

**FINAL REPORT ON THE
WORKSHOP ON POND-MANGROVE
REHABILITATION**

**Sponsored by the
Zoological Society of London
SEAFDEC Aquaculture Department**

**Iloilo Grand Hotel
Iloilo City**

10-12 September 2007

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I. Background

In mid-2007, the UK Big Lottery International (BLI) awarded the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) a small grant to develop a proposal on mangrove management and rehabilitation in Panay Island with the support of the SEAFDEC Aquaculture Department and the regional offices of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Under existing national laws, idle and abandoned fishponds covered under Fishpond Lease Agreements (FLAs) are to be released by BFAR to DENR for reversion to mangrove forests. This policy recognizes that the country's mangrove resources are rapidly being depleted and that using suitable sites (such as unsuitable fishponds) to replant mangroves is a key strategy to improving coastal productivity. Sadly, these laws are not being implemented primarily because of long-standing institutional issues.

Specifically, the BLI grant was for a consultative dialogue with major stakeholders to gather information and valuable feedback for developing a mangrove reversion proposal that is comprehensive but also realistic, attainable and representative of the stakeholders' needs and interests. In this context, a Pond-Mangrove Rehabilitation Workshop was organized to convene the private sector, academe, national agencies, NGOs and fisherfolk representatives to jointly formulate strategies for the immediate implementation of mangrove reversion policies. Held in Iloilo City 12-14 September 2007, Workshop had 30 participants (see Directory).

II. Objectives

The Workshop aimed to:

- give an update on the status of abandoned ponds and mangrove areas in the region
- review and evaluate national laws and local ordinances that relate to abandoned ponds and mangrove conservation
- gather feedback from stakeholders on the various issues and concerns related to mangrove reversion
- recommend strategies to cover gaps in existing laws and improve their implementation, particularly in Panay Island

III. Highlights of the Workshop

A. Day 1

1. Registration was followed by a short Opening Program during which participants from the pond industry, local government units (LGUs), national government agencies (NGAs), non-

government organizations (NGOs), people's organizations (POs), and academe introduced themselves. The background and objectives of the workshop were discussed by Ms. Alison Shaw of ZSL and Dr. Jurgenne Primavera, Pew Fellow in Mangrove Conservation and Scientist Emeritus of the SEAFDEC Aquaculture Department.

2. A presentation on Mangrove Resources and Governing Laws and Policies was delivered by Director Arlene Dalawis of DENR (Appendix V). Said presentation focused on the various laws that govern mangrove management including the Community-Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA), an instrument that allows qualified POs to manage and sustainably develop mangrove resources.
3. The topic "General Policies on Fishpond Lease Agreements" was presented by Mr. Edwin Javier, Chief of the Regulatory Division of BFAR Region 6 (Appendix VI). He discussed the status of FLAs in Region 6 and informed the workshop that around 670 hectares of FLA fishponds in Region 6 have been classified as unutilized and abandoned and as such, can be considered for mangrove reversion.
4. Dr. Jurgenne Primavera presented the topic "Mangroves and Aquaculture in the Philippines" that discussed the benefits of mangroves and the major issues and concerns concerning their management. She highlighted the minimum mangrove-pond ratio of 4:1, i.e., four hectares of mangroves to one hectare of fishponds, required to maintain ecological balance and sustain coastal productivity, based on a number of scientific reports. However given the present fishpond hectarage and continued conversion of mangrove area to fishponds, the actual ratio is a reverse 0.5:1 in favor of fishponds. Her lecture also featured best practices on mangrove management in other Southeast Asian countries that could serve as models for the Philippines. Dr. Primavera's lecture appears as Appendix VII.
5. The lectures were followed by an open forum facilitated by Mr. Raul Roldan that focused on the three topics presented as well as related concerns. Major issues discussed during the open forum include actual mangrove area in Region 6, potential areas for mangrove rehabilitation, 4:1 mangrove-pond ratio, and more undocumented/illegal than legal ponds

B. *Day 2*

6. The conduct of parallel workshops was the major activity in Day 2. Participants were divided into two workshop groups: Group 1 with fishpond operators, LGUs and NGOs, and Group 2 with DENR, BFAR and POs. Representatives from UPV and SEAFDEC joined both workshop groups while Ms. Shaw and Dr. Primavera joined Groups 1 and 2, respectively. The task for both groups was to discuss in detail the major issues concerning mangrove management, specifically on: (i) policies, laws and procedures; (ii) law enforcement; (iii) technical aspects; and (iv) socio-economics, from the perspective of different stakeholders represented in the workshop. Both groups were also asked to formulate strategies for addressing these concerns using a simplified SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis format. Messrs. Renato Agbayani and Raul Roldan served as facilitators for Groups 1 and 2, respectively.

