

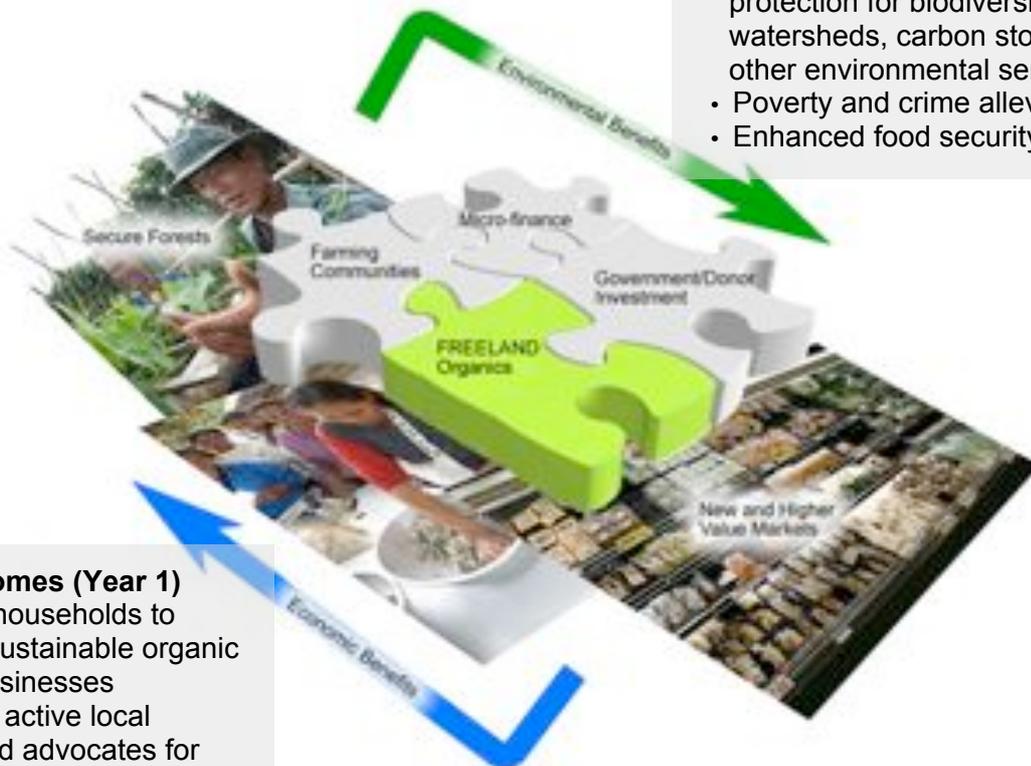
## Franchising Forest Stewardship

FREELAND is working to reduce poaching in Central Thailand by providing sustainable and ecosystem-friendly employment opportunities that alleviate poverty and provide healthy food security for rural people. We are seeking partners to help expand these successful small-scale pilot organic farming projects along the border of Central Thailand's Dong Phrayayen - Khao Yai (DPKY) Forest Complex. Partners will help bring the benefits of FREELAND *Organics*: *Franchising Forest Stewardship* to more rural communities.

This proven and effective program helps economically disadvantaged rural communities relying on unsustainable illegal logging and poaching to escape poverty and crime on a path that reduces pressures on nearby ecosystems and wildlife. The program goes further to encourage real community stewardship of those ecosystems. Communities are provided training and establishment support for their own low-impact, sustainable organic farming businesses. These businesses connect with FREELAND *Organics* branded wholesale and marketing channels to realize the full value of nature-friendly produce and tap into new, higher value markets. Profits support the development of more franchises, conservation projects and further education for community forest stewardship.

### Key Impacts

- Enhanced, sustainable forest protection for biodiversity, watersheds, carbon storage & other environmental services
- Poverty and crime alleviation
- Enhanced food security



### Target Outcomes (Year 1)

- Assist 30 households to establish sustainable organic farming businesses
- Develop 6 active local leaders and advocates for community forest stewardship
- Strengthen the program, brand and market penetration to drive further expansion

