

# Collaboration with DMCR helps build New Opportunities



when attempting mangrove restoration. Progress has been hampered, however, by several factors, and chief among these is the complex land tenure issues making it extremely difficult to secure available sites to implement restoration.



Some signs of encouraging progress and program success are now more evident, emerging from the challenging work of the MAP Asia office in Thailand. There seems to be some positive cracks in some corners of the [Department of Marine and Coastal Resources](#) (DMCR) towards favorable viewing of the Community-Based Ecological Mangrove Restoration (CBEMR) approach. MAP has been promoting CBEMR as a best foot forward

With an estimated over 400,000 ha of abandoned shrimp farms worldwide, which were mangroves, one would think access to these defunct sites, which now sit idle and unproductive, would be a given. Nevertheless, private landowners and those with lease contracts are not willing to allow restoration for fear of losing their land titles to government regulation if the sites are returned to their previous natural state as functional mangrove wetlands. In essence, they would rather see these abandoned sites remain unproductive and disused gambling on a rival of a profitable shrimp industry or speculating on oil palm demand



than to see them returned back to productive mangroves. This lack of access to these abandoned shrimp farms and other degraded mangrove forest sites has been difficult for MAP staff and volunteers, knowing that these same lands could be so much more productive and beneficial for local communities and wildlife, including wild fisheries, if allowed to be rehabilitated to even a semblance of their former status.



Though we at MAP know it will take more time for a full transformation of those government officials making the decisions, the recent signs of progress at the provincial level in Krabi Province is quite refreshing to witness, and MAP Asia staff are keen to fan the embers that now glow warmer beneath the feet of local government officials.

In mid-May, the MAP Asia staff had a meeting with the director of DMCR Regional Office #2 in Krabi who has been open and fairly supportive of MAP's CBEMR method. MAP Thailand Program Coordinator Ning Enright has had many meetings and calls with him over the past year, and seems to have won him over through persistent effort to locate sites for our small-scale CBEMR demonstration projects. MAP Asia staff also invited DMCR to MAP's [Ecosystems Protecting Infrastructure and Environment](#) (EPIC) inception workshop and field trip in December, visiting MAP Asia's proposed EPIC site on Klang Island, Krabi. Several of DMCR staff members then attended a recent CBEMR training in Krabi following the inception workshop.

According to MAP Asia Coordinator Jim Enright, "On the

inception field trip we stopped to show DMCR staff and others an abandoned shrimp pond which we had leaned that the Land Development Department (LDD) was going to assist the owner to convert it to an oil palm plantation under their present aggressive program of oil palm expansion. Last week, the DMCR chief told us he then made a comment to LDD that they need to check first on the status of abandoned ponds before engaging 'owners' to convert ponds to oil palm or other economic plants under their assistance program..."

"The day before we had a positive meeting with the community Imam, who is the owner and with his extended family of this particular abandoned shrimp pond site. He is now interested in joining our CBEMR project under EPIC to restore the site back to mangroves with a mud-crab component. Again, a direct economic return through pond-based livelihoods seems to be the incentive needed to win pond holders over to restoration."

At last week's meeting MAP Asia staff also heard from the head of Mangrove Extension and Development Division that their office is now planting at least 5 mangrove species per site and appear now to be possibly moving away from straight row, single species planting.

Obviously, it is key to find the right people in DMCR, like Director of Regional Office #2, and work with them..... We've not had such good fortune in finding sympathetic DMCR officers here in Trang.

By: Alfredo Quarto, MAP Executive Director

#### LINKS

[EPIC Project Website Page](#)

[The CBEMR Method](#)

[The CBEMR Video](#)

[The Mangrove Action Project Website](#)

