



Community Fisheries

Supporting Food Security and Aquatic Biodiversity
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The project, **Community Fisheries: Supporting Food Security and Aquatic Biodiversity (ComFish)**, aims to improve the conservation of aquatic biodiversity and management of capture fisheries in support of communities who rely upon aquatic resources for household food security and economy. This will be achieved through a community-based approach to coordinate the participation of communities and government in the management of aquatic biodiversity.

Capture fisheries and freshwater biodiversity are an integral component of rural livelihoods and culture in Lao PDR. Working on large tributaries of the Mekong River in Lao PDR, the project will strengthen the institutional and community capacity to manage aquatic resources in support of rural livelihoods. The project strategy will apply a river basin approach that recognizes the linkages between habitats and develops activities with communities from the headwaters down to the floodplains. The project will utilize local ecological knowledge of aquatic resources to strengthen the fisheries co-management approach and increase the participation of communities in the research, management and monitoring of freshwater biodiversity. Increased institutional capacity and information on capture fisheries will strengthen the development of national policy for integrated river basin management in the Mekong Basin.



Government Staff Use the Depth Sounder to Monitor the River Depth

ComFish will work to establish a network of communities participating in fisheries co-management in order to facilitate a platform for local dialogue and exchange of ideas or concerns. The project focus in the first year will be on the Xe Bang Hieng, Xe Bang Fai, and Nam Theun/Kading tributaries. Methodologies and capacity developed will be used to extend activities to other rivers in Laos where capture fisheries are an important component of people's livelihoods.

Under this workplan the project has 3 main objectives:

- (1) By 2008 an inventory of critical fisheries habitat based upon local ecological knowledge is created for 6 tributaries of the Mekong River in Lao PDR.
- (2) By the end of the project a Community Fisheries Network is created to strengthen the role and legal framework for communities to manage aquatic biodiversity and participate in decision-making processes related to aquatic resource management.
- (3) By the end of the project an integrated approach to river basin management is strengthening the management and conservation of aquatic biodiversity from rivers, wetlands and rice fields in 3 provinces.



Fishing Traps



Community Regulations to Establish a Fish Conservation Zone

Photos credit: WWF/Roger Mollot, except where noted.

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Community Fisheries: Supporting Food Security and Aquatic Biodiversity



Fresh Water Biodiversity Supports Rural Livelihoods

To achieve these objectives the ComFish project will develop capacity for fisheries co-management within rural communities and government institutions. Fisheries co-management will strengthen environmental governance and allow for more effective communication within and between rural communities who rely upon freshwater biodiversity for both food security and economy.

Expected Outputs

- Enhanced knowledge of capture fisheries to support fisheries co-management
- Increased community participation in the management and monitoring of freshwater biodiversity
- Improved rural livelihoods and food security through improved fisheries management
- Stronger institutional capacity for Integrated River Basin Management



Map of Target Watersheds

Activities will include:

- Assessments of local ecological knowledge of freshwater biodiversity, seasonal fish migrations, and critical habitats for capture fisheries
- Development and extension of fisheries co-management plans across river basins
- Development of methods for Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) of fisheries co-management plans to involve the resource users in generating research information used in capture fisheries management
- Establishment of a network of communities participating in co-management to share information on best practice and to study the relationships between upstream and downstream habitats
- Community-based management of critical habitat such as wetlands, floodplains, deep pools and rapids

Implementing Agencies

The project will be implemented in partnership between the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Lao Program and the Department of Livestock and Fisheries. At the community level activities will be coordinated through the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office and District Agriculture and Forestry Office. At the national level the project will be facilitated through the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Lao National Mekong Committee.

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