



**Report**  
**Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Area and Season Closure in Ao Trat, Trat Province”**  
**29<sup>th</sup> January 2016**  
**KU Home, Kasetsart University, Bangkok**  
**(REBYC-II CTI; GCP/RAS/269/GFF)**

Report by

*Dr. Mala Supongpan and Mrs. Tiwarat Sinanan*

### **1. Background to REBYC-II CTI Project**

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (“FAO”) and the Department of Fisheries, Thailand has signed the Letter of Agreement (LOA) for the execution of the GEF supported project “Strategies for trawl fisheries by-catch management” (REBYC-II CTI; GCP /RAS/269/GFF). Thailand by the Department of Fisheries, Marine Fisheries Research and Development Division is implementing the project at two sites. Prachuab Kiri Khan and Chumphon is the first site and focuses on the enlargement of mesh size codends for trawl fisheries. The Central Gulf Marine Fisheries Research and Development Center (CMDEC), located in Chumphon leads research on these experiments. The second site is in Trad province, and focuses on management measures for closed areas and closed seasons to protect fish larvae and spawners. The Eastern Marine Fisheries Research and Development (EMDEC), located in Rayong province takes the lead in this research works.

In this connection, the Marine Fisheries Research Development Division under the DOF wanted to present the results of the REBYC project studies which related to area and season closure in Ao Trat. I.e. the Trat trawl fisheries situation; fish larvae identify and distribution, social economic studies, fisheries law and legal review. Based on discussion around these presentations management measures for Ao Trat will be proposed.

Findings from these studies have already been shown to local stakeholders in Ao Trat at four meetings. Now, the DOF seeks wider opinions from the Advisory Committee to consult, consider and comment on the proposed management measures for Ao Trat. Their comments and recommendations will be useful to further develop management measures for spatial and seasonal closure of Ao Trat, as a conservation area for fish larvae and spawners, including some rare species.

## **Specific Objectives of the REBYC-II CTI Project in Thailand under the 2<sup>nd</sup> LOA.**

1. Consider the proposed measures for area and season closure in Ao Trat,
2. Consider practical way to implement the measures,
3. Consider the strategies for by-catch management,
4. To agree courses of action with relevant stakeholders and send to the DOF Conservation Committee for approval

## **2. Summary of Advisory Committee Meeting (29<sup>th</sup> January 2016).**

The 31 participants of the meeting were government officials, private sector representatives, fishers, experts, observers and organizers. The meeting was held at KU Home, Kasetsart University, Bangkok on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

Mr. Suchart Sangchan introduced the meeting and Mr. Pirochana Saiklieng, DOF fisheries consultant presided over the meeting. National experts and government researchers presented results of the studies on; the fisheries status of Trat; fish larvae and distribution; and socio-economic studies which can be summarized as follows:

### **1. Background of the project**

A short description of the project REBYC-II CTI; GCP/RAS/269/GFF "Strategies for trawl fisheries by-catch management" was presented at the meeting.

### **2. Fisheries status in Ao Trat**

The decline in fisheries was shown from DOF research vessel (OBT) surveys which show catch rates continue to decrease.

- Most fish now caught are of a small sized and have a low value.
- Most fish caught were smaller than size at first maturity, except for shellfish
- Four species (*Metapenaeus*, *Trachypenaeus*, swimming crab and short-necked clam) are considered over exploited,
- There is an ongoing threat to rare species;
- Conflict has occurred in the short-necked clam fishing grounds causing several private agencies and local people to come together and co-operate over protection of the fishing grounds. A good example of co-management.

### **3. Conclusions from four stakeholder consultation meetings.**

The meetings had proposed the area for conservation to be within 6 miles along the shoreline, starting from Lamsong Point to Ao Trat and to the Cambodia border. Fishers were do not agree with this measure and have called for further research. In the last meeting: (Public Hearing Meeting in Trat), the meeting concluded that there should be a ban on fishing by trawler, purse seine with purse line, purse seine with gillnet, gillnet with mesh size less than 4.5 cm in areas 1, 2 and 3, during the months of March to May, annually.

