

April 2005 Thailand Tsunami Reef Relief Trip Dwayne Meadows and Caroline Sachs

The goal of this trip was to bring relief supplies, professional advice, and hands-on assistance to the areas of Thailand worst hit by the December 26th, 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. A summary of activities follows:

April 19 - 20: travel from home to Bangkok.

April 20: travel from Bangkok to Phuket.

April 21: prepare for Similan Islands seafan restoration trip. Pick-up lift bags in Phuket for Stuart Robbens of Tsunami Volunteer Center in Khao Lak. Participate in pre-cruise press conference. Attend pre-cruise meeting. Deliver Mr. Sticky epoxy to seafan restoration group. Travel to Thap Lamu harbor, Phang Nga Province to board M/V Sea King. Transit to Similan Islands.

April 22-25: Restore and monitor over 250 seafans using cement, epoxy, nails, bolting with pneumatic drills on islands 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9. Assess reef condition. Each of us completes 10 dives. Mr. Sticky works moderately well. Set time is still an hour plus, maybe because of hot weather. Mostly use cement and some drilling.

April 26: M/V King returns to Ao Chalong, Phuket. Repair SCUBA gear. Transit to Phi Phi Island. Meet Andrew Hewitt.

April 27: Participate in reef clean up in Tonsai Bay, Phi Phi Island. Assess other areas of Tonsai Bay. Consult with Andrew Hewitt.

April 28: Assess other bays of Phi Phi Island. Consult with Andrew Hewitt and Ecko regarding debris removal, coral rehabilitation and monitoring. Each of us completes 2 dives and 2 snorkel surveys in the two days.

April 29: Take ferry back to Phuket then transit 150km to Khao Lak.

April 30, May 1: Discuss reef survey protocols and priorities based on view from viewpoint overlook. Debris clean-up in Nang Thong Beach area.

May 2: Off day for Tsunami Volunteer Center staff. We meet with other tsunami volunteers and survivors.

May 3: Debris clean-up in Nang Thong Beach area. Transport Caroline to Phuket airport for departure to Bangkok and then Germany.

May 4: Debris clean-up in rocky area in front of Similana Resort. Conduct survey of Bang Niang Beach area for clean-up priorities from Viewpoint. Consult with Stuart Robbens on Reef clean-up and surf boat driving.

May 5: In Khao Lak Caroline completes 10 dives on 3 work days, and Dwayne does 12 dives in 4 work days. Transit to Phuket. Flight to Bangkok.

May 6: Return flights to Hawaii.

For the entire trip Dwayne completed 24 dives and 2 snorkel surveys and Caroline had two fewer dives.

We recommended PMBC and their associated programs prioritize their debris removal areas and utilize locals to help them find any leaking or in-water toxics, alter their training, safety, and checkout protocols, acquire larger scale removal gear, coordinate with land-based clean-up groups to assure watersheds are cleared before rainy season.

In Phi Phi we recommended that Andrew's group focus most of their efforts at this time on re-righting and cementing overturned corals, especially *Porites*, in Loh Dalam Bay of Phi Phi which was severely damaged by the tsunami and is by far the largest juvenile nursery habitat in the area. We also recommended they alter their safety and checkout protocols, acquire larger scale removal gear and utilize locals to help them find any leaking or in-water toxics, develop some reef monitoring protocols and return to their well-visited sites to assess conditions and animals they knew of from before the tsunami (sharks), and coordinate with land-based clean-up groups to assure watersheds are cleared before rainy season.

In Khao Lak we recommended that Stuart alter their safety, surf zone boating and checkout protocols, acquire larger scale removal gear and utilize locals to help them find any leaking or in-water toxics, greatly expand the size and extent of the debris removal team, consider soliciting larger resorts to fund clean-up of the ocean area in front of their resorts, decide on debris removal priorities, and coordinate land-based clean-up to assure watersheds are cleared before rainy season.