

Importance of Ecosystem Monitoring in Capacity Building and Conservation of Vulnerable Coastal and Marine Ecosystem of Soc Trang Province, Vietnam

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Soc Trang, a coastal province in the Mekong Delta of Southern Vietnam, has a 72 km coastline with three large estuaries in Dinh An, Tran De and My Thanh, which are under significant pressure of various environmental changes such as rapid loss of coastal wetlands due to unplanned sprawl of shrimp farms, water pollution due to commercial and domestic wastewater discharge, mangrove forest degradation and saltwater intrusion due to sea level rise, among others. Response measures to these urgent challenges are almost non-existence due to provincial government's lack in capacity and human and financial resources. Most significant challenges are lacking scientific information on coastal ecosystem of Soc Trang. In this realization, Soc Trang Province initiated coastal ecosystem survey project during 2015-2017 in collaboration with the experts of Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation and Can Tho University with the financial support from Yeosu Expo Foundation. Major outcomes of the project include: i) increased capacity of Soc Trang Province in coastal ecosystem survey; ii) scientifically sound data and information of vulnerable ecosystem constituents of Soc Trang Province; and iii) identified locations of potential coastal ecosystem conservation areas of Soc Trang. Among the major activities of the project, ecosystem and water quality monitoring trainings conducted at KOEM in RO Korea were the key component. In particular, high-level participation (Deputy Governors) to the training activities enabled broader understanding of the values of coastal ecosystem and acceleration of policy measure implementation at the provincial level. The Deputy Governor supported the designation of the coastal ecosystem conservation areas of the Province.

Keywords: Soc Trang, vulnerable coastal species, coastal ecosystem, capacity building, coastal ecosystem conservation areas

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