**Dr. Kungwan Chantrachote**, Consultant for Fisheries of Kasetsart University commented that the management measures proposed were appropriate and relevant to the results of the research work. If fishers were not prepared to follow, there should be another option e.g. limit mesh size, ban the possession of small mesh gear, no possession of small sized

fish, as other countries have implemented. For management purposes a single measure cannot be implemented for multispecies fisheries.

**Mr. Pairochana Saikliang**, Consultant for Fisheries of DOF suggested that for multi-species fisheries management in the tropical zone, there was no single gear fit. One gear selected may not fit to another species, therefore other options should be considered, e.g. area and seasonal closure, This might be a good practice for multi-species fisheries in tropical zones like Thailand.

**Mr. Somsak Chullasorn**, Consultant for Fisheries of DOF commented that management in Ao Trat should include Ecological Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM)

**Miss Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk**, who works for an NGO in Trat also gave some comments: Both commercial and small scale fishers want to solve the problems about data, based on the number and type of fishing gear which were not detailed. Some small-scale fishers were missing from the record and some groups could not be classified by horsepower or gross tonnage categories. However, many fishers want to cooperate with the government and have started a network to revise the number of boats and types of fishing gear used in Trat.

Laws are necessary but effort should be made to raise awareness of fishers. Once they understood better they be more willing to cooperate. This kind of research was appreciated, and formed a good basis for developing management measures in Ao Trat. There should also be some mechanism to monitor or follow up the results of fisheries management in Ao Trat, that would affect to local community and evaluate the stocks.

#### **4. Fish larvae identification & distribution (Dr. Apichart Termvidckakorn, national expert).**

Dr. Apichart presented the results of the studies as follows:

The total number of fish larvae species caught during the research in Ao Trat was 35 species, 31 genera, 7 orders. Most of these were larvae of small sized fish such as dwarf threadfin fish, cardinal fish (Apogonidae) and stone fish (*Synala horrida*). The results were similar to EMDEC previous work. The most abundant month for fish larvae is in May, when 8,133 individuals of the genera Gobiidae, Clupeidae, Nemipteridae, Carangidae and Apogonidae were collected. The first and second ranked sites of abundance were in Area 2 and 3 in March, at Ao Trat to Hau Maew mouth.

#### **5. Results on the studies of socio-economic of fishers in Trat province, (Dr. Sirisuda Jumnongsong, national expert)**

Dr. Sirisuda presented information on 233 interviewed Trat fishing boat owners during September to November 2014. The fishing fleet included 193 owners of small boats, (less than 10 m); and 40 owners of boats bigger than 10 m, Information on 40 owners could be obtained from searching the Ministry of Human Development data sources. Results can be summarized as follows:

- Small boats were used for shrimp gillnet, crab gillnet, crab trap, fish gillnet fishing, whereas medium size boats were used for push netting, trawling and purse seining;
- The major fishing ground was in Area 4 and 1 (these areas were not disturbed by commercial fisheries),
- More than 83% of fishers are able to fish under the present situation,
- From the questionnaire/interviews, 14 management proposals issues were listed and fishers were requested to complete. Fishers were opposed to issues 1 to 6, which are about limiting fishing, effort; closed areas and seasons. They agreed for the remaining issues which included encouraging tourism crab bank programs and squid eggs program.

Fishers recommended the following actions:

- Some measures are required to solve the destruction of natural resources which were caused by over capacity, a growing fisher population and illegal fishing,
- Some fishers did not know about the fishery law. It is necessary to educate people so that laws and bylaws for local fishers can become easier to understand,
- Local fishers think that government officials cannot enforce on a full scale. Of those interviewed only 35-43% of fishers said that they were willing to follow rules and regulations.
- Strengthening fishers in decision-making on fisheries management issues should continue. 44% of stakeholders interviewed claimed that previously they had had no chance to participate;
- A fisheries management consultation meeting should be held to increase knowledge and understanding of the new fishery law and regulations.

