

Progress at EMCOR Information Center at Mae Pim Beach, Rayong, Thailand

CHANPEN WUTTHIVORAWONG, MICKMIN CHARUCHINDA, POTCHANA BOONYANATE AND SUPAWAT KAN-ATIREKLAP
Eastern Marine and Coastal Resources Research Center
Department of Marine and Coastal Resources
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
Rayong, Thailand
Email: mannai@loxinfo.co.th

ABSTRACT

Providing knowledge of marine resources is one method to encourage local people and tourists in conservation and to be conscious of marine resources. EMCOR performed an operation at EMCOR Information Center at February, 2004. The information center comprised fiberglass models of endangered species, similar as in nature and used multimedia displays. The result of the operation indicated that the information center was attractive to visitors. Thai visitors were a large proportion of total visitors. The number of visitors increased in the high season. In future planning, the information center will be added into guide books and provide displays in English language to increase visitor numbers.

KEYWORDS: EMCOR, Information Center, Rayong province, East Coast of Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Establishment of the information center was one of the government strategies to convince local people and tourists to conserve marine resources by themselves.

The Information center will be able to provide knowledge for local people and tourists, using multimedia presentations inside the center. Themes of media focus on traditional understanding of elements of the coastal environment of direct use to local populations, including an understanding of local oceanographic factors (tides, wave refraction patterns) for navigation and to help predict the movement of fishery resources and knowledge of biological resources, most commonly linked in the coastal environment with the exploitation of fish, crustacean and other marine fauna. An understanding of the schooling habits of a particular species of fish, for example, may be used to design more efficient ways of catching those fish with available technology and traditional knowledge and practice in coastal management (Kay and Alder, 2000).

The provision of knowledge about their marine resources, conservation of marine resources to strong communities of local people could be successful in conserving endangered species (Adulyanukosol, 2004). Interaction between local people and tourists from boat service for local people and increasing of income for tourists should be initiated for ecotourism in Rayong province in the future (Okuyama, 2003).

In the last year, Eastern Marine and Coastal Resource Research (EMCOR) in cooperation with Administrative of Sunthonphu

Sub-District, Rayong province and Ford Motor Company, Thailand, renovated EMCOR Information Center at Mae Pim Beach, Rayong Province. This information center was used for the distribution of knowledge and issues relating to the ecology of marine, marine animal, marine environment, activities of EMCOR, characteristic of shoreline and interesting places in Rayong province.

The operating procedure, the result of operation problems and recommendations are shown in follow.

OPERATING PROCEDURE

Staff are available to assist and give information to visitors. Assistance to visitors is provided over a 7 hour period, between 8.30 am to 4.30 pm (except lunch time) daily. The information center has a new appearance and facilities as shown in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2. External building renovation consisted of fiberglass models of endangered species and a rearrangement of stalls around the building into an organized area. Internal building renovation provided information with multimedia displays such as web pages on computer, endangered species feature on TV, posters and leaflet. Tourists were able to search for interesting places in Rayong province from web pages and posters. Moreover, they could hire a boat from local people for sight-seeing visits to Mannai Island and nearby and sometimes for fishing or diving. An exhibition of the sea turtle's life cycle, a study of sea turtle migration using satellite tracking device and a small sea turtle rearing pond were added in August 2004 (Fig. 3).

The center has requested local people and tourists to cooperate with the government unit on special days. One such occasion was on the Queen's birthday, people cooperated by releasing young sea turtle to their habitat, while being able to learn from the education facilities inside the building. Furthermore, a large group of visual

education students from the eastern part of Thailand (Fig. 4) were received and given some experience.



Fig. 1 Changes to the outside of the building, comprising of fiberglass models of endangered species (right hand side picture).



Fig. 2 Before and after, stalls have been placed around the outside of the building in an organized area (as shown on left-hand and right hand side picture respectively.)



