



Sustaining Fisheries in Tun Mustapha Park



The intention to gazette Tun Mustapha Park was approved by the Sabah Government through a cabinet decision in March 2003.

This park will be established under the Park Enactment 1984. The initiative to establish and gazette the proposed Park will be spearheaded by Sabah Parks as the managing agency for all Parks in Sabah.

This park will adopt a multiple-use concept, whereby various zones are identified for different types of uses and managed through a collaborative management mechanism.

Tun Mustapha Park*, Kudat, Kota Marudu and Pitas Districts

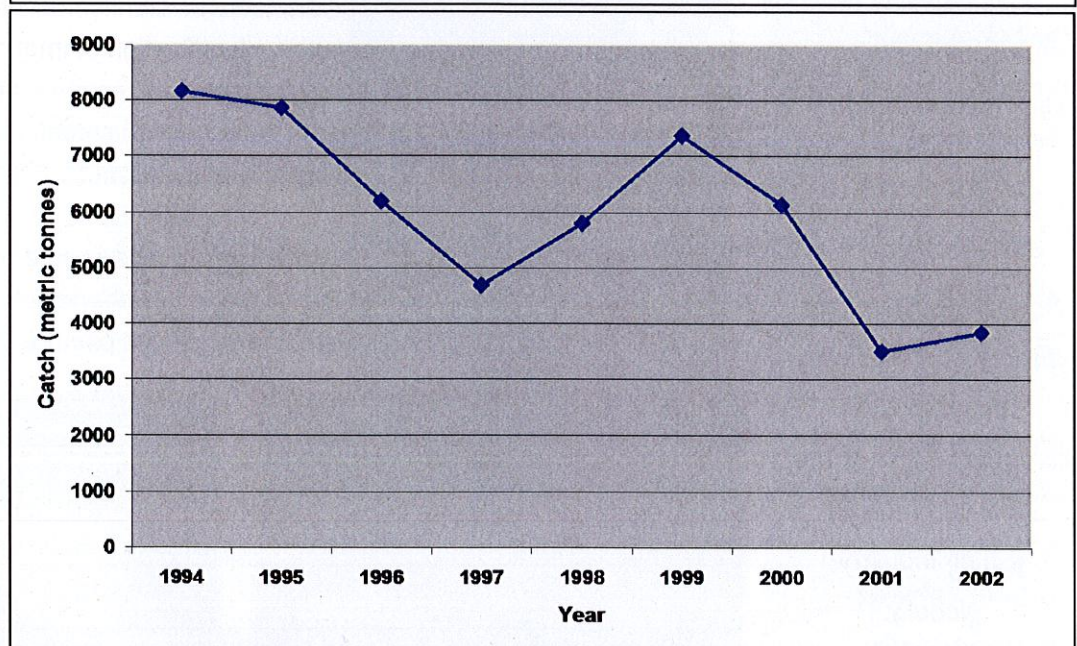
In Kudat, an area consisting of approximately 1.02 million hectares of land and sea has been designated as a proposed protected area, named Tun Mustapha Park (TMP). Marine resources within TMP provide an important source of income and livelihood to approximately 80,000 people living in its coastal areas. It is one of the most important fishing grounds in Sabah, with an estimated 100 tonnes of fish being landed daily, valued at approximately RM700,000.

Commercial fisheries in Tun Mustapha Park are made up of many fisheries that are defined by the fishing gears they use. These include trawl fisheries (prawn and fish), purse seine fisheries, crab fisheries, hook and line fisheries, and its related live reef fish trade, cage operations and other commercial fishing operations.

There are many issues related to fisheries in Tun Mustapha Park including habitat degradation due to the type of fishing methodology used and excessive fishing efforts conducted. Parallel to global conditions, Kudat and Tun Mustapha Park are faced with the threat of overfishing. Fish stocks are depleting, a fact indicated by a continuing decline in fish catch as documented over the last two decades.

Declining Trend in Trawl Catch in Kudat (1994-2002)

[Source: Cabanban & Manjaji-Matsumoto (in-prep) from the 1st Commercial Fisheries Workshop Report (2006)]



A preliminary trend analysis on trawl catch over a ten year period from 1992 to 2002 for Kudat area indicates a declining trend in catch. This is an indication of overfishing.

