

Phi Phi Dive Camp – Update – 01/06/06

For a photo gallery of Phi Phi Dive Camp's activities please visit our [on-line gallery](#).

Phi Phi Dive Camp has increased its involvement in coral reef management through a number of separate ventures in collaboration with some other organizations. PPDC is firmly committed to restoring, protecting local coral reefs, and educating people in coral reef issues.

The following is a monthly break-down of PPDC activities from August 2005 until present day.

August 2005

The six-month anniversary of PPDC signalled the end of the six day volunteer diving schedule.

However daily beach clean ups continued through to January 2006 and were organized by various long term team leaders. Volunteer groups between 5 and 25 persons were organised daily (except Fridays), to collect debris that was still appearing on the beaches. Volunteer numbers dwindled during this period due to the lack of work to be done. PPDC decided it was no longer necessary to continue providing accommodation to volunteers that were not applying their services for less than a few months.

During August Beach cleanups were also organized on Bamboo Island and Phi Phi Ley Island.

The floating pontoon that the PPDC had dismantled and used as a working platform during the previous months was reassembled and placed back into operation as a pier in front of the hospital.

Andrew Hewett was invited by the Chulalongkorn University to make a presentation in Bangkok regarding the activities of the PPDC. The meeting was to report the conditions of coastal resources post tsunami, and activities and plans that were underway to address certain issues. The meeting was attended by hundreds of representatives of universities and government agencies concerned.

September 2005

On the 24th September 2005, 120 divers arrived with the Department of Marine and Coastal resources [DMCR](#) together with 50 local and volunteer divers organised by the PPDC. Focus was on removing debris that had appeared in Tonsai Bay after tidal movement had washed away the top layer of sand.

The [ETC](#) also sent a number of their divers from Phuket.

The DMCR provided a barge with a crane which enabled the PPDC to remove a large deposit of debris that had been stored in the middle of town during previous PPDC clean ups.

Due to divers available the PPDC were able to extend the dive clean up to make it a 6 day project, removing many more tons of debris.



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October 2005

A dead dolphin was reported seen in Pi Leh Bay. After consulting with the PMBC's Endangered Species Dept. we were requested to recover the body of the dolphin and bury it for recovery by them at a later date.

Two weeks later a second juvenile dolphin was found in Tonsai Bay. The PPDC recovered the carcass and it was shipped to the PMBC laboratory for an autopsy.

In October the PPDC was given permission to clear a boat traffic lane in Loh Da Lum Bay. Dead coral boulders washed in by the tsunami were causing a hazard to longtail boats attempting to enter the bay during low tide. The PPDC organized approximately 50 volunteers and some local boat captains to remove the obstacles by hand during low tide. A boat lane approximately 10 meters wide was formed by removing the larger dead coral boulders. Care was emphasised not to damage any live coral.

During the project 20 broken fragments of Acropora coral were also collected and attached to the dead substrate to observe the effects and/or benefits of attaching broken corals using marine cement. We have surveyed the corals monthly and found a high level of survival and considerable coral growth.

Plans are now in progress for the PPDC under the auspice of the PMBC to develop a joint shallow artificial coral garden in Loh Da Lum Bay.

November 2005

Due to the PPDC's environmental activities and our newly established relationships with the government agencies such as the PMBC and the DMCR, we circulated a memorandum that all dive centres on the island can contact us should any other dead marine animals be found or any other illegal fishing practices witnessed. In doing so, we are trying to establish a line of communication between the local dive operators and the local authorities of the National Marine Park.

Also in November, 5 divers of the PPDC did 4 dives over 2 days to assess sites for Reef Check transects at Bida Nog Island and Bida Nai islands.

A dive clean up was organized from 26th to 30th November. Volunteer divers from the island joined a ten strong PPDC long-term team to focus on a large build up of bricks in Tonsai Bay.

December 2005

In early December, the PPDC, in collaboration with the Phi Phi Rescue team honoured the birthday of The King of Thailand, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The combined team of 20 divers plus beach crew lifted 5 tons of debris during this clean up. Again focus on this clean up was to remove further tsunami debris that was now exposed after tidal movement had removed top layers of sand.



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The PPDC provided boats and tanks to students from the University of Bremen to assist them carry out their studies on coral reefs around Phi Phi. The students contacted us through the PMBC and we agreed to provide support and equipment for them to carry out their experiments.

Also in December a new PPDC on-line [gallery](#) was created to display photos of work carried out.

PPDC conducted 3 dives to assess and choose a site for Reef Check in Tonsai Bay.

