

Semi-annual Report of the

Nam Theun 2 Watershed Management and Protection Authority (NT2 WMPA)

November 15, 2005

The NT2 WMPA was formed under Prime Ministerial Decree 39 of 2005 and is tasked with the protection of the watershed of the Nam Theun and the sustainable development of the ethnic minority groups living in 31 villages within the area. A further 77 peripheral impact zone (PIZ) villages are also included in NT2 WMPA programs.

The watershed covers a protected area important for its large size of approximately 4,000 km², considerable biological diversity and large numbers of rare, threatened and endangered flora and fauna species including some thought to be near extinction.

Activities during the Past 6 Months

The NT2 WMPA has been operating out of temporary office accommodation in Thakhek and Khamkert and with less than 50% of its planned staffing level. Despite this, 8,621 person-days of patrolling have been undertaken in enclave areas and 3,203 person-days within the PIZ areas. At the check points 1,552 vehicle checks have been undertaken. Any traps, snares, hunting huts, hunting tools located in these operations were collected as evidence or destroyed, and offenders arrested. Offenders were required to attend training in observance of the forestry law. Within the PIZ areas there were 50 cases of arrest, with 22 cases in which offenders were fined (amounting to 110,945,000 Kip) and 28 cases in which offenders were required to attend special classes and then released. In each case all evidence was confiscated.

In addition two Training of Trainer sessions were organized, with 32 people attending. Information on laws and regulations relating to the use of natural forest resources were disseminated in 18 villages, with 1,054 villagers participating in these sessions.

Boundary Demarcation and Cooperation

In order to clearly identify the boundary of the Nam Theun 2 watershed 600 concrete posts

produced, of which 487 have already been installed.

In addition, 22 large sign boards were erected and 4,500 small metal signs were produced with 4,112 being installed to date.



A total boundary length of 236 Km has been marked out. This has involved the investment of 8,684 villagers person-days and 2,018 person-days by government staff. In cooperation with the Vietnamese government a number of Boundary Cooperation Meetings have been held: one each in Lao PDR, Vietnam and Bangkok.

SEMFOP Consultation

The document that guides the operation of the NT2 WMPA is the Social and Environment Management Framework and 1st Operational Plan (SEMFOP-1). As such it is important that, to the extent possible, all project partners understand their role as described in SEMFOP and how their input is important to the overall strategy of watershed protection and management.



In order to engage villagers and village heads consultations were conducted in 108 Villages (31 enclave and 77 PIZ villages) with almost 1600 villagers participating. In addition SEMFOP workshops were conducted at the districts and provincial level with 82 people attending in total. New material is being produced to assist in training WMPA and District staff and village leadership groups including members of the Village Conservation Monitoring Units (VCMU).

Board Meetings and Field Visits

The training material will also be used to orient the NT2 WMPA Board of Directors on the way in which SEMFOP guides the development of monthly, quarterly and annual workplans and budgets. The Board has met a total of five times and plans to hold its next meeting at the WMPA headquarters in Nakai. The Chair, and Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Dr Sien Saphangthong, has made two visits to the site, the most recent being on 7th and 8th November

2005. The Chair used this visit to orient himself on progress in settling in to the renovated NPA offices and to provide advice and encouragement on the activities of the WMPA.



Summary of Biodiversity Field Survey Work in the Nakai Nam Theun Watershed

With the assistance of Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) the NT2 WMPA has implemented a biodiversity monitoring project in the watershed area.

The first survey was conducted in October/November 2005 with a team consisting of District and WMPA staff, a herpetologist, a zoologist and ornithologist and the WCS project supervisor and technical advisor. Participants from three ethnic minority groups, nine villages and four sub-catchments were interviewed to provide a broad cross-section of communities and conditions within the watershed.

Seven of the nine villages already had a Village Conservation Monitoring Unit (VCMU) which had been set up by previous work in the NPA. These VCMU members will play a major role in monitoring of wildlife as well as undertaking compliance patrolling in the future.



From these interviews, a monitoring methodology capable of being implemented by local people will be developed by the end of November.

