

The 6th Annual International Ecosystem Services Partnership (ESP) Conference held in Bali from 26-31 August 2013 focused on the practical application of the ecosystem services concept in planning, management and decision making, and the development of case studies.

During a post-conference professional training session on “Mainstreaming the value of water and wetlands into decision-making”, a “Spotlight on Asia” roundtable was organized to discuss local management and stakeholder issues with regard to water and wetlands and the potential benefits of communicating nature’s values to decision-makers at local, regional and national levels.

Ms. Nirawan Pipitsombat shared her experiences working for the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in Thailand.



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UNEP-TEEB: What are the main threats and pressures to water and wetlands in your country?

Nirawan Pipitsombat: Wetlands are being increasingly degraded in Thailand, despite the fact that they are crucial for food security and poverty reduction. The main reasons for that are urbanization and infrastructure development. Policy makers, both at the local and national level, still believe that human intervention is the only possible approach to flood and drought control and prevention, which are key priorities in Thailand. This is because knowledge about flood is still poor in the country, and the difference between flood disasters and normal seasonal flood is not clear to many stakeholders yet. In addition,

the economic value of ecosystem services is not clearly understood in Thailand.

UNEP-TEEB: What is the potential contribution of TEEB and the ecosystem approach to promote wetland wise management in your country?

Nirawan Pipitsombat: TEEB can support planning, for example for flood protection. Floods represent a very important problem in Thailand. For example in 2011 very large floods occurred all over the country from the north to the centre between August and December. The causes included poor water management, land use planning and politics. The northern part of Bangkok was under water for three months. Because of this problem, the government developed a mega flood protection project that comprised many sub projects, such as large dams in the north and a floodway in the central plain. Many NGOs and local people opposed and requested the government to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment and public hearing. The TEEB approach can support the selection process of the most appropriate solutions, and allow to discuss costs, benefits and trade-offs among alternative solutions. For example, large dams entail a loss of forest ecosystems and associated ecosystem services. A floodway requires compensation to land owners whose land will be affected in the retention area during seasonal floods.

UNEP-TEEB: Can you provide an example of a good practice related to wetland wise management in your country?

Nirawan Pipitsombat: Don Hoi Lord, in the Samut Songkhram province, is a large area of mudflat in the inner gulf of Thailand and has been a Ramsar Site since 2001. The conservation group of Don Hoi Lord was established in 2007, including local people, local NGOs, local administrative authority and central government. The major problem of Don Hoi Lord is the destruction of Hoi Lord or tube clam, the dominant species. It was agreed to register the fishermen who catch the clams and identify a protection area in Don Hoi Lord, where catching clams is not allowed. This no-take area has enabled the clams to reproduce and its population to rebound naturally. A correct method of catching the clams was defined too. As a result, now fishermen can catch more clams and get bigger ones too.