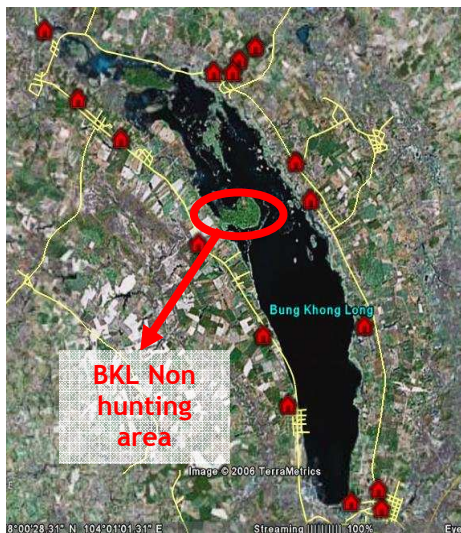


The Beung Khong Long site



Description

Beung Khong Long is a permanent lake (11 km long and 1.5 km at its widest). It covers 1 300 ha in Seka District, Nong Khai 15 km west of the Mekong River.

In 1982, a dam and sluice were built at the southern extremity of the lake, which has pushed its expansion to the North. The northern part of the lake shows emergent and floating vegetation which is really different of the south part which has little aquatic vegetation. Some 600 ha of marshland fringes the northern shore and extends along the Huai I La waterway for four kilometres.

Beung Khong Long was recognized as RAMSAR site in 2001.

Wetland Use

Beung Khong Long is an incomes resource for a lot of local households. 16 villages are located around the lake with major activities as fishery, farming or cattle-breeding. For example, around 30 boats work on the lake every day for fishing and about 500 cattle graze on the north part of the lake. Local people also collect vegetable matte and firewood from the remaining woodland. The area also possesses beautiful and attractive scenery which attracts local tourism, especially on public holidays.



Fauna and Flora

About 136 bird species have been recorded, including 70 migration birds. Beung Khong Long Lake is indeed an important winter habitat for migratory water birds. Fore examples, about 650 herons and egrets of seven different species and 1,250 ducks of seven species have been observed. Besides at least 64 species of fish and other aquatic species (mollusks and crustaceans) are found in Beung Khong Long (most of them are consumed both for subsistence and commercial purpose).The woodland also supports populations of forest bird species including and has a rich butterfly fauna, including *Euthalia cyanipardus*, specie restricted to lowlands. Mammal species include Moles, East Asian Mongoose and Squirrel spp.

Wetlands' Threats

Even if there is no immediate threat to Beung Khong Long, different activities in the area are pressuring the wetland. These several pressures come for instance from poor farmers' recent settlement (increasing the exploitation of the lake), spread of rubber plantations or use of chemicals for farming. By the way, former threats still remain as hunting, over fishing and forest influence.

The area has been in fact degraded during ten years and would have continued to quickly worsen without the start of a conservation project.

The Beung Khong Long project

As context picture, it is important to remark that even if a national wetlands committee exists, the wetlands issues are relatively unknown by Thai authorities. We can say that general awareness about wetlands has improved but it is still not a priority for the current government and the national committee doesn't have a large power of action yet. Moreover, the local communities are now responsible of managing natural resources but they are missing knowledge about wetlands wise use management and need to get more support. That's why the main objective of WWF Thailand is nowadays to support local communities (including local government representatives) managing their wetlands in a sustainable way.



Project's achievements

Are currently concerned by the WWF project in Beung Khong Long:

- 2 districts (Beung Khong Long and Seka districts.)
- 3 sub districts
- 16 villages (about 15 000 people)
- 8 schools

Until now, the team has been working on 3 major objectives: Institute clear wetlands' management structure, implement on field actions and develop communication activities. Project's realizations can be illustrated in several ways and examples below are of course not exhaustive.

