AQD and DENR organize training on biodiversity

The last of a series of three courses on Biodiversity conservation projects for locally managed protected areas and principles of stock enhancement & habitat rehabilitation drew to a close on 4 September at SEAFDEC/AQD’s main station in Tigbauan, Iloilo, Philippines. The training was organized by AQD in collaboration with DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources).

Twenty-nine participants from DENR, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, local government units and the academe attended the lectures and practicals on stock enhancement release strategies, tagging & monitoring of releases; grow-out culture of abalone and sandfish; resource assessment on giant clams and introduction to monitoring & evaluation. All the practicals were done at AQD’s Igang Marine Station in Guimaras and in Concepcion, Iloilo.

AQD holds mid-year review of GOJ-TF programs

Twenty one AQD scientists and researchers presented to their colleagues, including AQD Deputy Chief Dr. Teruo Azuma who manages the regional programs funded by the Government of Japan Trust Fund (GOJ-TF), the progress and some constraints in the implementation of their studies. GOJ-TF programs include: (1) promotion for sustainable and region-oriented aquaculture practices; (2) safety of aquaculture products in Southeast Asia; (3) accelerating awareness, capacity building & fish health management in Southeast Asia; and (4) resource enhancement of internationally threatened and over-exploited species in Southeast Asia through stock release. The mid-year review was conducted 8-9 August at AQD’s main station in Iloilo.
Three educators and an accountant completed the special training on *Freshwater prawn hatchery and grow-out operations* in AQD’s Binangonan Freshwater Station from 20 to 24 August. This five-day course is the third one offered since the beginning of the year. It consists of lectures and practical sessions on topics related to breeding & larval rearing, grow-out culture, feeding, and economics.

Mr. Mario Valdez of Quirino State College of Fisheries together with his assistant, Mr. Julis Gamagaygay, praised AQD’s lecturers and training coordinators. “We are confident that we can apply what we learned and we could duplicate AQD’s prawn hatchery facility in the university to assist farmers in their livelihood,” Mr. Valdez said. On the other hand, Mr. Chee Leong Kong of Malaysia compared the training in AQD to the practices of his country: “Malaysia is very advanced in raising freshwater prawn but here in AQD, I learned the techniques on broodstock selection and larval rearing.” Also, accountant Mr. Alfredo David had this to say: “I hope to establish a fishery cooperative in Pampanga that will engage in freshwater prawn grow-out business”. He plans to introduce this species to his neighbors in Pampanga and bring some post larvae and distribute to tilapia farmers.

--- Photos & story by FA Aya

Five business-minded Filipinos from Quezon City, Taguig and Cebu joined the training on *Tilapia hatchery and grow-out operations* conducted by SEAFDEC/AQD at its Binangonan Freshwater Station from 30 July until 3 August. The five trainees are either engaged in tilapia or yet to establish hatchery / grow-out operations. They were given lectures, including genetics & sustainable management of farmed tilapia and aquaculture economics, and hands-on practical sessions in actual tilapia operations. At the closing program, they thanked their AQD mentors, calling the course a vigorous one as well as a refreshing vacation by the Philippines’ largest lake.

--- Photos & story by JA Valera
Health-related activities conducted in AQD

AQD offered its employees and their qualified dependents a series of medical services on 9 and 28 August. With the help of Caduceus Clinical Laboratory and Services, a free Doppler study, bone densitometry and discounted vaccination were given.

Doppler study is an ultrasonic procedure that measures the blood flow and pressure in blood vessels to check the presence of blockage in the circulation (availed of by 70 employees). Bone densitometry scans for osteoporosis risk (availed of by 79 employees). The vaccines that were availed of during the medical service were for flu (availed of by 25 employees and 8 dependents), pneumonia (availed of by 27 employees and 6 dependents) and cervical cancer (availed of by 6 employees).

Dr. Sonia Galleon of Caduceus Clinic and AQD resident physician Dr. Jocelyn Magsico assisted in giving medical advice and necessary prescriptions. This activity is part of the drive to maintain the health and wellness of its employees.

AQD extends help to flood victims

On 8 August, residents of Pipindan (26 families composed of 117 persons including children), the host barangay of AQD’s Binangonan Freshwater Station (BFS) in Rizal evacuated to the BFS dormitory. They occupied 10 rooms and the lobby. The water of Laguna de Bay had risen because of the strong southwest monsoon and flooded their houses. Meanwhile, the local government unit of Binangonan gave the evacuees relief goods on 10 August.

The evacuees expressed their gratitude to AQD for giving them temporary shelter. BFS last hosted evacuees in 2009 during typhoon Ondoy.

New faces @ SEAFDEC/AQD

BAES, Charis J.
She is the new Technical Assistant in the Fish Health Section at RD under Dr. EC Amar. She graduated cum laude in University of the Philippines Diliman with the degree of BS in Biology in 2011.

STINSON, Ma. Haydee S.
She is assigned in Binangonan Freshwater Station’s RD as Administrative Assistant 1. She finished her degree in BS Biology in the University of Rizal System in 2008.

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AQD Matters August 2012 3
A QD hosted a group from DOST including two Balik Scientist program awardees Dr. Mercy Laurino of University of the Philippines-Manila and Dr. Ma. Cecilia Conaco of UP-Marine Science Institute and program coordinator Ms. Theresa Domine. The group toured Igang Marine Station in Guimaras, after which, Dr. Conaco shared with AQD her study entitled *A sponge life story: Genomic events accompanying the pelagobenthic transition in a marine sponge* on 28 August at AQD’s Tigbauan Main Station in Iloilo.

Dr. Conaco, using the demosponge *Amphimedon queenslandica*, characterized the sponge’s metamorphosis from a free-swimming larva into a sessile adult. To identify genome-wide events that accompany the pelagobenthic transition in *A. queenslandica*, she compared global gene expression profiles during four key developmental stages: pre-competent, competent, post-larvae and adult. Dramatic changes in transcription were observed in sponge larvae as they developed more functions (e.g. cellular respiration) needed for settlement. The sponge turns on or off some of its genes during its metamorphosis from a pelagic larva to a benthic adult, depending on environmental demands.

Another seminar was held earlier on 23 August. Ms. Milagros de la Peña, AQD researcher, presented her paper on the *Effect of using thraustochytrid Schizochytrium sp. OT1 as source of lipid and fatty acids for abalone Haliotis asinina Linne juvenile practical diet.*

The push for alternative sources of lipids and fatty acids was due to the dwindling supply and increasing price of the two common sources of lipids and fatty acids (cod liver and soybean oil) in abalone diet. Thraustochytrids are common marine microheterotrophs akin to algae which contain high protein and DHA content that makes them the perfect substitute to imported oil. It turns out that the modified diet containing thraustochytrid is more effective than the original diet.