



Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme

MEDIA RELEASE

A National Workshop on Wetlands and Management of Fires in Wetlands to be held in Viet Nam

Ha Noi, Viet Nam, 27 September 2005

A national workshop on Wetlands and Management of Fires in Wetlands will take place in Ho Chi Minh City from 28 to 29 September 2005. The meeting, organised by the Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP) will bring together policy makers, wetland managers and practitioners, and scientists to discuss three major themes:

- Legal and policy issues
- Ecology and research on fire
- Fire management

The workshop is co-funded by MWBP and the UNDP Project VIE/01/014 – Capacity Building for Disaster Mitigation. Technical support is being provided by the Viet Nam country office of The World Conservation Union (IUCN).

Participants of the workshop include national and provincial policy and decision-makers relevant to issues of wetlands management; scientists from universities and research institutions with interest in wetlands; wetland managers and practitioners from the provinces of Dong Thap, An Giang, Kien Giang, and Ca Mau of the Mekong Delta; and international experts from United State Forest Service (USFS), and INGO such as SNV and International Crane Foundation (ICF).

To demonstrate a process of problem solving for wetland management, MWBP is engaged in assisting wetland managers to address a wide range of conservation and livelihoods issues relating to wetland management. Among the issues are the management of fire and water of the wetlands of Tram Chim National Park.

Mr Huynh The Phien, Director of Tram Chim National Park said, "In compliance with the regulations of the government, we are under pressure to keep the park free of fires. While there are no other effective measures to control fires, we have so far taken the approach of constructing canals and keeping high water levels all year round to control fire risk. However, we are afraid that in the long run, this practice would affect the ecosystems of the park".

Wetlands of the Mekong Delta sometimes contain forest patches (mainly *Melaleuca*) that are subject to human-induced uncontrolled fires. Although fire is important in maintaining habitats, excessive fire can cause temporary damage to wetlands. Forest fire, non-discriminating fire in upland forest or fire in forest within wetlands is of major public concern in Viet Nam and thus a major concern of managers of forest areas and wetland areas.

The program, thus, is assisting the management of Tram Chim National Park to conduct a 1.5 year research program to test the hypotheses that (i) fire risk in wetland can be reduced through an integrated fire and water management approach that does not need to employ measures such as canals and prolonged inundation that in the long term can have adverse impacts on wetlands ecosystem; and that (ii) fire is an important ecological factor and can be used as a tool for ecosystem management; and to formulate an integrated fire and water management plan for recommendation.

A JOINT UNDP - IUCN - MRC GEF-FUNDED PROGRAMME



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“It is hoped that this workshop will be able to identify gaps in policy, research, and management relating to management of wetlands and risk of fires in wetlands in Viet Nam so that wetlands ecosystems can be better managed”, said Dr Peter Moore, Programme Coordinator of IUCN Viet Nam country office

For further information about the workshop, please contact:

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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 and 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 tries to address the most critical issues for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Mekong wetlands.

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