

**LOCAL PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION AND WILLINGNESS TO PAY
TOWARDS PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT OF
RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN WETLANDS OF WAT
PAILOM & AMPUVARARAM TEMPLE WILDLIFE NON
HUNTING AREA, PATHUM THANI PROVINCE, THAILAND**

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ABSTRACT

Wetland in Pailom and Ampuvararam Temple Wildlife Non Hunting Area located in an outskirt of Bangkok is equivalent to IUCN Category VI protected areas. It is enlisted as one of the high priority wetlands because of its global ecological significance as a breeding habitat for the migratory birds including Asian Open Bill *Anastomus oscitans*. Presence of temples within the protected area top-ups its significance culturally, attracting several thousands of visitors each year. Yet, lack of systematic and participatory recreational management mechanism has not been able to tap the economic benefits accruing from the recreational opportunities.

This study examined the local people's perception about wetlands conditions, existing management mechanism as well as their willingness to participate and willingness to pay in management of recreational opportunities. Semi structured questionnaire was administered through personal interview based on Contingent Valuation Method. 62 household heads of the village *Ban Soun Ma Maoung Tai* (Moo 5) in Pathum Thani Province of Thailand were interviewed based on a census method. Local people perceived that i) ecological integrity of wetlands must be maintained to sustain the economic benefits ii) conservation initiatives of management agency was praiseworthy but shadowed by its reluctance to involve local people in management decision making iii) systematic and participatory management of recreational opportunities would be economically beneficial.

Quantitative analysis indicated that each household was willing to pay 56.30 baht/month towards a community savings fund that would support activities towards wise use of wetlands. Multiple regression analysis revealed that respondent's willingness to pay amount dependent upon education, years of residence, perception towards participatory management of recreational opportunities and communities having rights to participate in decision makings. Qualitative analysis revealed that i) ownership of the wetlands, ii) lack of collaboration amongst the immediate stakeholders and iii) conflicting policies for wetlands and non hunting areas were major hurdles towards the wise use of wetlands.

It is recommended that this particular wetland be developed as a model of 'wise use of wetlands' by initiating systematic and participatory recreational management. It is also deemed necessary to amend existing legislation concerned with the protected areas especially those containing wetlands to ensure people's participation towards wise use.

KEYWORDS: ASIAN OPEN BILL / CONTINGENT VALUATION METHOD / PARTICIPATORY RECREATION MANAGEMENT/ PERCEPTIONS / WETLANDS / WILDLIFE NON HUNTING AREA / WISE USE / WILLINGNESS TO PAY