

## 43<sup>rd</sup> Regional Meeting of National RCA Representatives

**Project:** RAS7037 Enhancing Wetland Management and Sustainable Conservation Planning

**Details:** 2020 – 2023 | AUL | Neil Saintlan, Macquarie University | 14 Participating GPs

### Background

- Wetlands provide fundamental ecosystem services across the Asia-Pacific, supporting freshwater and marine fisheries, sustaining biological diversity and providing an efficient sink for atmospheric carbon. The project will enhance national capability in the sustainable management of wetlands, by training partners and regional organisations in the use of stable isotopic techniques which clarify the movement of carbon between components of wetland systems. These techniques have been applied to answer basic questions posed by natural resource managers: What sources of primary production drive fisheries productivity? What are the trophic interactions upon which healthy fisheries depend? How does the management of hydrology and the input of pollutants influence the integrity of wetland ecosystems? How much carbon is permanently sequestered and stored in wetland soils, and from where is this carbon sourced?

### Project Objectives

- The overall objective of this project is capacity building through the region and to discuss national activities on wetland issues and the application of isotopic techniques to sustainable wetland management.

### Project Activities in 2020

#### ▪ Meetings / Workshops

- › Project inception Meeting - Virtual (8-9 Sep 2020)
  - Attended by 25 participants including 5 IAEA staff, NPC's from 14 countries and 6 observers to review and discuss national activities on wetland issues and the application of isotopic techniques to sustainable wetland management in the region, set up the project baseline, discuss and agree on project activities to be implemented.
  - The meeting clarified the scope and expectations of the program, identified gaps in expertise and instrumentation and how these might be filled, and planned the implementation of a 4-year program including subsequent meeting dates.
  - The Inception Meeting report was submitted and approved in November 2020
- › Expert working group formed
  - Working group met Nov & Dec 2020

### Progress during 2020

- Progress in the sampling of biological materials for isotope analysis.
- Several countries (Bangladesh, China, Sri Lanka, Malaysia) reported on progress in the establishment of domestic networks supporting project objectives.
- Funds from the meeting underspend were made available to member states in support of small equipment purchases. These included Freeze dryers (Philippines, Vietnam), Grinding CryoMill (Sri Lanka), NCS Detector (Indonesia), Microbalances (Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh)
- The LCC is very conscious and committed to achieve the major goals of the project which concerns the preparation of a training manual for the application of stable isotopes in wetland management followed by different virtual and on-hands trainings on sampling and measurement procedures for stable isotope analysis using EA-IRMS, as well as training in the application of stable isotopes source mixing models

### Constraints/ Challenges

- ✓ Lack of face-to-face meetings made casual conversation, partnership building and capacity sharing difficult.
- ✓ The pandemic has delayed the implementation of field programs in some cases and pushed back the 1<sup>st</sup> Project Coordination meeting scheduled for April 2020.