## **6. Miss Chalati Chanchompoo, (Researcher from Department of Coastal Resources**

Miss Chalati presented on rare species in Ao Trat (the same presentation as in the Public Hearing Meeting held in Trat). Rare species, found in 2014 composed of Irrawaddy Dolphin (about 200 individuals), Humpback Dolphin (15 individuals), Bighead Dolphin (50 individuals). Latter surveys found only 164 Irrawaddy Dolphin and 7 Humpback Dolphin in Ao Trat. From the carcasses of dolphin showed that their death was either by natural causes illness; trash eating; entanglement in fishing gear and from hunting. Nowadays, some fishers try to protect these rare resources and are hopeful to take advantage of them through tourism. They have established a tourism network for this purpose

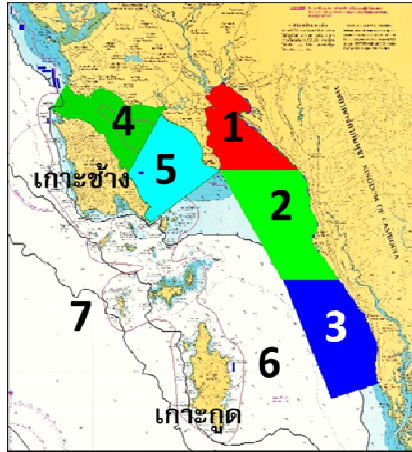
**7. Mr. Danai Chantasee**, fisher leader in Trat, was grateful to the project and suggested to DOF that small scale fishing boats should have to register under their fishing season condition:

- a) Fishing by season,
- b) Majority farming and only part-time fishing,
- c) Only fishing, this group has to be taken care of if management measure affected them, Other livelihoods should be promoted e.g. eco-tourism.

8. **Ms. Archan Penchan** commented that most fishers accepted the fishing area measure and it was not clear how local fishers could participate. In Trat province, 39 local community groups have been established, comprised of 26 coastal fisheries groups, 4 marine fisheries groups, 4 processing groups, and 5 coastal aquaculture groups.
9. **Mr. Sanguansak**, a local fisher, pointed out that small sized fish are captured to make low value trash fish. Dr. Apichart explained that some small sized fish could be used for human consumption, whilst some were consumed by larger fish. All fish have their life cycle in the ecological system.

In the afternoon session, the participants considered the proposed management measures in Ao Trat. It was concluded that:

- The management measures in Ao Trat should be monitored and evaluate by DOF, after they had been implemented for a while;
  - Standard measures should be formulated, so that they can be used in other places;
  - Consultation should be made amongst the fishers and agencies concerned to come up with sustainable fisheries management through the formation of a provincial committee;
  - Possession of small-sized fish inconsistent with the management measures in Ao Trat should be considered a breach of the law;
  - The National Park area could be included in the area & season closure management,
  - The definition and concept of artisanal fisheries should be clarified;
  - A follow up project should be set up after the management measures have been introduced for a time. Monitoring and evaluation for review and improvement is important;
  - Conflict between stakeholders should be resolved;
  - Understanding of management measure should be extended to house wives as they sometimes have to help make decision for fishers in their families;
  - Octopus pots and ray line fishing should be prohibited because it destroys sea turtles and octopus pot fishing now occupies a large area;
  - Minimum mesh sizes for trawl cod-ends should be introduced;
  - Two winged beam trawls should be banned;
  - Management measures are required for small boat light luring around Chang island;
  - A long time frame for management including practical implementations should be formulated.
10. **Output from the last meeting in Trat** (Public Hearing Meeting, 25<sup>th</sup> December 2015 was shown in the figure.



Ao Trat, Trat province

The figure shows the proposed areas for fisheries management in Ao Trat, based on the research results. Proposed management measures include; no fishing by trawlers, no fishing by purse seine with purse lines, no fishing with purse seines with gillnets, no fishing using gillnets with mesh size of less than 4.5 cm, no fishing in the areas 1, 2 and 3 in March, April and May annually.

## Photographs from the Meeting