- *Institute management structure*

Involving local authorities was really important to implement a sustainable management of the wetland. That's why the project's team propose to organize committees, including different levels of local representatives. Nowadays, a provincial wetland committee has been created and already took place 5 times. Working groups (including head of villages, district delegates or users groups) were also organized on a district level to work on the local wetland issues. Moreover, to make sure the question of wetlands management was recognized as significant, a local agreement proposing rules and regulation has been written and proposed to local representatives who all approved and signed it.



Provincial wetland committee



Beung Khong Long working group

- On-field actions

To be able to implement a long term wetlands management it was necessary to get exact information about the current state of the wetland but also to involve local population and increase their understanding of the wetlands importance. Firstly, it was necessary to clearly define the limits of the wetland with the local communities. So the project team worked with local users on demarcation, dealing with the definition of lands which were part of the wetlands but owned by local people. At the same time, collaborative researches were led on the wetland. For example, local knowledge of fishermen permit to know what kind of fishes lives in the lake and where are the fishing areas located. Several meetings were organized with local users to conduct surveys about the biological state of the wetland and its economical use. Other actions like blood testing on local people to show the direct impact of chemical use were also led. As the local users were going more and more concerned, the team could start fulfilling conservation actions like the creation of fish conservation areas, defined and implemented with the users.



Demarcation work



Collaborative research



Fish conservation area

- Communication activities

Moreover, to increase understanding of wetlands impact of all communities, it was important to raise awareness by running communication actions on all local groups. That's why public forum were organized to explain the wetland's issues and exchange with all communities. Study tours to others wetlands were also proposed to key stakeholders to show the importance of wetlands management and its benefits. Then, to develop local knowledge about wetlands, one of the priorities was to involve students and teachers. That's why the team invite them to take part in some concrete actions as water quality testing. To implement a long term education about wetlands, a local curriculum was also developed with the teachers and the local education officer. That means that subjects as water cycle or water quality are now an obligatory part of the local children's studies. Some other standard communication activities happened like the development of communication support or the organization of a big event for World Wetland Day.



Public Forum



Communication support



World Wetland Day's event

The Evian-RAMSAR Project

The local communities and authorities are nowadays aware about the importance of issues. However, there is still a lot of work to establish a long term and concrete involvement of all stakeholders. In particular, education materials, communication supports and capacities building are now needed by the local communities to help them managing the Beung Khong Long wetland in a sustainable way.

That's today the aim of evian-RAMSAR project which will especially support the WWF team in the development of tools according to the Convention's education and public awareness program (CEPA) and in the implementation of a strategic management plan by the local stakeholders.

For now, the project is indeed focused on continuing to raise awareness while developing the local communities' capacities to manage the wetland themselves. In particular, this last point means developing the NHA services and building capacities for teachers, NHA staff and all stakeholders who will take part in the strategic plan's development.

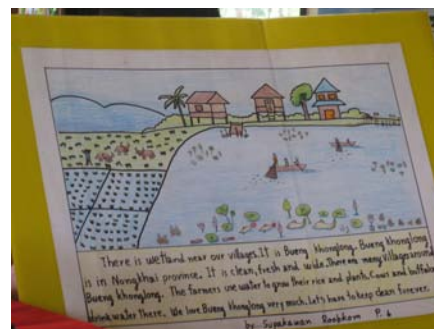
The team is working for example with schools to develop new tools for the teachers and has been exchanging about the most important topics for students but also about the materials as books, kit water testing or multimedia game. Teachers will soon come to a proposal defining the priorities about all that has been discussed.

Another illustration of current work is the collaboration with the NHA staff to develop their capacities. The NHA has also been part of some schools meetings, according to the proposal of developing its staff's capacities for education programs. The Nature trail and exhibition centre have also been discussed with NHA staff and different possibilities are now studied about the topics, materials, distance and so on.

Finally, the team plans to organize soon working groups for starting exchanges about the strategic management plan. The creation of these workshops will be discussed during the next provincial committee, to get the approval of all stakeholders including on the provincial level (one of the team's objective is to include the wetland management plan in the provincial 5 years plan).



Exchange with NHA staff about the nature trail



Existing school material on wetlands education