



# CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN MU KOH CHANG, THAILAND



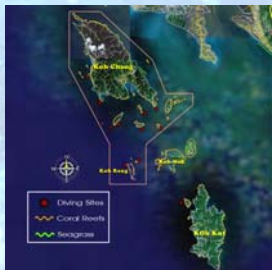
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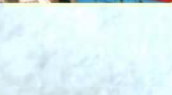
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Mu Koh Chang was declared as a national park in 1982. It is also a special administrative zone for sustainable tourism development since 2002. The UNEP/GEF Project on Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand selected Mu Koh Chang as one of the demonstration sites for coral reef subcomponent.



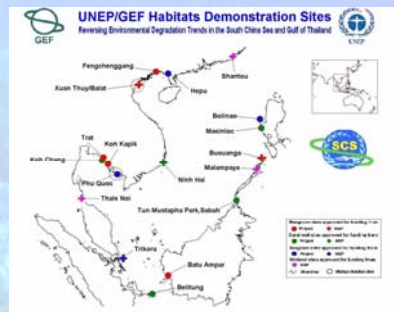
- Major threats of coral reefs were sedimentation from infrastructure development, impacts from expansion of tourism business, unskilled divers, illegal fishing, coral reef bleaching and storms.
- The causal chain analysis of Mu Koh Chang revealed that root causes of coral reef degradation were lack of awareness, greed, lack of ecological knowledge, failure of coordination among institutions, inappropriate tourism management, inadequate numbers of government staff, researcher and site manager for coral reef management, inefficient law enforcement, poverty and degradation from natural disturbances.

Several activities have been implemented for sustainable tourism management; i) study on carrying capacity for tourists; ii) establishing diving trails at particular sites; iii) establishing local guide center and encouraging local guide activities; iv) installing additional mooring buoys; v) academic supports for local communities and private sector to encourage public participation for coral reef management and conservation for ecotourism; vi) encouraging local people and tourism organizations to clean up coral reefs; vii) study on determination criteria of tourist fees for coral reef management purposes.



## Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- Management of diving behavior is very important.
- Establishing diving trails at particular sites is an effective tool to reduce diving impacts on coral reefs.
- Establishing a local guide center and encouraging local guide activities play a major role for raising public awareness and reduce impacts from tourists.
- A mooring buoy committee should be established from representatives of relevant stakeholders. The mooring buoy installation can be a significant tool for systematization of diving activities.
- Encouraging local people and tourism organizations to clean up coral reefs was successfully carried out for cleaning the reefs and raising public awareness on coral conservation.
- Several coral reef restoration projects have been conducted however the high cost and limited scale of restoration puts the onus on government and communities to prevent damage to coral reefs in the first place.
- The local administrative organization, the Designated Area Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization), the provincial governor, the resort owners and the government policy have to play major roles to control land-based pollution and implement pollution monitoring programs.
- The ecological and socio-economic monitoring programs should be appropriately planned and implemented.
- Encouraging coordination among government agencies, private sector, NGOs, and local communities during planning, operation and evaluation phases to strengthen co-management of all activities in the area and to reduce any obstacles of the project implementation are very crucial.
- The provincial governor (chief executive officer) can establish a special committee for coral reef conservation.
- Mu Koh Chang Demonstration Site for coral reef subcomponent under the UNEP/GEF Project on Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand provides a good opportunity for information exchanges and transferring lessons learned to other sites.



## Reference

UNEP. 2004. GIS-Database: Coral Reefs (Vol. 2). UNEP/GEF Project on Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand. 114 pp.

