



*Embassy of the United States of America*

*Bangkok, Thailand*

April 4, 2014

Rebecca J. Lent, PhD  
Marine Mammal Commission  
4340 East-West Highway  
Room 700  
Bethesda, MD 20814-4498

Dear Dr. Lent,

We wish to thank you for your letter dated March 31, 2014, and for attaching the WWF Science Brief. In response to your letter, we wanted to pass along a small, but representative, sample of the work that our Embassies and the United States Government as a whole do to promote sustainable management of water resources, fisheries, and protected species like the freshwater dolphins of the Mekong River.

We take all the above issues very seriously and have in concert with our many colleagues throughout the United States Government engaged in policy advocacy and technical capacity building to encourage the countries of the Mekong to take into consideration the potential ecological impacts of hydropower and other water infrastructure projects in the Mekong Basin.

In addition to policy advocacy at the highest levels, we have undertaken numerous recent actions in support of fish populations and the freshwater dolphins of the Mekong River. The Mekong River Commission (MRC) Development Partners, which includes the United States Government, have provided significant support and encouraged the MRC to play a stronger role in helping countries understand the impact of hydro-power facility construction in general, and specifically the planned Don

Sahong facility on fish and freshwater mammal populations. We have created opportunities for MRC member countries to discuss the impacts of development projects on the natural resources of the River, and have funded workshops like the Water-Food-Energy Nexus Dialogues that IUCN has helped organize to further catalyze these discussions. The United States Government has also initiated the Lower Mekong Initiative which provides sustained and deep technical support to the Mekong countries to help manage their natural resources and minimize threats to biodiversity as part of the Water and Environment Pillar. In this website (<http://lowermekong.org>) you will see the broad array of activities carried out by both State Department as well as the US Agency for International Development that are supportive of biodiversity in the Mekong River Basin.

In addition to these efforts, USAID supports the MRC's Fisheries Program to promote sustainable freshwater fish management, with significant financial resources, and is now supporting MRC to develop a unified, consolidated fish database that will help all countries understand the impact of dams and other development activities on the Mekong. The State Department has supported the development of a Mekong University Network that brings together 18 different Mekong universities to conduct graduate level training on the river basin environment and wetland ecology bringing critical skills and knowledge to the next generation of scientists and government employees.

The Smart Infrastructure for the Mekong (SIM) Project, announced by Secretary Kerry last year on July 1, has approved activities to specifically reduce the impact of dams on fish (and freshwater mammal) populations and support implementation of appropriate environmental and social safeguards. We expect these to start around the middle of the year.

Finally, we will be happy to mention your concerns with the MRC this week at the MRC Summit Meeting in Ho Chi Minh City, and staff can discuss with you after the conclusion of that event. The MRC is well aware of the United States and the other Development Partners' interest in the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources of the Mekong River and

its Basin, and we are all working hard together to minimize the impact of hydro-power construction on the precious foundations of life that nourish and provide the livelihoods for millions of people in the riparian countries.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Kristie A. Kenney, U.S. Ambassador to the Royal  
Kingdom of Thailand

David B. Shear, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam

William E. Todd, U.S. Ambassador to the  
Kingdom of Cambodia

Daniel A. Clune, U.S. Ambassador to Laos