

**Regional Environmental Affairs Office**

**NEWSLETTER**

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Please visit our embassy webpage for more information at:

<http://bangkok.usembassy.gov/embassy/reo.htm>

**REO Highlights**

**Join the Diet**

The world is facing a growing threat from the enormous increase in the use of plastics, and Southeast Asia, like many other regions, has been hugely impacted. In almost every city, one can see the impact of plastic bottles, bags, containers, and other products lying around. The exponential use of plastics is beginning to have a negative impact on the environment beyond the obvious aesthetic damage. Oceans are filled with plastics floating in currents, ruining the beauty of coral reefs, and damaging marine life. However, it's not all doom and gloom because one NGO in the region is fighting back against the unnecessary overuse of plastics. Nol Sampah, which translates to "Zero Waste" in Indonesian, is leading the campaign in Surabaya, Indonesia to reduce plastics. With the help of a small grant from the U.S. Department of State, Nol Sampah is targeting schools and villages to promote the three "Rs" – **Reduce**, **Reuse**, and **Recycle**.

Nol Sampah promotes a "Plastic Diet," a cleverly named campaign, which encourages members of the community to cut back on their use of plastics. Whether it is promoting reusable water bottles or cloth bags for shopping, Nol Sampah is trying to start a grass roots effort to educate people in the community about how they can reduce the amount of plastic they use in everyday life.

The campaign has been most effective in the city's middle schools where Nol Sampah conducts its outreach. Twenty middle schools in Surabaya are participating, and Nol Sampah hopes to get several more to join soon. Since joining the campaign, the participating schools have started recycling on their campuses; pledging to use lunch boxes for their meals instead of plastics bags; and use old plastic bottles to make handicrafts. Additionally, students have

learned about the different types of plastic and how they can impact their health. Some of the schools have even moved beyond the "plastic diet" and are working on other ways to be more environmentally friendly by making their own compost for vegetable gardens, practicing energy saving programs, and implementing water conservation techniques.

In addition to the schools, Nol Sampah is also working with 14 villages promoting a campaign to improve the living conditions in local communities with waste pick-ups, making handicrafts, and promoting reusable bags. The campaign does not just stop at the schools or villages. Nol Sampah also participates in Surabaya's "Car Free Day" every Sunday where they are able to talk with passersby about the use of plastics and hand out reusable sacks to encourage fewer plastic bags. Nol Sampah estimates that 700 plastic bags are used per person, per year in Surabaya, so promoting **reusable bags** could make a significant impact.

See more of what Nol Sampah is doing [here](#).



Middle school students and teachers show off their reusable bags provided by Nol Sampah and their handicrafts made from reused plastic bottles



## Building the Mekong Fish Network

(Article courtesy of our friends at FISHBIO)

Trying to manage fisheries and coordinate research in a river that flows through a single country is challenging enough — so imagine the challenges surrounding a river that crosses the borders of six countries with six distinct languages. Such is the case of the Mekong River, which is home to more than 850 species of fishes that feed an estimated 60 million people, making it one of the most diverse and productive rivers in the world. As the Mekong moves into an uncertain future of regional development and environmental change, coordinated efforts to study and manage its fishes will become all the more imperative.

To address these issues, the fisheries research group FISHBIO is currently working to build the Mekong Fish Network (MFN), a platform to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration among researchers in countries across the Lower Mekong Basin, including Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. FISHBIO has been working on fish research and conservation in the Mekong region since 2009. Now, the group has launched a new website as a tool to serve the Mekong research community. The website ([www.mekongfishnetwork.org](http://www.mekongfishnetwork.org)) serves as a hub for network communication and connects fish scientists and managers to many valuable tools

to assist their research.

The MFN website is a direct product of a workshop that FISHBIO staff and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) convened in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in February 2012 to bring together Mekong scientists, government officials, and members of various organizations working in the region. FISHBIO staff developed the website based on feedback from workshop participants about resources that would be most useful for them. The website can be viewed in a variety of languages, and features news stories from across the region, a discussion forum, blog posts of network member activities, descriptions and photos of ongoing research projects, a calendar of relevant upcoming meetings and events, and links to recent open-source research publications.

The website also links to the Mekong Fish Network Data Bank, an online USGS data tool. The Mekong Fish Network data management tool, recently developed in collaboration with the Data Bank, is a free tool to help Mekong researchers store, manage, and share their data with collaborators in a secure environment, which is currently a challenge for many scientists in the region. The data bank supports one of the Network's major goals: to implement standardized sampling methods in

the various Mekong countries with the aim of achieving cohesive, basin-wide assessments of the fish community. FISHBIO and USGS will continue to develop the main MFN website and data bank to best meet the needs of the Mekong research community.