*proposed

Towards Sustainable Fisheries

Steps are being taken in the right direction. Responsible fishing, which addresses a range of issues such as the status of the resource, the health of the marine environment, and post-harvest technology and trade, enables the development of sustainable fisheries.

Protected areas provide marine species the chance to reproduce and grow, ensuring that fish stocks are sustainable, and marine ecosystems continue to provide livelihood and food security for people.

In the case of Tun Mustapha Park, where resources are shared amongst a wide range of stakeholders including local communities, traditional and commercial fishers, and local government authorities, it is vital that a co-ordinated approach is adopted.

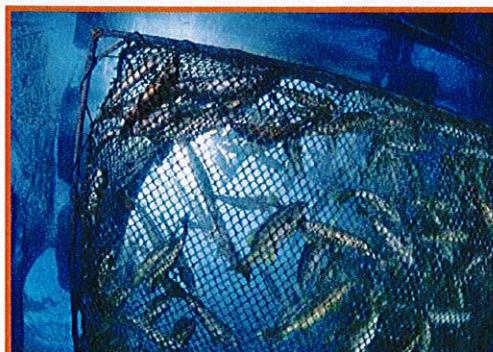
Changing Governance of Marine Protected Areas

There is a shift in traditional governance methods, now seen in both marine and terrestrial protected areas in Sabah. Traditional methods, such as that used in Tunku Abdul Rahman Park, allow no extraction of resources. Newer methods have been adopted for Tun Sakaran Marine Park and is being planned for Tun Mustapha Park.

The proposed Tun Mustapha Park should fall under Category VI (Managed Resource Protected Area), of the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories. This category depicts the highest level of human intervention. Shared governance, or collaborative approach, is used. Management practices emphasize strong commitment to involve key stakeholders in decision making.

This includes the fishing industry. In the planning of TMP, several workshops have been conducted. These workshops initiated discussion and consultation with key commercial fisheries players towards clarification of existing fishing zones and current fisheries regulation, identification of important areas for fishing and possible zoning areas for fishing and closed seasons, and potential regulation of fishing effort (number of fish trawlers, shrimp trawlers and purse seiners allowed), both within and outside of the identified TMP.

This important first step in the consultation process should be continuous until all key players and stakeholders in the commercial fisheries industries come to an agreement related to the zoning and management plan for Tun Mustapha Park.



The fishing industry plays an important role in ensuring the sustainability of fisheries in Tun Mustapha Park.*

Adopting sustainable fishing practices will increase the competitiveness of the local commercial fishing industry globally.

The decline of fish stocks

Global fish stocks are on the decline. Overfishing is, as argued by many marine ecologists, one of the biggest threats to marine ecosystems today. The continuous rise in demand for fish, and other well-loved seafood, drives this. Unfortunately, not enough is understood about the changes that over-extraction is doing to the ecology of our oceans, which results in a decrease in catch by commercial fisheries.

Mismanagement of fisheries all over the world has already led to the collapse of once-thriving fisheries, such as seen with the cod (in Canada). While scientists have been urging politicians to put into place long-term solutions to ensure fishing is done in a sustainable way, the short-term answer is found in increasing fishing capacity and seeking out new sites to fish.

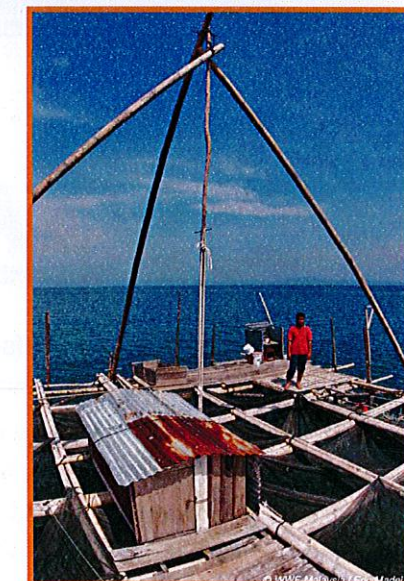
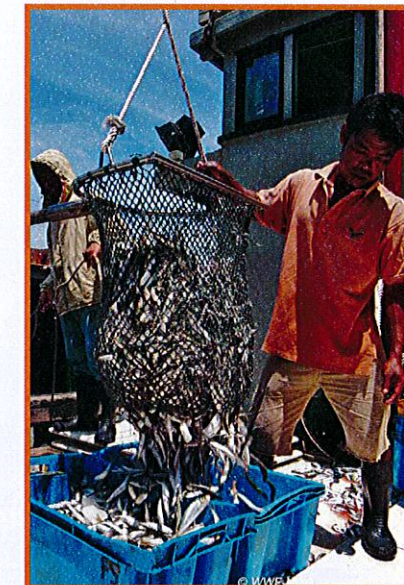
Malaysia, a centre of marine biodiversity

