

The Journey begins with a First Step **The First Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia Workshop and Training Session**

The Ramsar Regional Center–East Asia opened the “The RRC-EA Wise-Use Workshop and Training Session on Wetland Management from the 19th to the 26th September 2009” at Upo Wetland in Changnyeong, South Korea. The two-day workshop had 19 wetland managers from 11 countries in East and Southeast Asia presenting different issues affecting wetland management and different methods whereby those managers achieved their duties. The opening speech, given by the Honorary



Director (Dr. GeaJae Joo), presented the establishment of the RRC-EA and its future goals. Furthermore, it identified the present challenges facing wetland managers, and framed the mechanism whereby these issues can be overcome through the interaction and cooperation amongst these managers. In his congratulatory remarks, Mr. Won Tae Kim (Director of the Global Environment Office of the Ministry of the Environment, Korea) expressed the desire that RRC-East Asia would play a leading role in facilitating effective and efficient wetland conservation activities in East and Southeast Asia. The presentations covered a vast array of topics, ranging from policy approaches to management to much more fundamental community organized programs.



The five-day training session managed by the UNDP/GEF Korea Wetland Project covered topics from the Economic valuation of wetlands, Wetland database, Ecotourism, and Wetland restoration. A summary of the workshop will be circulated during the CBD COP meeting in Japan in 2010. Also during the meeting, the group went to Upo Wetlands (a riverine Ramsar site), Junam Reservoir, Suncheon Tidal Flats (a coastal Ramsar site). Further excursions included the Ramsar Cultural Center at Junam Reservoir.

The value of the meeting came in its outcomes. The attendees asserted that the best way for the network to work was for the RRC-EA to facilitate the interconnections and network structure by aiding in and assisting with communications between the multiple groups involved. This led to suggestions for internet bulletin boards (i.e., Facebook[®]), e-mail communiqués, and even interacting with traditional mail for those with limited access to the internet. Later in November, the RRC-EA is planning to hold the Changwon Network Declaration and Steering Committee meeting in Changwon.