C. Day 3

7. The organizers, with assistance from some participants, integrated the two workshop outputs for presentation in the morning session of 12 September. Before this however, a special lecture was delivered by DENR on Executive Order 533 which embodies the national policy framework to “ promote the sustainable development of the country’s coastal and marine environment and resources in order to achieve food security, sustainable livelihood, poverty alleviation and reduction of vulnerability to natural hazards, while preserving ecological integrity.”
8. The integrated workshop results were presented by Dr. Primavera. This gave the participants the opportunity to review the outputs of the two groups and improve on the information generated from the parallel workshops. Among the agreements arising from the presentations and the ensuing open forum were the following:
 - (a) conduct of a national mangrove workshop to harmonize the programs of the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture, particularly BFAR, with respect to FLAs and mangrove reversion, and bring attention to critical issues on mangrove resources particularly their continued conversion to fishponds and unsustainable exploitation.
 - (b) need to submit resolutions from the Workshop participants addressed to DENR and BFAR urging concerned officials to implement existing mangrove laws in view of the critical condition of the country's mangrove resources.
 - (c) need for officials of the Regional Offices of BFAR and DENR to meet in October 2007 discuss common concerns on mangrove reversion and develop strategies to facilitate reversion, specifically in Region 6
 - (d) Region 6 Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO) to look into the case of the Dumangas Punta Lakaran, Ermita Fisherfolk Multipurpose Cooperative (PLEFMC) and a Foreshore Lease Agreement site that blocks off the docking access of their fishing boats.
 - (e) coordinate with NAMRIA and PAGASA (the national Weather Bureau) on the need to review the tide table in view of reports from pond operators that tide levels have risen in recent years and that information in the tide table are no longer accurate
 - (f) coordinate with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) so that coastal resource management (which covers mangrove resources conservation) will be explicitly identified in the Internal Revenue Allotment as a priority activity by the local government

The integrated workshop outputs and other issues appear as Appendices I and II, respectively.

9. The two Resolutions drafted by Atty. Mayo-Anda with the assistance of several participants were presented to the body for comments and or further enhancement. The two Resolutions were:

Resolution 1 (Appendix III) – A Resolution Calling for the Immediate Implementation of Existing Guidelines concerning the Reversion of Abandoned, Undeveloped and Underutilized portions of Fishpond Lease Agreements (FLAs) and other Potential Areas into Mangrove Forestlands. This resolution is to be widely circulated for signatures among concerned NGOs, POs, academic and research institutions, and the signed copies are to be sent to the DA, DENR and other concerned agencies after one month.

Resolution 2 (Appendix IV) – A Resolution Calling for the Formation of a Mangrove Convergence Initiative (MCI) and for Pro-Active Efforts by Key Government Agencies. This resolution specifically calls for the first meeting of the MCI (comprising the regional directors of DA-BFAR, DENR and DILG) to be held 5 October 2007 in Iloilo City.

10. After a lengthy discussion on the provisions and proposed follow-up actions, the two draft resolutions were finalized and distributed to the participants for signature.
11. A short closing program was held with Ms. Shaw and Dr. Primavera expressing their appreciation for the contributions of the participants and the very important outputs that arose from the three-day workshop, particularly the formulation of the two resolutions and the creation of the Mangrove Convergence Initiative (MCI). They noted that through the pioneering efforts of Region 6, other regions will follow suit and initiate their own plans for the reversion of cancelled fishponds back to mangroves.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The Workshop succeeded in surpassing its original objectives based on what was achieved in three days of productive discussions, information sharing and collective planning. The highlight of the Workshop was the formulation of the two resolutions which hopefully will jumpstart the implementation of national laws concerning mangrove resources management. The success of the Workshop can be attributed to the right mix of participants who were all eager to share their expertise and experience and who all agree that action has to be taken to address serious environmental concerns. However, for this success to be sustained, there is a need to undertake follow-up meetings and active coordination with concerned agencies so that agreements made can be pursued and hopefully realized. An important follow-up activity is the conduct of a National Mangrove Workshop that will convene government policy and decision makers, academe, research institutions, NGOs, POs and the fishpond industry to discuss critical concerns and jointly formulate a concrete plan of action to save the country's threatened mangrove resources, and in the process, the entire coastal environment as well.