

Forestry Department tears down fence surrounding 92-rai plot of land

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THE NATION

FORESTRY DEPARTMENT director-general Boonchob Sutthamanaswong led 100 officials and volunteers yesterday to tear down a 1,000 cement-pillar fence, put up by alleged owners to mark a 92-rai plot of land, after authorities found the plot was located in Nakhon Ratchasima's Phu Luang national forest reserve.

As requested by locals, the 92-

rai plot will now be registered as community forest. Boonchob said this operation was a proactive measure against those encroaching on forestland.

It was reported that the land in question, located at the foot of a mountain in Pak Chong district's Tambon Wang Kratha, was also split into several 10-rai plots to be sold at between Bt1 million and Bt2 million - fetching a possible Bt30



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million in total.

Although the case was separate from the recent Wang Nam Khieo forestland encroachment case involving 43 plots (1,400 rai) being investigated by police, Boonchob said the fence could be dismantled under the National Reserved Forest Act, BE 2507 (1964).

Boonchob said the agency received the villagers' complaint last July and sent officials to

inspect the area, however, no one came forward to claim responsibility for the fence despite announcements posted throughout the area giving the supposed owners 30 days to claim ownership rights.

Authorities therefore demolished the fence on August 4.

Boonchob thanked the villagers and said if they hadn't brought the matter to his attention, the mountainous conservation area - also known as "Zone C" - would have been encroached

upon and most likely used to build resorts. The land offers attractive views of Khao Yai National Park and the surrounding region.

He went on to say that authorities were now checking the Nikhom Lam Takong area where many resorts were being built, as some were reportedly located on forest reserve territory.

The agency was also looking at some rubber plantations that had allegedly encroached on forestland in Phitsanulok, he added.