

Coastal Institute Asia 2007
Integrated Coastal Ecosystem Management
Summary Report

Joining forces to improve management of the world's threatened coastlines, the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and the Coastal Resources Center of the University of Rhode Island (CRC/URI) completed a three-week certificate level course on *Integrated Coastal Ecosystem Management*. The Coastal Institute-Asia, conducted from 23 July to 10 August in Thailand, graduated 27 participants representing twelve countries from Asia, Africa and North America. The program provided the practical skills to design implement and learn from integrated coastal management experiences around the world, with a focus on the Asian region.

The Coastal Institute was the 10th in the biannual series conducted by CRC/URI, and the first to be held in Asia. It builds upon a two-year partnership between AIT and CRC/URI through the Post-Tsunami Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods Project supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The course was an early step in advancing the Mangroves for the Future initiative of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), who funded eight participants from Indian Ocean coastal communities. It shared lessons learned in coastal community resilience, resulting from the US-Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System Program, also funded by USAID. For the first time, the course combined a cadre of Master degree students with field practitioners, and partnered AIT's Academic program with their Extension program.

The knowledge, skills and attitudes gained by participants enabled them to more successfully balance ecosystem conservation with sustainable development given the dynamic and challenging aspects of population growth in coastal regions worldwide. Participants increased their knowledge of: the characteristics of coastal ecosystems and the application of appropriate management tools, ranging from government regulation to economic incentives; project design for behavior change in the larger context of public policy; techniques to enhance coastal community resilience to natural hazards; and a holistic approach to managing freshwater for coastal ecosystems. Skills learned by participants—conflict mediation, group dynamics, presentation techniques and leadership—all are essential for facilitating effective coastal management. Attitudes broadened from narrow to more comprehensive in many ways over the three weeks. For instance, focus shifted from solving a single shoreline development issue to integrating multiple issues; the importance of connecting community level actions to strong national policy initiatives; and a growing awareness that “coastal managers” involve many disciplines and are government and non-government specialists alike.

Trainers emphasized technical management tools and techniques for tackling the multifaceted challenges facing the world's coastal regions. Rather than relying on a traditional lecture setting, the Coastal Institute deployed a combination of teaching styles, including hands-on simulations, group exercises, field visits, and an emphasis on applying the knowledge in the participants' home countries. Students benefited from real-world application of course work and from mentoring by seasoned professionals. Field practitioners benefited from the keen questions and academic context provided by the students and faculty.

Since the very first course held in 1991, the Coastal Institute has brought together participants and trainers from 65 countries from all regions of the world. They have come from a variety of backgrounds and share valuable real-life experiences, which are integral to the success of the course. All strive for one common goal— to improve the management of the world's coasts.

A CD is available from CRC/URI and AIT with the curriculum and materials used by the course. For more information about the CRC/URI Summer Institute program and the new Advanced Course offerings for June 2008, please visit <http://www.crc.uri.edu>, or contact Virginia Lee, vlee@crc.uri.edu or Kim Kaine, KKaine@crc.uri.edu .