Fig. 3 Attractive multimedia inside internal building is shown on left-hand side picture and exhibition of sea turtle's life cycle is shown on right hand side picture.



Fig. 4 Conservation activities and visitors at EMCOR Information Center.

THE RESULT OF OPERATION

The list of visitors classified visitors into two groups, Thais and foreigners, as shown in Fig.5

Fig.5 shows that the number of Thai visitors was more than foreign visitors. The ratio of foreigners visitors to Thai visitors was 1: 41.54.

The number of Thai visitors decreased during March, 2004 to July, 2004 and after that the visitor numbers increased from August up until

now. For the foreigner visitors, no trend was recorded.

(**Note:** Groups or large number of visitors were excluded from graph.)

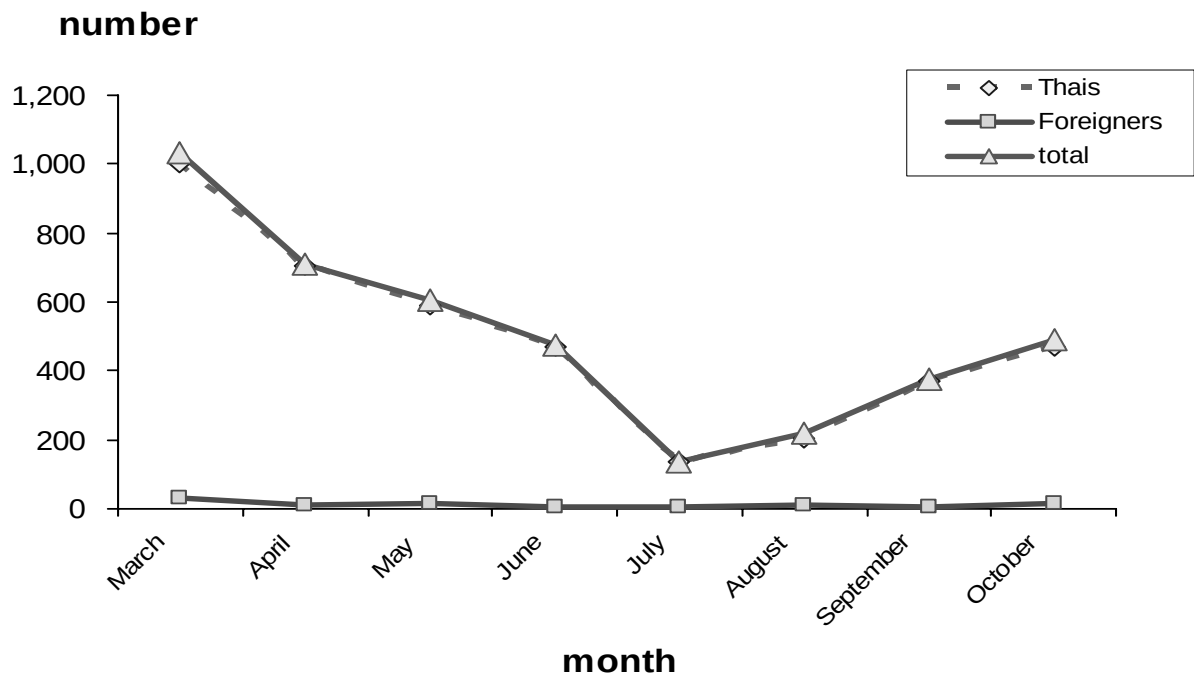


Fig. 5 The trend line of visitors number at EMCOR Information Center since at March 1, 2004 to October 31, 2004

PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDATION

1. The small proportion of foreigner visitors may be as a result of the lack of poster and leaflets in English .
2. Reduction of visitors during in May to September, may be as a result of the buildings appearance which still wasn't a recognized building for visitors in the beginning, and it was the low season period in the same time.

In the future we will be adding EMCOR Information Center on maps and interesting places in guide books, asking some desirable questionnaires of visitors and get outside budget for the improvement of EMCOR Information Center.

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