In addition to the commissioned research of WCS, WMPA cooperates with international academic institutions such as the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh (RBGE). RBGE's Darwin Initiative Project 163/13/007, titled '*Taxonomic Training in a Neglected Biodiversity Hotspot in Lao PDR*' has recently concluded its second field trip to the NT2 watershed area (October 19 - November 6, 2005) in which three RBGE team members were joined by three people from the Forest Research Center, three from National University of Laos, two from WMPA and four trainees from FRC and NUoL.



The visit covered four main areas over 18 days and resulted in the addition of 650 herbarium collections, 110 living collections (mainly non-

flowering Orchidaceae; all of this material is currently held at NUoL Orchid nursery to be cultivated for further identification by NUoL staff. No material will be exported.

Although it is estimated that 400 to 500 species samples have been collected from the watershed, most collections have only been identified to family level at this stage.

Significant finds include:

- *Cephalotaxus mannii*
- Sapotaceae a new country record (previously thought to be endemic to Vietnam)
- More than 300 of the collections will represent new provincial records;
- Collections of members of the family Lentibulariaceae, Burmanniaceae, Balanophoraceae, Chloranthaceae, Polygalaceae, Theaceae, Ebenaceae may contain new species or new species/family records for Lao PDR. It will be at least 12 months before we can be certain

The field team reported having received very strong support from local people, especially in Ban Macfeung and Ban Nameau and attributed this to the good relations established during the previous visit as well as the positive relations between the local people and the WMPA staff who accompanied the team.

During the previous visit, the Darwin team conducted a survey of the village trees surrounding the school at Ban Macfeung. These included several trees with ethnobotanical significance (either edible or medicinal). During this last visit, trees were labelled with both scientific and local names. A small competition was organised with the school children in which they were asked to name each species. The aim was to encourage their interest in their local plants. This activity was well received by the children and their parents.



Planned Activities in the Next Half Year

On 18 November 2005 NT2-WMPA will formally take over the new headquarters in Nakai and has a branch office in Laksao. By December the WMPA will be at 75% staffing level with full staffing and all technical advisors in place by February. Office and field equipment procurement is progressing and management systems are being established. Coordination systems with all stakeholders are also being developed. During the next month a GIS /database system will be established to assist in the management of the watershed for conservation of flora and fauna and the sustainable development of the ethnic minority groups that rely on forest resources for their subsistence.

An information dissemination and awareness raising campaign is being developed to utilise the local media. This will build on the SEMFOP seminars and support training activities with the aim of building strong cooperation between NT2 WMPA and village organisational structures, villagers and District staff assigned to WMPA activities.



Forest landuse planning, allocation and management (FLUPAM) activities are planned for 14 villages (five enclave villages and nine PIZ villages) during the current fiscal year. Improvement in the patrolling network in 14 villages and expanding into a further 18 will cover the most critical area of the watershed and the PIZ. This will be supported by the establishment of eight patrolling checkpoints/gates.



During the next six months WMPA will continue its trans-boundary cooperation with Vietnam and complete the watershed boundary demarcation.

Livelihood development activities in support of increasing food security and improvements in community development will be undertaken, as

will improvements in education and health system.

RBGE Future plans

The next period of field work for the Darwin project is scheduled for late April early May 2006 for a period of up to 4 weeks. It is likely that the same number of participants will be involved.



As with the previous visits, the main objectives are

- to provide training in field identification and collection of higher vascular plants,
- to collect specimen that can be used in the follow-up training at NUoL in Vientiane
- to contribute to the production of some of the project's major outputs (a preliminary National Species checklist and a preliminary checklist of the plants of NNT NBCA)

Discussions with WCS and WMPA staff have raised the possibility of targeting plant collections in areas where WCS and the WMPA are likely to be carrying out biodiversity monitoring programmes. These areas will be identified by early December 2005. The Darwin team is very keen to cooperate in this work and meetings with WMPA and WCS staff are planned in relation to potential for collaboration during the next field visit.