Learn more at: [fishbio.com](http://fishbio.com)



*The Mekong River is widely used for a variety of purposes and sustains the livelihood of many people across Southeast Asia.*

*Photos courtesy of FISHBIO*

## U.S. Mission to ASEAN Launches a New Blog!

The U.S. mission to ASEAN recently launched a new blog that focuses on the application of science, technology, and innovation to the development of the ASEAN community. Visitors to this site can learn more

about the latest innovative technologies being used in ASEAN. Blog contributions are welcome, so what are you waiting for? Visit the site today!

Go check out [InnovASEAN](http://InnovASEAN) to learn more!



**InnovASEAN**

Using science and technology to address the ASEAN region's challenges and opportunities



## Philippines Destroys Millions of Dollars Worth of Ivory

On June 21, the Philippines destroyed approximately \$10M worth of ivory that was been smuggled into the country from Africa. The destruction ceremony was aimed at discouraging the illegal trade in ivory and was applauded many in the wildlife conservation community.



*Photos courtesy of BBC*

Continue reading about this story [here](#).

**‘Gene Chip Technology’ Deployed in Fight Against Malaria (IRIN)**

Scientists in the USA are looking to use “gene chip technology” to reduce or contain drug resistance to malaria, an increasing problem globally but particularly in Southeast Asia. Researchers from the US University of Notre Dame’s Eck Institute for Global Health are developing a “gene chip” which could contribute to identifying drug resistance in blood samples.

The goal is to “see resistance as it is emerging, respond in real time and modify strategies to save a drug, such as protecting it

with new formulations and combinations tailored to the specific location of emergence,” said the lead researcher, Michael Ferdig. “We now have markers for emerging resistance and new hypotheses that we will use to track down the resistance mechanism.”

Genetic markers or “signposts” are any alteration in the DNA that helps to identify the presence of a specific disease. Artemisinin is a natural plant product that repre-

sents the first-line treatment for malaria, after resistance to chloroquine, an antimalarial previously widely used, forced treatment to change in the early 1970s. Growing resistance to artemisinin in the greater Mekong sub-region - including Cambodia, the southern provinces of China, Lao, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam - means treatment is taking longer to clear parasites.

Continue reading [here](#)



Photo by Brendan Brady—IRIN News

**Indonesia Extends its Forest Moratorium—What’s Next? (By WRI Insights)**

Indonesia’s President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono made a bold and courageous decision this week to extend the country’s forest moratorium. With this decision, which aims to prevent new clearing of primary forests and peat lands for another two years, the government

could help protect valuable forests and drive sustainable development.

Enacted two years ago, Indonesia’s forest moratorium has already made some progress in improving forest management. However, much more can be done. The extension offers

Indonesia a tremendous opportunity: a chance to reduce emissions, curb deforestation, and greatly strengthen forest governance in a country that holds some of the world’s most diverse ecosystems.

Continue reading [here](#)



Women in harvest ground nuts in teak forest area. Photo credit: Murdani Usman, CIFOR

**Laos: Biofuel at the Pump by 2016 (By Vientiane Times)**

The government aims to have a biofuel content in all petrol by the year 2016, saying that Laos has the necessary plant resources such as oil palms, vernicia and jatropha to produce the required amount. The Luang Prabang Teak Tree Import and Export Company is ready to harvest the first nuts from vernicia (mak kao) trees to produce biodiesel, after first encouraging northern farmers to grow the trees in 2008.

The government, through the Ministry of Energy and Mines, is drafting a Biofuels Decree to provide an overall legal frame-

work for setting the target, Deputy Director of the Renewable Energy Promotion Institute, Mr Chantho Milatanapheng, told Vientiane Times yesterday.

At present, Laos has no comprehensive renewable energy policy and strategy. While there are some private sector investments in fuel crops, they are facing significant obstacles due to inadequate management mechanisms. To reduce imports of fossil fuels and optimise the use of marginal lands, the government will encourage and actively promote the devel-

opment of fuel crops, with a preference for smallholder promotion under community land ownership and control.

Some companies have already produced batches to test the quality of both the B5 and B10 bio-diesel varieties obtained from jatropha and vernicia in vehicles and tractors, said Mr Chantho. However, most Lao people have doubts about the quality of this fuel as there are no guaranteed standards set by the sectors concerned.

