



IN THIS ISSUE

- \$14m grant to BCI formalized
- First CEP orientation conducted in PRC
- CEP Week highlights
- Upcoming activities
- Pilot site focus: Deqin County
- Current EOC staff

First edition of CEP E-newsletter

This is the first issue of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Core Environment Program (CEP) e-newsletter. Our mission with this e-newsletter is to bring together all partners in the CEP through regular communication and exchange of ideas and keep everyone continuously informed and engaged. Initially, the e-newsletter will be released quarterly. The Environment Operations Center (EOC) will spearhead the creation of each e-newsletter, but we strongly encourage article, news, and photo submissions from the various stakeholders. With your active participation, we hope to make the GMS CEP e-newsletter as useful, timely, and relevant as possible. This e-newsletter will be circulated through e-mail in PDF format, as well as posted on the CEP website at www.adb.org/projects/core-environment-program.

Netherlands formalizes \$14m grant to CEP-BCI

On 31 May 2006, the Asian Development Bank and the Government of Netherlands formalized the \$14 million Dutch financial support to the GMS Core Environment Program, and its flagship component, the Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative (BCI). Present during the ceremony held at the ADB's Viet Nam Resident Mission (VRM) in Hanoi were Andre Haspels, Royal Netherlands Embassy Ambassador to Viet Nam, Arjun Thapan, Deputy Director General of the ADB's Southeast Asia Department (both shown in photo), and Ayumi Konishi, VRM Country Director. Dr. Nguyen Van Tai, Deputy Director General of the Department of Environment, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Viet Nam, was also in attendance. [Read the news release.](#)



EOC conducts first CEP orientation in the PRC

Early in June, members of the EOC team from Bangkok, Thailand went to Kunming, People's Republic of China (PRC) to conduct three half-day orientation seminars on the CEP. The topics presented and discussed included: (i) introduction to the CEP, (ii) strategic environment assessments, (iii) BCI and pilot site implementation in Yunnan, (iv) environmental performance assessments, (v) geographic information systems, (vi) outreach and communications, and (vii) finance and accounting procedures. The EOC team included Hasan Moinuddin (BCI Unit Leader), Pavit Ramachandran (Program & Portfolio Specialist), Lothar Linde (GIS Specialist), Sompong Somsookh (Finance Accounting & Management Specialist), and Rachel Salazar (Outreach Specialist). Participants at the sessions included representatives from the State Environmental Protection Administration of China (SEPA), Yunnan Provincial Environmental Protection Bureau (YEPB), Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden (XTBG), other Yunnan provincial bureaus, and the academe. Similar orientation seminars for other GMS countries will be conducted soon.

WEBSITE UPDATES

Latest News Release

Twelfth Meeting of the GMS Working Group on Environment

Inauguration of the Environment Operations Center

International Symposium on Biodiversity Conservation Corridors

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

WGE-12 Summary of Proceedings

WGE-12 Resolutions

BCI Strategic Framework and Technical Assessment – Executive Summary

RETA 6289: Technical Assistance for the Core Environment Program and Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative in the Greater Mekong Subregion

◆ CEP WEEK, 24-28 APRIL 2006, BANGKOK

SEF II outputs well received

The week-long CEP-related activities in April 2006 started with the Final Regional Workshop of the Strategic Environment Framework (SEF II) Project held on 24 April at the Holiday Inn Bangkok, Thailand. At the workshop, Project completion plan and activities were reviewed and finalized. Participants also discussed the final national environmental performance assessment (EPA) reports and the result of the subregional assessment. Country delegations appreciated SEF II's contribution in developing environmental monitoring capacity in their countries, and strongly recommended continuation of this effort under the CEP umbrella.

WGE-12 concludes with resolutions

The Twelfth Meeting of the GMS Working Group on Environment (WGE-12) was held on 25-26 April and concluded with a list of resolutions and items for immediate action. Co-chairing the meeting were (pictured from left to right): Mr. Urooj Malik, Director, Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Division of ADB's Southeast Asia Department; Dr. Monthip Sriratana Tabucanon, Deputy Permanent Secretary, MONRE; and Mr. Surendra Shrestha, Regional Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The first-day Technical Session saw presentations from the EOC, the GMS countries, and the CEP partners on planned and proposed activities. The Formal Session on the second day reviewed ongoing activities, specifically pertaining to SEF II, and tackled the status, endorsements, and outstanding issues of the CEP for year one. The day ended with the inauguration of the EOC. Mr. Arjun Thapan, Deputy Director General, of ADB's Southeast Asia Department and Dr. Monthip led the ceremonial ribbon-cutting.



Symposium on biodiversity corridors a success

Biodiversity corridors experts and implementers convened on 27-28 April during the first International Symposium on Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative. The symposium was structured around four themes: (i) ecosystems connectivity, (ii) local livelihoods, (iii) climate change, and (iv) sustainable financing. The main objective of the symposium was to share experience gained and lessons learned by implementers and practitioners of biodiversity corridors outside the GMS with implementers of the CEP. About 130 participants attended the symposium, including government officials from the GMS, development partners, biodiversity corridor experts and implementers from various countries, and representatives from nongovernment organizations (NGOs), and the academe.



PARTNER LINKS

Asian Development Bank

Royal Netherlands Embassy – Viet Nam

State Environmental Protection Administration of China

United Nations Environment Programme

Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden

Yunnan Provincial Environmental Protection Bureau

◆ UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

SEA focus group to be formed

As one of the main components of the CEP, strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) have been identified as an important tool to mainstream environmental considerations into the decision making process within GMS countries. In the initial planning phase, the CEP is coordinating a discussion forum among relevant partners to scope out the terms of reference and activity plan for SEAs in the GMS. A focus group of SEA experts in the region is being constituted. A preparatory planning workshop to define the terms of reference for SEA implementation in the priority sectors and GMS economic corridors will be held in Bangkok in early August. An action plan for implementing activities will be drawn up after this workshop.

EOC staff have also been liaising with GMS country representatives and partners to identify lessons learned and trends from pilot SEAs in the region and their potential for mainstreaming within the countries and across the three priority sectors identified within the CEP, i.e., transport (roads), hydropower, and tourism.

The EOC has participated in important thematic workshops held in the region. Members of the team attended the Regional Workshops on Developing Fuel Quality Roadmaps in Asia and Climate Change Mitigation in the Transport Sector held at the ADB headquarters in Manila, Philippines between 22-25 May 2006 as well as the Working Group of Energy meeting held in Siem Reap, Cambodia on 15-16 June, 2006.

Over the next few months, the EOC also plans to organize at least one sector specific thematic workshop of practitioners in the region to discuss the operationalization of SEAs.

GIS data collection and standardization

The EOC has identified two major activities to make geospatial databases fit the needs and objectives of the CEP: (i) data collection/analysis to fill the current gaps, and (ii) standardization of data across countries and institutions. Aside from orientation seminars to be conducted, the following steps will be undertaken in the coming months:

- **Database assessment** (meta-database development): Each implementing agency involved in geospatial database development will receive a form to report on the contents and characteristics of their database. Based on the meta-data, EOC will assess gaps in data availability and data quality, and accordingly prioritize database development efforts.
- **Formation of CEP-Geographic Information System (GIS) network:** EOC will establish a network of GIS specialists from partner agencies, which will serve as a forum to share progress, experiences and lessons learned during the first phase of the CEP. Besides receiving feedback on GIS-related progress of the CEP partners, the network will be the platform for the EOC to introduce and initiate discussion on short- and medium-term data standardization efforts, which partners will implement within their CEP-related databases.
- **Capacity building:** Successful data collection and data standardization need a balanced GIS capacity level within the implementing agencies. EOC will ask CEP-involved GIS specialists to provide core information on their background, and preferences on building additional GIS capacity. This information will be used to compile groups of similar interests and proficiency to provide more efficient, customized trainings.

FOR MORE INFO ABOUT THE CEP

Visit:
www.adb.org/projects/core-environment-program

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Pilot Site Focus: Deqin County

The Environment Protection Bureau (EPB) in Deqin County, Yunnan Province, PRC is collaborating closely with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) on introducing solar panels for warm water, biogas plants, and micro-credit schemes. The support planned for Yunnan Province under the CEP will augment these ongoing efforts by building capacity at village and county levels. During a mission to PRC early in June, the EOC and TNC team met with officials from SEPA, YEPB, EPB, and the Deqin County government to identify a core set of capacity-building activities for Phase I (2006-2008) of the CEP implementation. A proposal for biodiversity conservation in the area was also discussed, for implementation in Phase 2 (2009-2011).



Deqin County is located in the northern mountainous part of Yunnan Province, close to the border of Tibet. Inhabited mostly by ethnic minorities, it has a small population of about 60,000, with majority living under poverty line. Deqin County's scenic natural beauty offers it a high tourism potential. Unfortunately, this rich natural endowment is under grave threat from high fuelwood consumption, overgrazing of alpine pastures, sedimentation of rivers, waste dumping in water streams, and unplanned development and tourism growth.

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