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Readers' Corner



Dear Co-Directors,

Let me thank you for the very informative and diverse ASEAN Biodiversity magazine Vol. 1 No. 4, October to December 2001 issue, which you sent me.

In behalf of the Foundation for the Philippine Environment, I would like to extend my gratitude for including us in your mailing list.

This special issue is so significant considering the very successful 3D modelling activity in Pu Mat, Vietnam, which I was a part of. Again, my thanks to ARCBC, particularly to Mr. Giacomo Rambaldi. The lessons from the training are so applicable to what we are advocating in the Philippines for biodiversity conservation as a foundation for sustainable development.

We hope to receive regular copies of your newsmagazine and other related materials in the future.



Fernando Ramirez

Area Coordinator - Luzon
Convenor, Operations Group
Foundation for the Philippine Environment



Dear Co-Directors,

It is my great pleasure to acknowledge that I have received copies of ASEAN Biodiversity. The articles are so useful, interesting and informative that I can't express my appreciation in language. I wish ASEAN Biodiversity a long and wide circulation.

Professor Md. Mustafizur Rahman

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Dear Co-Directors,

I recently received a copy of Vol. 1 (1&2) of your magazine ASEAN Biodiversity. This is an excellent and most useful publication.

Stephen J. Richards

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Dear Co-directors

The issue of ASEAN Biodiversity Vol. 1 No. 3 titled "A Burning Issue" was useful

in highlighting the problem of forest fires and smoke pollution in the region, but rather disappointing in that hard data on the impact of forest fires on biodiversity was lacking. Also, case studies on successful community fire management were lacking.

In the Upper Nan Watershed Management Project in North Thailand, the forest area burnt has been reduced from 23% in 1998 to less than 2% in each of the last 4 years due to a successful cooperative Royal Forest Department – Community Fire Management Programme, with Danish assistance. The area covers 1007 km² and includes a population of 20,000 in the watershed in 45 villages located in two National Forest Reserves. Also the time of burning on agricultural fields has been delayed from mid-February to late March resulting in a shorter period of smoke and haze pollution.

The process for effective fire management is simple, and similar for all community-based natural resource management issues. The process requires facilitators working at the community level:

1. Baseline data collection on the causes of fires, time of burning, areas burnt, conflicts caused and the present community rules and regulations.
2. Training and awareness on the environmental damage from uncontrolled fires, and the use of facilitators to bring leaders of neighbouring villages together to solve conflicts over damages caused by fires and other Natural Resource Management (NRM) issues.
3. After two or three meetings, the village leaders recognised the need to form networks (in the Nan Watershed Management Project – the formation of Village Watershed Networks). The networks agree on community boundaries for responsibility for improved NRM, and the strengthening of the existing rules and regulations on NRM.
4. The institutionalization of the networks through the local administration (Tambon and District), and recognition of the network rules.

The strength of the process is that it is simple and based on the existing community NRM rules that, in most cases, are weak or cannot be enforced. The process can minimise the burning of forest areas within two years.

Peter Hoare

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