



Rural Training Center-Thailand

2009 Feb-Mar RTC-TH Update

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Community-based environmental education for the self-sufficiency and sustainability of small rural family farms

You may post questions / comments to the Discussion area of our website

Winter is Fishing Season

The winter dry season is traditional time for construction. For reservoirs and fish ponds, it the ideal time to perform maintenance and repairs. Draining water from reservoirs and ponds is also a good time to catch fish.

Ban Na Fa villagers organized a fishing day to raise funds for the village and to clear fish from the reservoir prior to maintenance operations. People paid 100 THB for a permit to fish.

Village committee members stood watch overnight to keep people from starting too early. Some people



A big early morning turn out at the reservoir.



A few hundred people came out to fish. camped out overnight to claim a good spot. People fished from the shore, wading into the water, or from boats. They used throw nets, dipping nets, and scoop nets.

With so many people fishing and the water level dropping, the biggest catches took place in the first 30-60 minutes. Some folks were happy just to catch fish to eat and to socialize with others. Some successful fishermen were enterprising and began to sell their catch at 65THB / kg and more than earned back their ticket fee. 🌐



A variety of fish were found in the reservoir.

<i>In This Issue</i>	
<i>Winter is Fishing Season</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Fishing Out Our Ponds</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Tha Ko Revisited</i>	<i>3-4</i>
<i>Ban Na Fa Temple Ceremony</i>	<i>5-6</i>

Fishing Out Our Ponds

We had to drain the fish ponds for maintenance and repair work. Some villagers offered a lump sum cash payment to fish out the ponds. These were distant relatives from Wang Wa village (closer to Thawangpha).

It was interesting to watch them fish. In contrast to commercial fishermen, the people seemed to be on a family outing. They were fishing as though for fun with laughter and small talk.



Unlike commercial fishing by long drag nets, they used throw nets and dipping nets.



The floating net cage used as a holding pen until the end of the day when the fish are taken to market.



Pahtong, a local variety of fish, was one of the surprise catches of the day.



Other interesting catches were the Plabu (left photo) and fresh water eels. We have no idea where these came from as we had only stocked catfish and tilapia in our ponds. 🐟



Tha Ko Revisited



Saifon catches up with many of her former staff.



A small "reunion" gathering in the Tha Ko SAO area.

Mr. Sompat, an agriculture officer invited us to visit his new home. He is an advocate of sustainable living. His new home included an integrated fish / duck pond supplying fresh food for his family.

Since leaving her government career, many changes took place in the structure and functions of the SAO. These changes brought significant pay increases and authority to the subdistrict level. Overall, Saifon's brief reunion with her team was heartwarming.

It is rewarding to see how a simple grassroots project launched by 2 volunteers can have long lasting and sustainable impact on the lives of rural villagers. 🌱

It was more than 10 years ago that the first trial run of Greg Lee's community-based environmental education took place under the umbrella of the Los Angeles Geographical Society (LAGS). Summer 1999 was the start of what is now the Rural Training Center-Thailand (RTCTH).

Saifon and Greg Lee made a brief visit to the Mae Suai District of Chiang Rai Province where Saifon served as a Thai Ministry of Interior, Subdistrict Administrative Officer. The current Tha Ko Chief Administrative Officer was in attendance. It was surprising to see many of her staff former staff still working together. She gave many of them their start toward regular employment, and encouraged them to study to advance themselves.

Many of the 27 head villagers came by to greet and pay their respects to her. Also present were people who were trained in the early days of the program. Some reported they are still composting and organized group composting.



Mr. Sompat's integrated fish / duck pond in Tha Ko.

Rural Training Center-Thailand: 2009 Feb-Mar RTC-TH Update
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Saifon's government furnished house at Ban Tha Ko was her home from ~1998-2002.



Mr. Kamkom, current Tha Ko SAO Chief with Saifon, the former Tha Ko SAO Chief.



The office is more crowded now than it was in 1999.



Former co-workers happy to see the "boss" again.



Saifon and Mr. Boontan, one of our ardent composting supporters.



Aoi (Saifon's oldest sister), Mr. Sampat (Agriculture Officer), Saifon, and Nhum (Aoi's son).

It was good to see friends from the beginning of the program that grew into the RTC-TH. Mr. Sampat, the Agriculture Officer, started his own effort in sustainability nearby the Ban Tha Ko SAO.

It is encouraging to see how a simple volunteer effort could take hold and be effective with so little cost involved. All it takes is simple people to people action based on mutual respect, mutual benefit. 🌱



Ban Na Fa Temple Celebration

A major community event in March was the celebration at the temple in honor of completing the construction of a meeting hall. The festivities began with a parade from Na Fa Elementary School to the temple.



The street was awash with colors and filled with the beat of drums and cymbals.



The procession enters the temple gate.



Almost everyone in the village is involved leaving a mere handful of villagers as spectators for the parade. What a contrast to the crowds of spectators typical of the Pasadena Rose Parade!



No fancy floats, just plain pick-up trucks to transport the offerings to the temple.



The village is subdivided into cluster of households. Each cluster makes an offering to the temple adorned with a wide variety of decorations, small gifts, and cash.



The parade ends at the temple where ceremonies and prayers are held for the new facilities.



And with everyone present amidst all the color and excitement, what better time for a family photo to commemorate the event? 🌐