

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE PILOT STUDY OF CORAL REEF ZONING IN TRAD PROVINCE, THAILAND

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There are approximately 16 km² of coral reefs in Trad Province, Gulf of Thailand where are remarkably utilized for tourism activities with increased trend. The cabinet has adopted coral reef zoning in Thailand, under national policies and measures for coral reef conservation, since 1992 however it seems to be unsuccessful and impractical at local levels. In order to prepare the revised draft of coral reef zoning, a pilot study in Trad Province was carried out during April 2002 – April 2003. The Office of Natural Resources and Environment Policy and Planning and consultants prepared the first draft from the results of discussion with involved agencies, managers and experts. The perception of the pilot study concentrated on importance of community participation from the initial phase of planning until implementation, assessment and monitoring processes. Implementation of coral reef zoning was performed by cooperation of government authorities, local district administration, stakeholders and local people. Assessment of coral reef zoning implementation was periodically evaluated in order to revise properly the draft before the national meeting to finalize the draft of coral reef zoning. The coral reefs have been classified into 3 zones, i.e., reef managed for general uses, reef managed for tourism and recreation (intensive tourism and ecotourism) and reef managed for reserved ecosystem. Most coral reefs are assigned as ecotourism zone. There were several problems arisen from the pilot study, e.g. participation and taking leadership of local district administration, establishing networks of tourist operators, hotels and resorts, tour boats and diving instructors for effective management, establishing the committee to regulate mooring buoys, establishing the volunteer group for coral reef protection, encouraging mariculture and developing artificial reefs to reduce coral reef damage from illegal fishing and raising public awareness through various media. For coral reef zoning to be successful, local communities must participate actively in cooperation with local district administrations and involved stakeholders.