Continue reading [here](#)

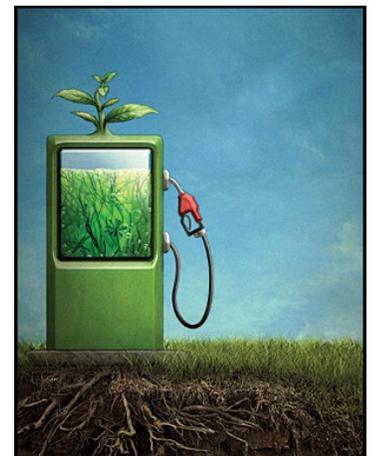


Image from Google

**Wildlife Trafficking in ASEAN Still Rampant (The Bangkok Post)**

Wildlife trafficking continues unabated throughout Southeast Asia, with the number of animals and carcasses being discovered by officials rising each year, the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network has reported. National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department deputy chief Theerapat Prayurasiddhi yester-

day said Thailand and its neighbors were identified as wildlife trafficking “hotspots” in the latest ASEAN-WEN situation report.

ASEAN-WEN involves police, customs, and environment agencies from all 10 ASEAN countries – Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia,

Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, and Thailand. According to the report, 386 cases of wildlife trafficking were uncovered in 2011 with 38,895 live animals and 36,109 carcasses, weighing about 94.68 tons seized.

Continue reading [here](#)



Photo courtesy of the Bangkok Post



**Joint Conservation Efforts for Asian – U.S. Birds**

Malaysia was accepted as a new Partner and Bako Buntal Bay as a new important addition to the waterbird flyway site network at the Seventh Meeting of Partners of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) as it opened in Anchorage, Alaska, with 70 participants from governments and NGO partners from the USA, East Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific region.

The Partnership is an informal and voluntary initiative, which aims to protect migratory waterbirds, their habitats and the livelihoods of people dependent upon them within the Flyway. Malaysia is the newest member of this international bird conservation initiative which was adopted as a type II partnership at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2012. Click [here](#) to continue reading.



Malaysian Delegate being welcomed to EAAFP. Photo credit Whitehouse/Primmer USFWS

**Have An Interesting Story to Tell?**

Is your organization working on a neat project that you would like to share? If so, we would love to highlight it in our newsletter. Please send us your stories.

To subscribe, unsubscribe, comment or submit ideas, please email [REOBangkok@state.gov](mailto:REOBangkok@state.gov)

**Inviting Solutions for Adapting to Climate Change**

How are you adapting to the impacts of climate change like flooding, droughts and unpredictable weather patterns? Solution Search: Adapting to a Changing Climate, an innovative contest sponsored by Rare and The Nature Conservancy, seeks local solutions for how communities are adapting to their changing environments.



**Share Your Success**

Solution Search is looking for adaptation strategies that:

1. Use biodiversity and ecosystem services of forest, wetland, or coastal, marine systems as part of an overall adaptation strategy to help people and communities adapt to the negative effects of climate change
2. Decrease the dependence on the consumptive use of resources and/or improve the ability of the community to cope with loss or changes in vulnerable resources.

**Applications Due by July 15, 2013** — Learn more at: <http://www.solutionsearch.org/node/17>



**International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)—Fellowship**

ITTO is offering fellowships to promote human resource development and to strengthen professional expertise in member countries in tropical forestry and related disciplines. The goal is to promote the sustainable management of tropical forests, the efficient use and processing of timber, and better economic information about the international trade in tropical timber.

**Applications Due by August 23, 2013** — Learn more at: <http://www.itto.int/feature20/>

**Promoting Conservation, Protecting Species**

The Chicago Zoological Society administers conservation grants funded by the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT). The Fund's priority is to support projects that assist directly in the protection of populations of threatened and endangered species; or that protect a specific habitat that is of high biological value or that is substantially threatened (IUCN Red List Status)



**Applications Due by August 16, 2013** — Learn more at: <http://www.czs.org/czs/cbotgrant.aspx>

**Conservation & Environmental Grants in China—Ford Green!**

Ford Motor Company annually presents environmental awards to community groups, environmental NGOs, and individuals in mainland China for projects and communications in environmental protection. For 2013, the program will allocate a total of US\$2 million for NGO capacity building, incubator projects, and environmental communications.



**Applications Due by September 2, 2013.** Learn more at <http://www.fordgreen.com.cn/>

**Grand Challenges – Fostering innovation in Global Health Research**

The Grand Challenges in Global Health initiative fosters scientific and technological innovation to solve key health problems in the developing world. The initiative includes the Grand Challenges in Global Health grant program and the newer Grand Challenges Explorations grant program. Click [here](#) to learn about what opportunities you might be eligible for!



**Upcoming Events**

- June 24-28: 33rd Working Group of the Montreal Protocol—Thailand
- June 25-28: 8th Asia Clean Energy Forum—Philippines
- July 1: Lower Mekong Initiative Ministerial Meeting—Brunei
- July 16-19: Strengthening Policies/Practices for Low-Carbon Green Growth in Asia—Japan

**Observance Days**

- July 28: World Hepatitis Day
- September 16: International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer