

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA



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Asian Bureau
for Conservation

Marine Protected Areas in Southeast Asia

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MESSAGE



The ASEAN region has the richest biodiversity, the most extensive coastline and most diverse coral reefs in the world. However, it is also one of the most threatened regions in terms of coastal marine resources degradation.

Marine protected areas in Southeast Asia were assessed and reviewed to analyze the increasing threats such as coastal development, collecting of endangered species, ornamental trading, overexploitation, pollution and tourism that lead to the depletion of the biodiversity resources of the marine protected areas in the region. Without proper knowledge regarding conservation of biodiversity, degradation of resources will escalate.

The ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation (ARCBC) was established since 1999 to strengthen biodiversity conservation in the ASEAN region. We hope this publication will serve as a valued reference to the policy makers, planners, fishermen and other stakeholders as well as students, scientists and park managers. This assessment and its timely publication will be useful in the continuing efforts to plan for management that will save, rehabilitate and safeguard our coastal marine resources in the region.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregorio I. Texon'.

GREGORIO I. TEXON

ASEAN Co-Director, ARCBC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John R. Mackinnon'.

JOHN R. MACKINNON

EU Co-Director, ARCBC

FOREWORD

The last decade has seen a burgeoning of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Southeast Asian (SEA) region, in particular member countries of the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN), where it has been known to be the heart of highest marine biodiversity. Perhaps due to the great value and importance of marine biodiversity to hundreds of millions of diverse peoples, these resources have been considered to be at greatest risk.

The tremendous challenges in marine biodiversity conservation have been met with an equally diverse way of doing things, from the large MPAs of Indonesia to the many small community based no-take marine sanctuaries of the Philippines. Eco-tourism may have shown some promising results in an increasing number of areas, but the number of species still under threat from overexploitation is also increasing. The bilateral agreements between the Philippines and Malaysia on the Turtle Islands are exemplary examples of promising efforts for endangered species and the beckoning need to scale up the effectiveness of MPA management efforts. The constraints prevalent in a region of diverse cultures provide opportunities where potential global conflicts may be prevented by establishing joint cooperative stewardship arrangements through MPAs such as those in the disputed islands of the Spratly's. Transboundary opportunities may also be through the Sulu-Sulawesi ecoregion approach and those in the South China Sea. Other areas in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Seaboard also show connectivity of marine organisms that indicates potential MPA corridors. Indeed, there is a greater demand to forge an ASEAN effort for marine conservation and a functional network of MPAs beyond the SEA region.

This review is both timely and appropriate for the SEA region. Past efforts have been made in MPAs, and various good global synopses have provided impetus for more extensive regional cooperation and deeper commitments in biodiversity conservation. The ratification of the Convention of Biological Diversity by most countries in the region and the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation (ARCBC) are indicative major responses by the region. The need for examples of best practices in MPA management makes this review of MPAs in SEA important testaments of small steps that may contribute to great strides in understanding the significance of MPAs.

The continuous journey of the ASEAN in its common seas is on a sturdy boat; the ARCBC is one of its important engines. These MPA vignettes are important knowledge stars and lessons for us to navigate through a sea of change where MPAs help sustain biodiversity, the life support system of people.

Porfirio M. Aliño

University of the Philippines—Marine Science Institute

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