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FISHBIO Launches New Website to Improve Study of the Mekong River Across Borders

FISHBIO has launched a new website to improve the study, management, and conservation of the Mekong River's unique and valuable fishes. The website supports the Mekong Fish Network to help researchers and managers communicate and collaborate with each other.

Oakdale, CA, March 06, 2013 --([PR.com](#))-- As part of efforts to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration among researchers in Southeast Asia's Lower Mekong Basin, FISHBIO has launched a new website to build and support the Mekong Fish Network. The website (mekongfishnetwork.org) connects fish scientists and managers with many tools to assist their work in this ecologically unique and valuable region.

Distinct challenges surround fisheries management and research in a river that crosses the borders of six countries with six distinct languages. The Mekong River is home to more than 850 species of fishes that feed an estimated 60 million people, making it one of the most diverse and productive rivers in the world. As the Mekong moves into an uncertain future of regional development and environmental change, coordinated efforts to study and manage its fishes will become all the more imperative.

As part of its international conservation program, FISHBIO has been working in the Mekong region since 2009. FISHBIO staff are currently working to build the Mekong Fish Network to connect researchers in Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

This website is a direct product of a workshop that FISHBIO and the U.S. Geological Survey convened in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in February 2012 to bring together Mekong scientists, government officials, and members of various organizations working in the region. FISHBIO staff developed the website based on feedback from workshop participants about resources that would be most useful for them.

"Because the Mekong is an international river, effective and sustainable management requires people to share information throughout these countries," said FISHBIO's Conservation Director Harmony Patricio. "One thing that's really special about the Network is that it provides an easy way for researchers to communicate and access information across borders."

The website, which can be viewed in a variety of languages, features news stories from across the region, blog posts of network member activities, descriptions and photos of ongoing research projects, a calendar of relevant upcoming meetings and events, and links to recent open-source publications of Mekong research.

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The website also links to the Mekong Fish Network Data Bank, an online data management tool developed in collaboration with the U.S. Geological Survey and also launched this month. The Mekong Fish Network Data Bank is a free tool to help Mekong researchers store, manage, and share their data with collaborators in a secure environment, which is currently a challenge for many scientists in the region because of limited infrastructure and funding for data management.

The Data Bank supports one of the Network's major goals: to implement standardized sampling methods in the various Mekong countries with the aim of achieving cohesive, basin-wide assessments of the fish community. "Until now, nobody has established a standardized method for monitoring long term trends in the fishery throughout the basin," Patricio said. "That's the only way to gauge what's happening with fishery resources in response to physical and environmental changes in the region, and it's the only way to plan for the future. It's going to be really important not just for fish researchers and managers, but for all the people that depend on the fish."

The Mekong Fish Network website and FISHBIO's larger international conservation program are part of the company's efforts to conserve and promote sustainable fisheries throughout the world. FISHBIO has contributed several hundred thousand dollars and donated thousands of hours to international research and conservation projects and building scientific capacity. "It's an integral part of our company culture," said FISHBIO President Doug Demko. "We have a young and highly dedicated group of scientists that are interested in researching fish and improving the lives of others around the world. This program benefits a large number of people in Southeast Asia, fish, and our staff."

Patricio will present the Mekong Fish Network and the MFN Data Bank at the Mekong Environmental Symposium, occurring in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, from March 5-7, 2013. She and Demko will also each give presentations on FISHBIO research and monitoring at a workshop entitled "Food Security in the Mekong - The Water, Food and Energy Nexus Revisited," which will be hosted by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and the [International Water Management Institute \(IWMI\)](#) in Chiang Rai, Thailand from March 11-13, 2013.

About FISHBIO

FISHBIO is a research and environmental consulting company with offices in Chico and Oakdale, California, and Vientiane, Laos. FISHBIO partners with agencies, resource users, and NGOs to provide technical assistance, and is dedicated to advancing the research, monitoring, and conservation of fishes around the world. For more information, please visit fishbio.com.

Media Contacts

Doug Demko, FISHBIO President
530-828-3822
dougdemko@fishbio.com

Harmony Patricio, FISHBIO Conservation Director
831-295-8733
harmonypatricio@fishbio.com

Erin Loury, FISHBIO Communications Director
408-205-7444
erinloury@fishbio.com

Contact Information

FISHBIO
Erin Loury
408-205-7444
[Contact](#)
www.fishbio.com