PPDC ran the first Reef Check data collection survey. 5 members of PPDC undertook 3 dives to collect data regarding the condition of the reef in Tonsai Bay. The data has been forwarded to Reef Check, California.

To commemorate the one year anniversary of the Tsunami, the PPDC arranged another dive and beach clean up operation lasting 6 days from the 19th to 24th December 2005. Once again the focus was on the beaches and underwater in Tonsai Bay. However we had to establish a central storage area underwater to store the large nets filled with debris since we were no longer allowed to deposit the debris on dry land.

January 2006

A dead Turtle was discovered floating at the mouth of Tonsai Bay and transported to the PPDC headquarters at The Adventure Club. The PMBC Endangered Species department was contacted after establishing that the male Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) was too large to be shipped to the mainland. The Phuket Marine Biological Centre's (P.M.B.C) Endangered Species Department sent veterinarian Dr Sontaya Manawatthana to perform a necropsy and take samples. The turtle was then buried.

Fish and coral posters donated to us by the PMBC and DMCR were framed, mounted and donated to the school for display in the classrooms. This is part of a project to start in 2006 to help educate the local children about the marine environment around the Phi Phi Islands and its importance in the local community.

The National Marine Park (NMP) misplaced huge concrete moorings directly onto the coral at Bida Nai. After receiving the report from a local dive operator, the PPDC team attempted to move the mooring to a better site using lift bags. The operation took 2 days due to the difficulty and weight of the mooring. Finally the mooring was moved, and photos were sent to the PMBC and DMCR to highlight the issue to the NMP department.

February 2006

To mark the one year anniversary of the PPDC another clean up operation was organised. Divers again were directed to locate and remove any debris that had found its way to the surface of the seabed.

For this clean up the PPDC organized the divers from the Phi Phi Rescue Team and also volunteer divers provided by various dive schools on the island.



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The final large piles of debris that the PPDC had collected in December and stored underwater in large nets were removed during this clean up.

A second Reef Check was conducted in Tonsai Bay. Results can be found in the Reef Monitoring section of our website.

Note: It is now difficult to locate debris of any considerable amount underwater in Tonsai Bay. Future dive clean ups will be organized, however the focus will be to promote cleaner more sustainable attitudes to protect the island resources.

March 2006

The PPDC set up 2 more Reef Check Sites. One at Moskito Island, and the other at Bida Nog Island.

April 2006

2 members of the PPDC attended a week long workshop hosted by the Phuket Marine Biological Centre (PMBC). The aim of the workshop was to bring together reef monitoring organisations working in the Andaman Sea. Two days were spent discussing the latest reef monitoring techniques, followed by 5 days on board the Department of Marine and Coastal Resource's (DMCR) MR/V Chakratong Tongyai. Dives were conducted in Ao Ton Sai and Laem Tong, on day three data was collected. Participants came from three neighbouring countries and surveys were successfully completed in Laem Tong.

Work was also undertaken on the PMBC's long term artificial reef project at Koh Maiton.

Diary by participant ([pdf](#))

Full report by PMBC ([pdf](#))

May 2006

In 2005 after numerous attempts the PPDC finally set up a web site. It helped greatly to spread the word that volunteer divers were needed. The web site launched in the winter of 2005 made an excellent portal for travellers into the current state of Koh Phi Phi Island, with business listings and accommodation availability. It also carried a lot more detail of the methodology used by PPDC during the clean-up phase.

However, in terms of conveying the ongoing progress and the achievements to the public and interested parties, there was no constant updated media platform. The new-look web site has been designed to focus on the coral reef restoration and the coral reef monitoring techniques and results that PPDC now utilise as part of a long term commitment to help preserve coral reefs.

The PPDC were asked to assist the PMBC and DMCR to select the best possible locations for two separate artificial reef projects. Dives were conducted over 3 days and the findings reported.



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On May 29th the PPDC assisted the Phuket Marine Biological Centre (PMBC) in assembling a coral reef nursery at Phi Phi Ley. The structure comprises of 16 racks of plastic tubing filled with plastic mesh, each rack holding 70 coral fragments. This is suspended 5m below the surface by an anchor and buoy system where it is hoped the corals will have optimum growth conditions. The site will be monitored and maintained by PPDC and PMBC for a period of six months. It is planned to then transplant some of these corals to a second artificial reef structure made from concrete and also to a number of other natural reefs around the area.
Full report ([pdf](#))

June 2006

The PPDC attended a meeting at Cape Panwa held jointly by the PMBC and members of AIMS. The meeting was used as a forum to discuss possible ways to combine the efforts of dive operators (primarily Phuket based ones) and to coordinate information into a database that might help to communicate the conditions and activities surrounding Thailand's coral reefs.