Together with Indonesia and the Philippines, Malaysia is part of the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion (SSME), which sits at the apex of the Coral Triangle, an area recognized for its richness in marine biodiversity. Marine portions are made out of the Sulu and Sulawesi seas, and the inland seas of the Philippines. Local communities living in this area depend on fishing for livelihoods.

Introduced in the 1970s, trawl fishing has resulted in the substantial decline of fish stocks, said to be as high as 95% in some places.

Recognizing the high value of Malaysia's marine resources, particularly in fisheries, steps have been put in place to counter threats that are depleting these resources. These are aimed at achieving management targets such as ecosystem-based management of coastal fisheries, improved pelagic and demersal fisheries resources and adoption of sustainable fishing practices including application of international standards in the management of the live reef fish trade.

In Sabah, these targets are central in achieving the sustainability of fisheries in important fishing grounds within SSME ~ in the districts of Kudat, Sandakan and Semporna.



Consumer awareness plays an important role in sustainable fisheries.

Consumers drive demand.

Fortunately, today, consumers are becoming more responsive to the plight of threatened marine species.

Fish guides have been developed in countries within this region including Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore, in an effort to change consumer behaviour.

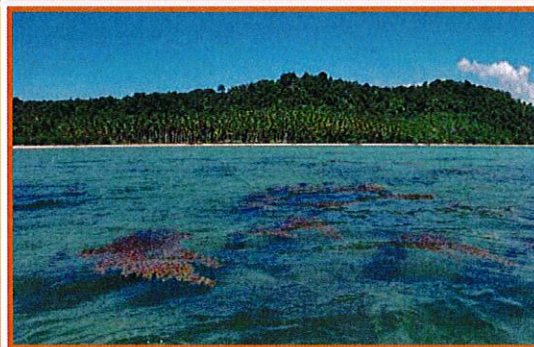
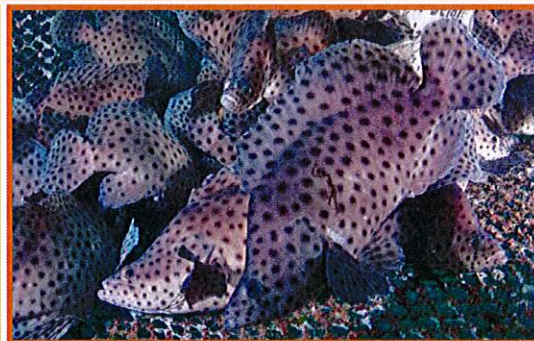
The choices consumers make can decide if a species avoids disappearing from our seas forever!

*Towards a
common vision for
sustainable
fisheries in
Tun Mustapha
Park.*

Help Sabah sustain its fisheries...

The commercial fishing industry can adopt these methods to achieve sustainable fisheries:

1. Support the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPA), no take reserves and closed areas.
2. Usage of improved gears, such as:
 - Appropriate net mesh size which releases juvenile fishes;
 - Trawl net fixed with Turtle Excluder Device to release turtles;
 - Mid-water trawl net – trawls allowed only at certain depths to prevent seabed destruction.
3. Record fish landings and report to the Department of Fisheries Sabah.
4. Become MSC certified.



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Coral Triangle Support Partnership



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This project is part of the initiative to build support for the gazettement and establishment of the proposed Tun Mustapha Park, supported by the Coral Triangle Support Partnership (CTSP)-USAID. It promotes sustainable fisheries by working with the commercial fishing industry to improve fisheries management and implement Ecosystem-Based Management of Fisheries (EBMF) within the proposed Tun Mustapha Park. The first step towards this is to formulate a common vision and goals for sustainable fisheries as input into an integrated Management Plan for the Park.