



## Salween Peace Park Wins 2020 Equator Prize

15<sup>th</sup> June 2020

***“...ensuring that the natural environment, which forms the bedrock of Indigenous Karen people's way of life, will continue to be healthy and plentiful...”*** (SPP Charter introduction)

The Salween Peace Park (SPP) is pleased to share the news that the communities of the SPP have been awarded the 2020 Equator Prize. The prize, established by the United Nations Development Programme in 2002, is awarded biennially for outstanding community efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The SPP is a community-led initiative that strives to empower local Indigenous communities to revitalize their traditional practices, assert their rights, and manage their own natural resources. The SPP spans 5,485 km<sup>2</sup> of biodiverse landscape in Mutraw district, managed sustainably by Indigenous Karen communities through an inclusive democratic governance structure that provides spaces for local people and leaders to converse on equal-footing. Through the collaboration between local people, and revitalization of Indigenous conservation practices, the people of the SPP have established wildlife sanctuaries, forest reserves, community forests and demarcated *Kaw* customary land. The SPP is the embodiment of a vision that an alternative to top-down, militarized, destructive ‘development’ is possible.

The achievement of this award to the Salween Peace Park constitutes direct recognition by the international community of the achievements of Mutraw’s Indigenous Karen communities, highlighting the value of their traditional ways of life and the importance of protecting their rights and territories. It also reinforces the globally important message that Indigenous peoples are vital stakeholders in, and contributors to the health of our planet.

The award winners were announced on June 5<sup>th</sup> and there will be a series of related events, including a formal award ceremony, in September during Climate Week. Due to concerns over the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic the events and ceremony will be held digitally, hosted by the UNDP in New York. We would like to thank the many supporters of the SPP who have worked with Mutraw’s Indigenous Karen over the years, and helped make this possible.

There is still a lot more work to do to achieve the full vision of the Salween Peace Park communities. We are encouraged to see this international recognition for the hard work of the SPP’s communities and Karen civil society, and solidarity with Mutraw’s Indigenous peoples. We will take this energy and channel it into our work, to help Indigenous Karen people build a place where all things can truly live together in peace.

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### **Media Links:**

Article by the UNDP Pronouncing the 2020 Winners: <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2020/11th-equator-prize-.html>

SPP Page on Equator Initiative: <https://www.equatorinitiative.org/2020/06/04/salween-peace-park/>