

Kickoff Workshop on

Advancing International Collaboration for Seagrass Ecosystem Research, Conservation and Restoration

Phuket, Thailand, 4-6 November 2025



The UNESCO/IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC), DMCR Thailand, and BRIN Indonesia are pleased to invite you to this workshop on 4-6 November 2025, in Phuket, Thailand

Background

Seagrass ecosystems are of vital ecological, social and economic significance in the Western Pacific. They provide essential habitats and nursery grounds for a wide range of species, while also delivering key economic and ecological benefits such as fisheries, and serving as carbon sinks that help mitigate climate change. Moreover, seagrass meadows hold cultural significance for coastal communities, often forming an integral part of local heritage and traditional practices.

Seagrass ecosystems in Southeast Asia are experiencing rapid degradation due to increasing anthropogenic pressures, including overfishing, pollution, coastal development, and the impacts of climate change. In recent years, several documented or suspected large-scale seagrass die-offs in the region have underscored a critical challenge: the lack of comprehensive knowledge and data on seagrass continues to hinder the ability of scientists and policymakers to formulate and implement effective conservation and management strategies.

To address this challenge, the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC) decided to form a Working Group on Seagrass Research and Conservation in the Western Pacific, aiming to enhance collaboration among countries, researchers, managers, and stakeholders to advance the study and conservation of seagrass ecosystems in the region.

As an initial step, a kickoff workshop, hosted by the Phuket Marine Biological Center, will bring together seagrass experts and managers from member states in the region to share knowledge on current status of seagrass ecosystem and related research, identify key challenges and knowledge gaps, and explore opportunities of developing joint initiatives and collaborative activities.

A one-day field visit to a seagrass restoration site will be organized to provide practical insights that complement the workshop discussions. The field visit will explore the key drivers of seagrass loss at the site, relevant tools and methods used for baseline assessment and early warning, the involvement of local community and NGOs, and best practices in planting, transplantation, and protection.

Workshop Objectives

The workshop aims to:

- a. Share knowledge about the current status of seagrass ecosystem and related research including relevant policies, management practices, research approaches, methods, and techniques;
- b. Identify key challenges and knowledge gaps, and explore opportunities of joint initiatives and collaborative activities in the Western Pacific.
- c. Launch the Seagrass Working Group and initiate its major activities;
- d. Conduct a field visit to observe degradation status and examine local restoration efforts.

Qualified Participants

The kickoff workshop will convoke seagrass experts, researchers, and managers from Member States in the Western Pacific. Ideally, they should have rich experience in seagrass research and conservation, and the capacity to lead and carry out seagrass research and conservation in their respective countries. Community organizations and NGOs in Thailand will also be invited to join the field trip to share their perspectives and contributions to local restoration efforts.

Registration

Individuals who are nominated or self-nominated and are committed to contributing to the collective effort and shared goals are encouraged to complete the [Online Registration/Application Form](#) as early as possible, preferably before **16 August 2025**.

If you are unable to access the online form, please complete the offline registration form (Annex 1) and email it to iocwestpac@unesco.org with the subject line: **Registration/Application Form - Seagrass Research Collaboration Workshop**

Please note that funding for international travel is limited and will be prioritized for participants from developing countries. Selection will be based primarily on the applicant's CV, his/her work experience, and previous engagement with WESTPAC or other related international programmes.

Updated information about the workshop will be made available in due course on the WESTPAC website: <https://ioc-westpac.org/event/kickoff-workshop-on-seagrass-research/>