



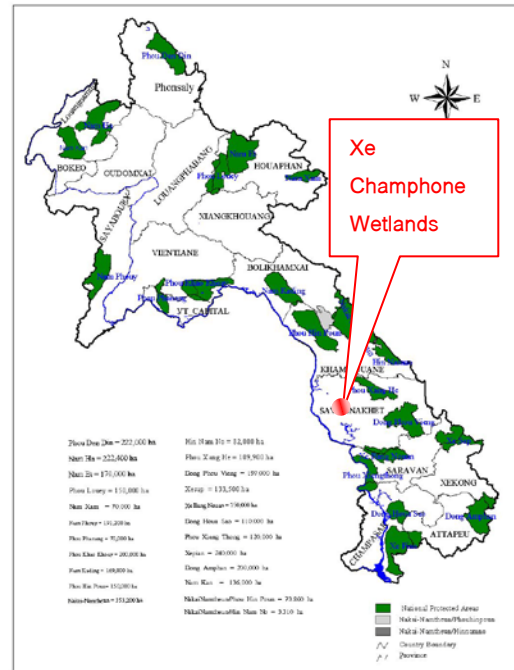
Xe Champhone Wetlands,
Ramsar site in Lao PDR since September 2010



Xe Champhone Wetlands in Savannakhet Province of southern Lao PDR includes a large plain containing perennial and seasonal rivers as well as scattered lakes, ponds, fresh water marshes, and rice paddy fields. These become interconnected during the wet season, and the wetlands complex extends into other wetlands areas. The northern part of Xe Champhone includes rice paddy fields and two large reservoirs, while the southern part contains extensive vegetation, including open woodland, mixed semi-evergreen forest, as well as shrubs and grasses.

Xe Champhone Wetlands has important value for conservation due to its high biodiversity value. It supports threatened species such as Asiatic soft-shell turtles, Siamese crocodiles, giant Asian pond turtle and elongated tortoise. It also supports the livelihoods of approximately 42,000 people.

NATIONAL PROTECTED AREAS IN LAO PDR



1.) Location :

The total area of Xe Champhone wetlands is about 12,400 ha (two third of the areas belongs to Champhone District and the rest to Xonbuly district). The nearby districts of Atsphone and Atsaphanthong also utilise the wetlands.

Xe Champhone wetland area is located in the South East of Champhone District about 3 Km. Champhone District is about 54 km west of Savannakhet city.

2.) Governance and Population

Of the 12,400 ha catchment, 1,500 ha is designated as core protected areas since it serves as conservation area for crocodiles. About 20 villages are within the core protected area, with an additional 22 villages within 5 km of the core protected area boundary. As all 44 villages rely on the wetlands for ecosystem services, the wetlands support livelihoods of a total of 42,000 inhabitants (26,000 of which are women).

3.) Significance and Value of Xe Champhone wetland area

Xe Champhone wetlands is a combination of naturally occurring ecosystems and human created reservoirs (Soui and Bak reservoirs). The 42,000 local residents rely on the wetlands for water resources, irrigation, food for people and feed for livestock and other ecosystem services. These services provided by the wetlands can be summarized as follows:

- **Provisioning:** Fish aquatic animals and plants provide food; Seasonally flooded forest provide fiber and fuelwood; support to rice cultivation.
- **Regulating:** Rivers and streams recharge groundwater; Carbon sequestration; Irrigation for rice fields
- **Cultural:** Siamese crocodiles, macaques and turtles that inhabit the wetlands are considered sacred and are respected and conserved by local villagers. About 10,000 tourists visit sites within the wetlands each year such as the turtle pond, taleo temple, the temple library, monkey forest and natural Soui reservoir. Tourists bring additional income to the villages.
- **Supporting:** Migratory fish pass through the area for breeding; Oxbows and natural lakes provide habitat and sanctuary for some fish and aquatic animals during the dry season; Nutrient cycling; Sediment retention; and, Spawning ground for fish.



4.) Threats and key priorities of actions of the Ramsar site

Key threats to the wetlands include: clearing of forest surrounding the wetlands; expansion of agricultural lands; invasive species; and, use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. In addition, population

growth which leads to more agriculture activities and infrastructure development puts additional pressure on the wetlands.

Priority activities for site conservation include participatory mapping and zoning (including creation of a buffer zone) and a review of existing relevant regulations to enable formulation of a management plan of the site. Extensive public awareness raising activities should be implemented once there is a long term management plan in place for wetlands

5.) Objectives of Ramsar site management:

- To protect wetland site based on the wise use concept. **The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands defines wise use of wetlands as “the maintenance of their character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development”**, In the case of Xe Champhone this means management should prioritize drought and flood protection, habitat restoration and management for all aquatic species.
- To maintain and rehabilitate the site for local livelihood through sustainable use, community management of fisheries, and tourism.

