the programme team, district and provincial partners and the local communities. Programme promotional materials will be distributed as prizes for the winners.

The main event will be followed by a friendship soccer match between the programme, PAFO, and district staff to build up team work, which is essential for further coordination and cooperation.

It is only celebrated once a year but National Wildlife Conservation Day is a very important event to reflect all the conservation work conducted throughout the year. MWBP and its partners are actively implementing the work of conserving the Mekong flagship species such as: Irrawaddy Dolphin, Siamese Crocodile, Giant Catfish and Sarus Crane, at the provincial level, the programme works closely with its provincial and district partners to collaborate and monitor conservation and livelihood interventions.

"Our government has declared the National Wildlife Conservation Day on 13 July every year to improve the awareness of the uses of the natural resources in a sustainable way, at the same time it aims to decrease the dependences on nature among the local communities by providing alternative livelihood options" Mr Soukchay Silapha, Director of Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office, states of the importance of the event.

The Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP) is a joint programme of the four riparian governments of the Lower Mekong Basin (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam), managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), IUCN-The World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Mekong River Commission (MRC), with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNDP, The Royal Netherlands Government, MRCS, the Water and Nature Initiative (WANI). The celebration of Wildlife Conservation Day is a collaboration with the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office, MWBP and Government of Xaysettha District.

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