



Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme

MEDIA RELEASE

3 April 2006

Community knowledge to be used for environmental education in local curriculum

Since 1999, there has been a push in Thai education development policy to see local communities become involved more in determining their education curriculum, 'local curriculum'**. This research into education and the community is aimed at helping local communities have greater opportunities to understand their overall economic, social and political situation.

In response to this greater involvement of local communities, the Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP)* is organising a workshop titled "Introducing Community knowledge (Tai Baan Research) into the local curriculum" at the Sri Kodtraboon meeting room, Mae Nam Khong Grand View hotel on Tuesday, 4 April 2006.

The purpose of the meeting is to look at the water quality tests conducted by schools in the Songkhram River Basin area and determine ways to develop the local curriculum using the community knowledge and the environmental education activities in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in the Mekong-Songkhram river basin. This will hopefully be a way to disseminate knowledge from community research and build awareness amongst communities and the younger generation about the value and importance of wetlands in the Songkhram River Basin.

"A main goal of these meetings is to bring learning experiences from practice (local knowledge) and then use this knowledge to develop a curriculum for enlarging the learning process in schools to include local biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources" Mr. Tawatchai Rattanasorn, National Project Coordinator, MWBP, Thailand.

Tai Baan Research*** is the communities' own research that focuses on community knowledge about ecosystems, utilisation of resources, community history and culture, and economics and livelihoods in the Lower Songkhram River Basin. The research has been undertaken and published by the Tai Baan researcher group from Baan Tar Bor, Baan Pak Yam, Baan Auan and Baan Yang Ngoi, Songkhram district, Nakhon Phanom Province. The research has run from August 2003 to March 2005 and the knowledge from Tai Baan research is helping to create a database about resources and local knowledge that the people have inherited from their ancestor and in the past has never been officially documented.

Mr. Rattapon Pitaktepsombat, Project co-manager-Lower Songkhram river basin demonstration site, who has worked in the area for more than two years said, "I would like to see local participation in the development of local curriculum as well as environmental education activities based on the community knowledge about natural resources and environmental management in Songkhram River Basin. Building strong networks for the conservation and wise use of resources is very important in helping to disseminate local knowledge. These processes will help make the younger generations and communities more aware of the value and importance of wetlands and the need for conservation and wise use. Although today Songkhram River Basin remains an unknown river to many, I believe that if these processes continue the achievements will push the public to become more interested in the value of natural resource management.

This meeting will run parallel with another meeting also at the Mae Nam Khong Grand View Hotel on the 4-5 April 2006. For this parallel meeting there will be presentations by students from 9 schools that have been doing tests to monitor water quality in Songkhram River over the past year. There will be many activities

A JOINT UNDP - IUCN - MRC GEF-FUNDED PROGRAMME



CAMBODIA



LAO PDR



THAILAND



VIETNAM





such as a science project competition about testing water quality and exhibitions about the activities in natural resource and environmental conservation occurring currently in the Songkhram River Basin.

For further information please contact:

Ms. Panjit Tansom
National Communication and Training Coordinator
Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP)
Tel: +662 298 5837 ext.14
Mobile: +669 669 3368
Fax: +662 298 5839
Email: panjit.mwbp@iucnt.org
Website: www.mekongwetlands.org

*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), the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Mekong River Commission (MRC), in collaboration with other key stakeholders. With funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNDP, the Royal Netherlands Government, MRCS, the Water and Nature Initiative (WANI) and other donors, the programme addresses the most critical issues for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Mekong wetlands. MWBP aims to strengthen the capacity of organisations and people to develop sustainable livelihoods and manage wetland biodiversity resources wisely. It is a five-year (2004-2009) intervention at three levels – regional, national and local – with demonstration wetland areas in each of the four countries: in the Songkhram river basin, Thailand; in Attapeu province in southern Lao PDR; in Stung Treng, Cambodia; and in the Plain of Reeds in the Mekong Delta, Viet Nam. For Thailand, the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP) is the host government agency.

**‘Local curriculum’ involves a curriculum that students and teachers build together with a focus on local experiences and resources database in areas that will help the learning process of understanding local knowledge which can applied for effective daily life.

***‘Tai Baan Research’, or Villager Research, involves collecting information from villagers’ knowledge and experience about their environmental, social, economic and community culture. Villagers work on collecting information and data analysis with outside research assistants who help take photographs and compile the information into a database which will be useful and meaningful for the future.

###