It was also an opportunity to present the report 'Status of coral reefs, in tsunami affected countries'.

This was the first of a series of meetings planned for this year.

In June the PPDC made two assessments on the floating nursery and carried out repairs to the support frame and collected other data.

July 2006

To mark the anniversary of The King of Thailand, His majesty King Bhumidol Adulyadej's ascension to the throne, a dive and beach clean up was organised by the Phi Phi Rescue Team and some members of the Phi Phi Dive Camp. The Phi Phi Dive Camp has attempted in the past year to build an understanding within the local community regarding the importance of protecting the island's natural resources and this day is hopefully the first of many to come.

This project was primarily a local community venture, organized by local people, with the use of the PPDC's equipment. Staff from various businesses also assisted in cleaning the beach in Loh da Lum Bay.

Also in July the PPDC assisted the DMCR to position 100 concrete blocks at a site in Phi Phi Ley. Each block is 1.5 cubic meter and weighs 1 ton. The objective of the PPDC's participation was to ensure that the blocks were positioned properly in an area not too deep and in a way to not cause further damage to the reef. The purpose of the reef is to create an artificial diving area that will help to minimise the pressure on natural reefs.

The next step will be to assemble the blocks under water to create interesting formations.

August 2006

The PPDC organized a small group of experienced divers to help in lifting and stacking the 1000kg concrete blocks previously laid in July.



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The divers performed 3 dives per day for 3 days and were able to lift a number of the blocks. However the work is slow due to the risks and size of the blocks and many more dives will be needed to complete the work.

Damage was discovered to the floating coral nursery and a small team was sent to repair it.

Scores of dead fish were seen on the reef in Tonsai Bay and the local Tourist Police Rescue team reported this to the PPDC. A member of the team collected some specimens for analysis at the PMBC. We are still waiting for the results.

The Future

The Phi Phi Dive Camp continues to promote sustainable practises through both action and education. The coming year will see an increase in work on artificial reef projects and monitoring the conditions of the island's coral reefs.

We have established a good line of communication with the PMBC and the DMCR and are now contacted directly whenever projects are to be proposed for the Phi Phi Islands. We have indicated to the PMBC and DMCR that we are fully committed to assisting them whenever needed. We hope to utilise their resources to increase awareness and to protect the islands in the future.

We have distributed over 200 posters and informational booklets developed and printed by the DMCR that promotes sustainable tourism, to the businesses on Phi Phi Island. We have also had these posters distributed in Koh Samui and Koh Tao.

There are plans to start another artificial coral garden project in Loh Da Lum Bay, under the auspice of the PMBC. We have already received written consent indicating support for the project. The project is designed to not only develop an artificial coral garden, but as an important tool to help educate both the local community and also visitors about coral reefs. The project is still subject to approval form the National Marine Parks Department.

Regular monitoring of the coral reefs (Reef Check) will allow observation of changes/impacts to the condition of the reefs due to human impacts (incl. diving, snorkelling, boat traffic, fishing practises). Such data will enable better informed coral reef management decisions.

Data will be used to support the need for an alliance of dive operators to create a coral reef awareness watchdog to address the need for enforcement of local marine laws and better diving practices.

Members of the watchdog will include dive operators and dive professionals operating around the Phi Phi Islands.

The PPDC recently invited dive centres from Phi Phi to attend a meeting to discuss ways to improve sustainable tourism practices. This was the first of hopefully many meetings to create a Phi Phi Dive Operators Association.

Although we have supported the artificial reef projects in the hope that these projects will reduce the stress from dive tourism, we feel that the best solution for this is to



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sink a wreck near to the Phi Phi Islands. Although at the early stages of planning, we have discussed the idea with the DMCR and they are supportive of the idea if approached correctly.

We shall be drawing up plans for this project and ways to obtain funding to purchase and clean a ship to act as an artificial reef and new dive site.

Costs and overheads of the last year's work have been minimal, and funds received in the first year of PPDC were sufficient.

However present funds will support us until approximately October '06, and to continue the work beyond this time, further funds will be required.

We wish to thank all our benefactors for giving us the opportunity to carry out the work in the last 18 months, with the hope that you will continue to support the PPDC in protecting the beauty of the Phi Phi Islands.

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