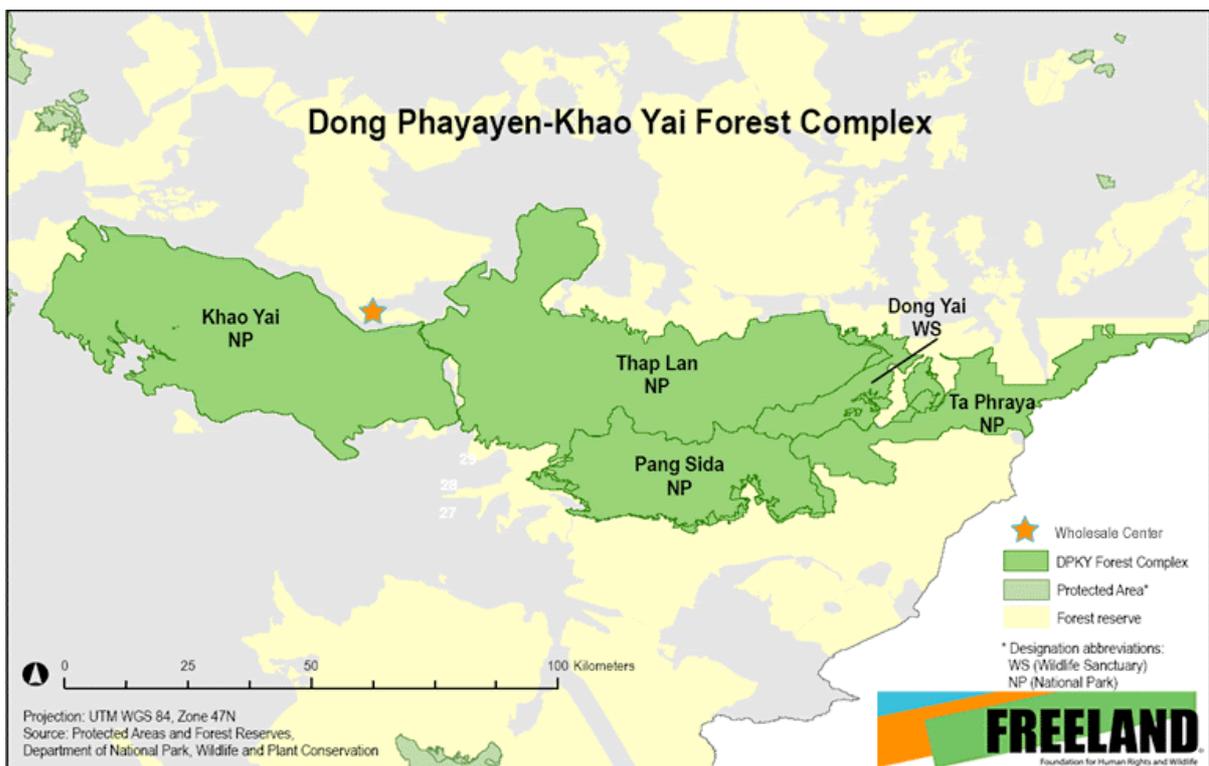
## People and Wildlife in Need



There are more than 300,000 people living in 600 rural villages in close proximity to the DPKY Forest Complex (home to critically endangered tigers, endangered elephants, threatened hornbills, bears, gibbons, and many other wild species). The few opportunities for employment pay low wages, barely enough to subsist on. Communities rely on the forest in many ways, but unsustainable poaching is damaging the environment and threatening legitimate livelihoods, such as farming.

### Scope and Approach

With partner support, the FREELAND *Organics: Franchising Forest Stewardship* program aims to engage communities in Central Thailand on a scale that results in a measurable rebound in wildlife populations within 3-5 years. It will become a model program that can be expanded and replicated around Thailand's protected areas, for the benefit of local communities, living forests and a stable climate.



Program base location in relation to the DPKY Forest complex

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FREELAND's village surveys have revealed that the main reason local people poach wild animals or cut wood illegally is the stark lack of alternative ways to make a living (including lack of access to funds to start their own legitimate business) and lack of knowledge about the unsustainability and negative impacts of poaching. They are fully aware of the risks of being arrested by park authorities and being injured or falling ill in the wild, as well as the potential long-term consequences for their families. Most poachers would prefer to change to a sustainable and legitimate livelihood, if given the chance.

To begin to create a 'community forest stewardship shield' around the DPKY Forest Complex, FREELAND will apply a consultative and tailored approach to expand the successful pilot organic farming program in Kok Sa-ard Village to three additional villages in Nakhon Ratchasima Province during the first year of partner support. This approach will highlight pilot program successes and incorporate education on environmental sustainability and the impacts of poaching. In total, 30 families and individuals will be equipped with the skills and materials needed to establish their organic mushroom farming business and supported until their business reaches sustainability (normally 6-12 months).

The program will be run and expanded by five on-site support staff based at the Training, Wholesale and Processing Center working in conjunction with two program coordination and marketing staff based in Bangkok. Mobile outreach staff will engage target communities near the border of the DPKY Forest Complex. Collective training will be provided to help new members establish their businesses. Mobile outreach staff will provide ongoing training and logistical support (such as materials purchasing, inventory, book keeping and banking).



Training conducted with the support of key program partner Phra Dabos Foundation

### **Progress Already Made**

In 2009, with support from the Blue Moon Fund, FREELAND conducted market research establishing significant demand for fresh produce and value-added products. Thailand's organic produce sector is at a relatively early stage of development, but is growing rapidly.

With Blue Moon Fund support and help from the local Wang Mee Sub-district Administrative Office, FREELAND has constructed a Training, Wholesale and Processing facility – located in close proximity to the target communities at Wan Nam Keaw, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Central Thailand (see map previous page).

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The partially outfitted Training, Wholesale and Processing Center (inset: mushroom barns)

The pilot program in the flagship Kok Sa-ard Village has so far helped seven ex-poacher households establish sustainable and growing mushroom farming businesses. These businesses supply the FREELAND *Organics* wholesale arm (which currently delivers all profits from sales to growers).

In 2009, more than **eight metric tons of fresh organic mushrooms** was produced and sold. Program members have been able to reinvest a healthy portion of profits back into their businesses.

Strong community forest stewardship has been developed. Surveys of the pilot program have shown it has **reduced poaching by up to 70%** in nearby forest areas, giving over-exploited ecosystems and endangered wildlife populations a chance to rebound.

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Program member Somai Kunok at work in her mushroom barn

### **Program Needs**

To continue and expand alternative livelihoods outreach under the FREELAND *Organics: Franchising Forest Stewardship* program, financial support is needed for the following key components:

- Partial funding of the existing three on-site support staff and employment of two new personnel (an additional community outreach officer and an agriculture advisor)
- Complete outfitting of the newly constructed Wan Nam Keaw facility for member training and value-added processing
- Materials and training to support new program members in establishing their businesses
- Special training to mentor wildlife conservation leaders within the target communities
- Transport and vehicle maintenance (including fuel costs for outreach, member support and produce transport)
- Product and brand development and market expansion

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