

Green Coast

For nature and people
after the tsunami



Protected Area Management: Policy Issues

Park Management Boards and Participatory Management Planning

The New Constitution (1997) provides a refreshing legal framework for natural resources management in Thailand, particularly with respect to people's participation. In response, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment produced a 'Policy and Strategy' document (May 2003). Within this document, is a notable section, as follows:

Approach 9 – Area-based administrative management with stakeholder participation.

- (i) *Develop.... specific management plans for natural resources and the environment*
- (ii) *Promote area-based administrative management, development and use of natural resourcesbased upon a multidisciplinary approach and good governance principle*
- (iii) *Build mechanisms to manage natural resources and the environment with people's participation at all levels*

In 2002, WWF conducted an analysis of protected area legislation in 21 countries, comprising 34 documents, and identified the key institutional bodies and key issues contained with them. Figure 1 shows the generalized model

WWF identified three pillars for effective protected area management:

(i) the appointment of a competent national park committee operating at the national level; (ii) the establishment of a park management board comprising of representatives from all key stakeholder groups; (iii) the preparation of a management plan. These three pillars almost perfectly match the statements published in the Ministry's "Strategy and Policy" document.

Of note, the Director-General of the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation issued a departmental order on 6th February 2006 establishing protected area advisory boards in every national park and wildlife sanctuary across the country.

Under the Green Coast initiative, WWF's Marine and Coastal Resources Unit has supported the national park authorities in their endeavours to establish this key institutional body for natural resource management at Had Thai Muang. As a result, the Had Thai Muang Marine National Park Advisory Board was established on and is one of the first to be established in the country. This committee comprises key stakeholders from both the local and provincial level; it includes representatives from the local communities, as well as the Department of Fisheries, Department of Marine and Coastal Resources, local politicians and WWF-Thailand. This board is expected to provide advice on issues relating to all aspects of national park management, in all aspects.



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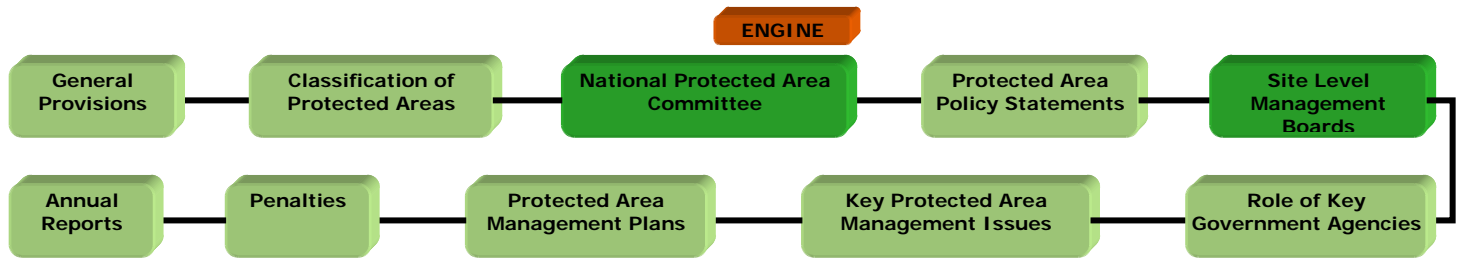


Figure 1: Generic Train generated for Guiding Protected Area Management

While creating a new institutional body is very credible, getting the Had Thai Muang National Park Advisory Board to function correctly is another matter. Of direct relevance, WWF has been field-testing the involvement of the park management board in a participatory management planning process at Kuiburi National Park, in Prachuap Khiri Khan Province. The process optimizes local stakeholder participation and local ownership, including the involvement of a core team of national park personnel, generating a future vision for the reserve in question. WWF Thailand will field-test this participatory management planning process with the Had Thai Muang National Park Advisory Committee during the next phase.

In preparation to develop a strong management plan at Had Thai Muang, staff from WWF’s Marine and Coastal Resources Unit have focused their energies on understanding key management issues. These have included the management of the turtle population; the management of the coral reefs and developing sustainable tourism within the marine national park. This has enabled both the marine park staff, as well as WWF, to understand the key threats to the natural resource base and their causes. It also has identified conflicts of interests between the different resource user-groups; for example, between dive operators and fishermen.

The park authorities and WWF have strategies on turtle conservation. These include measures to counteract the robbery of sea turtle eggs. Furthermore, for successful turtle conservation, monitoring of offshore and inshore threats at sea need to be mitigated, including the suppression of harmful fishing activities. The park staff and WWF have also collated baseline data on the live reef fish trade and destructive fishing techniques that threaten the integrity of the reef ecosystem. Moreover, a patrolling system has been developed to assist park staff conserve the vulnerable resources more effectively. Another focus of discussion is the participatory demarcation of the national park boundary.

The Had Thai Muang Advisory Committee will develop policies or plans, and provide a forum to voice grievances, comments or suggestions from the villagers themselves. This mechanism will enable the national park authorities and the local communities to better understand each other. Additionally, the committee will respect any rules or agreements announced. These may include agreement on replanting mangrove trees to replace each mangrove tree cut and utilized, as well as involvement on artificial reef installation.

Most significantly, all these interventions cannot be accomplished successfully without local collaboration and cooperation. In this light, it is hoped that the Green Coast Initiative will be able stimulate both the management board members – through the Had Thai Muang Marine National Park Advisory Boards – and through the local villagers themselves – in developing a model management system` for the long-term conservation of the natural resources.

Encouraging Community Participation

To stimulate positive communication, between the local communities and the Had Thai Muang national park authorities, a small grant mechanism is an approach being utilized to strengthen participation in livelihood and natural resources recovery. The establishment of artificial reef is an outstanding recovery program that has been proposed from the local communities. This intervention prevents commercial trawlers encroaching within three kilometres of the coast, including the rehabilitating coral reef zones (special preservation zone); the artificial reef also helps to generate more income for fishery-based families. Moreover, the initiative is expected to attract various coral reef fish species within six months of setting these reefs in place. This grant will be disbursed and operated by a group of villagers. Furthermore, greater participation is expected particularly in sea turtle conservation, ornamental trade-fish prevention and demarcating the park boundary.

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