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Press Release

## **Boon Rueang Wetland Forest Conservation Group of Thailand wins global environmental award: The Equator Prize**

A forest community in northern Thailand was today awarded the prestigious Equator Prize by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The Boon Rueang Wetland Forest Conservation Group from the village Boon Rueang convinced the government to conserve the largest wetland forest in the Ing River basin rather than develop a special economic zone. Since that momentous achievement, made through advocacy and dialogue, the Group has pioneered a community forestry model that is successfully protecting biodiversity, storing carbon, providing food and livelihoods, and enabling the community to preserve its identity and culture.

The Group was supported by the international organization RECOFTC, in cooperation with local partners, with funding from the European Union.

“I congratulate the Group and the people of Boon Rueang for demonstrating the power of nature-based solutions for tackling climate change, environmental issues and poverty,” said H.E. Pirkka Tapiola, Ambassador of the European Union to the Kingdom of Thailand. “The community’s resilience and dedication to fighting for their rights and the environment is an inspiration for us all.”

The UNDP awards the US\$10,000 prize biennially to recognize outstanding community efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. As sustainable community initiatives take root, they lay the foundation for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and overcoming the climate crisis.

This year, UNDP selected 10 prize-winners from a pool of almost 600 nominations across 120 countries. They will be honoured at a virtual event or series of events in September 2020 during Climate Week in New York.

“The award showcases the knowledge of indigenous and local communities and their power to bring about lasting changes that will benefit all of society,” said David Ganz, executive director of RECOFTC. “It was an honour to support the community of Boon Rueang, and we intend to share their experience with other communities in

the Asia-Pacific region that are struggling to protect precious natural landscapes and the forests that are their home.”

In August 2015 the community of Boon Rueang established the Boon Rueang Wetland Forest Conservation Group to advocate and generate funds for protection of the wetland forest covering 483 hectares. These wetlands are the foundation of their livelihood and culture. The wetland forest is contained within the Ing River Watershed, a 260-kilometre river basin that flows from Phayao Province to Chiang Rai Province in northern Thailand and on to the Mekong River. The community generates income from managing the wetland fishery. The income is directed into a village fund, with a portion reserved annually for conservation and maintenance of the wetland.

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#### More information

Visit [www.equatorinitiative.org](http://www.equatorinitiative.org) or join the conversation on Facebook or Twitter by using #EquatorPrize.

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