



Fourth ARCBC-NBRU Consultative Meeting

► By LAURO PUNZALAN

National Biodiversity Reference Units (NBRUs) of member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation (ARCBC) programmed the project activities for 2002 during its Fourth Consultative Meeting.

The NBRU Coordinators and Focal Persons from ASEAN member countries met with the Director of the Bureau of Economic and Functional Cooperation of the ASEAN Secretariat, representative from the ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity and ARCBC Co-Directors to discuss the future of the project in the areas of networking, training, research and database management.

The meeting was held on November 6-9, 2001 at the Holiday Inn, Manila, Philippines. Countries represented were Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

This meeting addressed several issues, resulting in agreements between the NBRU representatives and ARCBC on several aspects of the programmes and activities being implemented by the Centre in coordination with the NBRUs. In his speech during the opening ceremony, **Mr. Luc Van Debon**, charge d' affaires of the Philippine Delegation of the European Commission (EC) underscored the roles that NBRUs play in carrying out the project's mandates. He also acknowledged the accomplishments that ARCBC, with the cooperation of NBRUs, was able to render in pursuit of protecting and maintaining the region's biological resources. On the other hand, **Secretary Heherson T. Alvarez** of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), which is the executing agency of the ARCBC, expressed optimism that the three-day meeting would be able to lay down the structures, systems and procedures to efficiently manage, conserve and protect the biodiversity of the ASEAN region.

Each of the NBRU's work plan and budget was reviewed and, based on the availability of budget, integrated into ARCBC's annual work plan and budget for year 2002.

Part of the said work plan is the research grant programme. Financial management mechanisms were discussed to facilitate the full disbursement of EC funds for the approved research projects of member countries. A standard monitoring format has been agreed upon to look into each of the project's expenditures, accomplishments against the targets and the timing at which the accomplishments are being performed.

The NBRUs and ARCBC agreed to support the establishment of a web-based training resource centre. They likewise decided on the training tools and materials that will be developed and published to enhance the capability of various stakeholders.

During year 2002, ARCBC will also implement the occupational standards programme that aims to endorse a regional and widespread use of a set of generic standards for biodiversity conservation. Such standards will be tailored to the needs of member countries.

The participants also discussed the need to harmonise information, since so much data is being generated to support national biodiversity programmes, and to meet the reporting requirements of international agreements. To resolve the issue, the Coordination of Information on the Environment (CORINE) system for Asia will be developed to standardise the classification of habitats. CORINE is an EU programme used for describing natural habitats globally; it has already been developed for N. America, S. America, Africa and Eurasia. NBRUs and ARCBC identified the approaches and solutions and the products and services provided by ARCBC to address the

issues and problems on managing and exchanging information.

The ASEAN staff exchange and ASEAN and EU biodiversity chair programmes also form part of the Centre's work plan for 2002. NBRUs expressed their intention to actively participate in the programmes and to co-sponsor some of the project's meetings and workshops.

The Co-Directors led the discussion on sustaining the project beyond 2004 and beyond EU funding, which means that processes developed by ARCBC will be institutionalised. Individual countries are expected to practise the processes and become part of the system that will support the management of biodiversity. All the participants agreed that efforts to sustain the cooperation activities should come from the countries, while ARCBC would facilitate the acquisition of the technology and management of the data. ■

Mr. Lauro Punzalan heads the *Networking and Institutional Building Branch* at ARCBC.

Surfing the Web... of Life

The **Community Mapping Network (CMN)** <http://www.shim.bc.ca> integrates community and government natural resource information using GIS and an online interactive mapping system. Maps and natural resource information are "web-served" to assist communities and local governments with landuse planning, to promote conservation and protection of sensitive habitats and to raise awareness and respect for ecological values. Many types of information are included such as fish and wildlife distribution, streams and wetlands, eagles and herons, rare and endangered species, biodiversity and possible restoration sites. In addition, various community organizations are able to enhance and update the existing data by digitizing, "online" new GIS and resource information. Building local capacity and expertise, sharing ideas and linking all community data across administrative boundaries are the key objectives of the Network.

The **Aboriginal Mapping Network** <http://www.nativemaps.org> is a collection of resource pages for First Nation mappers who are looking for answers to common questions regarding mapping, information management and GIS. It is a network where First Nation mappers can learn about what other native mappers are doing, and share their own experiences throughout the aboriginal community. The AMN has a British

Columbia focus, but is not limited to this geographic region. It is intended to be used by any group who is active in aboriginal mapping, from the introductory level, to the advanced. It is a source for both technical information on GIS mapping, to general information relevant to decision makers.

GIS for Developing Countries (GISDECO) <http://www.geog.uu.nl/gisdeco/gisdeco.html> is an international network of GIS experts, planners and project managers engaged in GIS applications in developing countries, focusing on the exchange of practical experiences with GIS-applications by organising seminars and workshops in various countries. Its purpose is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and progress in problem solving for GIS researchers and practitioners, either from and working in developing countries or from developed countries and working on the problems of GIS technology transfer and spatial analysis applications in developing countries. The general objective of these two broad groups is common, namely to assist the development process and improve the quality of life of those populations who suffer from lagging economic and social development, while safe-guarding the fragility of the bio-physical realm in truly and newly underdeveloped countries. ■

Looking for a key document on biodiversity-related training?

ARCBC Training Resource Database

Environmental trainers, managers, researchers, policy makers, and other interested individuals and organisations can now access the Training Resources Database (TRD) developed by the ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation (ARCBC).

The Training Resources Database is a web-based repository of training materials such as manuals, guidebooks, and visual aids, among others. It aims to provide a widely recognized and consulted source of training advice and information on biodiversity conservation mostly in the ASEAN region. Materials have been sourced from a variety of organizations and experts, primarily from the ASEAN region, conducting significant work in environmental protection all over the world.

The database provides a search engine that allows users to look for specific material by entering keyword(s), its "title" or "author". Users can also narrow down their search by selecting geographic coverage, subject and taxonomic area through dropdown menus. Descriptions, abstracts and other bibliographic information can be viewed by looking at the Full Detail Display. Links for ordering, requesting or downloading copies of these materials are also provided.

To access the database, visit ARCBC's website at <http://www.arcbc.org.ph>. For comments and suggestions, contact: webmaster@arcbc.org.ph

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