



世界自然基金會
香港分會

WWF-Hong Kong

香港新界葵涌葵昌路 8 號
萬泰中心 15 樓
15/F, Manhattan Centre
8 Kwai Cheong Road
Kwai Chung, N.T., Hong Kong

電話 Tel: +852 2526 1011
傳真 Fax: +852 2845 2764
wwf@wwf.org.hk
wwf.org.hk

Chairman and Members of Panel on Environmental Affairs, Legislative Council

(c/o Clerk to Panel on Environmental Affairs)
Legislative Council Complex,
1 Legislative Council Road, Central, Hong Kong

22 November 2019
(By post and e-mail)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Panel on Environmental Affairs Meeting on 25 November 2019, agenda item #IV “Holistic fisheries management strategy in marine parks”

We understand the above captioned will be discussed during the meeting of the Panel on Environmental Affairs on 25 November 2019. WWF-Hong Kong (WWF) welcomes the conservation measure of banning commercial fishing in the Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park (HHWMP), Yan Chau Tong Marine Park (YCTMP) and Tung Ping Chau Marine Park (TPCMP) in the eastern waters and the Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau Marine Park (SCLKCMP) in the western waters. To strengthen the proposed fisheries management strategy, we would recommend the following actions be taken:

1. Establish *strict* no-take zones within the proposed and existing Marine Parks

Scientific evidence shows that strict no-take marine protected areas have the potential to result in significant economic, biodiversity, and fisheries benefits when properly configured and enforced. They are an essential tool for effectively protecting, conserving, and rehabilitating marine ecosystem and fisheries. Even low levels of fishing can result in greatly diminished benefits as slow-growing, larger, reproducing fish are removed from the ecosystem. Around the world, non-commercial fishing activities have been documented to greatly reduce the beneficial impacts of marine reserves, in much the same way as commercial fishing. We strongly recommend that all fishing is completely banned and strictly enforced in the target marine parks, at least in a major core proportion of each reserve; this action should take place in concert with extensive community engagement efforts. Simply stated, allowing any form of fishing within no-take zones unacceptably undermines their effectiveness. Given that recreational fishing is growing, this has become, in many places, more of a threat than commercial fishing for certain species. Hence all extractive activities need to be considered if the goal is to effectively conserve both habitats and species.

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贊助人：香港特別行政區行政長官
林鄭月娥女士、大紫荊勳章、GBS
主席：何國達先生
行政總裁：江偉智先生

義務核數師：香港立信德豪會計師事務所有限公司
義務公司秘書：嘉信秘書服務有限公司
義務司庫：匯豐銀行
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2. Closely monitor fisheries resources and catches in The Brothers Marine Park and new marine parks to be designated in the western waters of Hong Kong

WWF is concerned about the effectiveness of these marine parks if commercial fishing is still allowed in these waters. We suggest the Government pilot a system that accurately monitors the fisheries resources and catches in these marine parks and carry out adaptive management measures when the fisheries stocks decrease. We strongly recommend the Government to prohibit fishing gears that could harm or kill marine cetaceans (for example, large mesh gill nets) or can be non-selective (such as gill nets). We also suggest the Government consider managing these reserves in a way that is compatible with achieving Chinese White Dolphin recovery goals as recommended in the November 2019 urgent recovery plan developed by the Greater Bay dolphin conservation community (available December 2019).

3. Explore options to expand the Core Area in The Brothers Marine Park

Currently in The Brothers Marine Park, 80 hectares are demarcated to protect the Chinese white dolphins and the fisheries resources therein. Fishing activities are prohibited within the Core Area. WWF suggests the government to explore options to expand this Core Area, because the western waters are now a critical habitat for the survival of the Hong Kong Chinese white dolphins, which continues to decline and needs urgent and effective management attention. Small and large vessel traffic and speed should be strictly managed and enforced according to guidelines in the upcoming *Pearl River Delta Chinese White Dolphin Urgent Conservation Action* report due out in December 2019).

4. Expand marine protected area (MPA) coverage to encompass 30% of Hong Kong waters

A robust MPA network helps fulfil Hong Kong's obligation under the Convention of Biological Diversity and its own actions planned for dolphins and other marine species under the Government's Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. We propose the Government commence feasibility studies for the establishment of MPAs covering 30% of waters in Hong Kong, incorporating a network of science-based, strict no-take reserves, fisheries management zones, community-based fisheries reserves, and other marine protected area designations. WWF along with partners, including AFCD, have already identified a number of key conservation priority areas that would be appropriate as candidate areas to expand the marine park network.

Sadly, fisheries resources in Hong Kong waters are so severely depleted that recovery is impossible without strong management action, a situation with serious consequences for fishing communities and the marine ecology. WWF recognizes the importance of providing *sustainable* access to fisheries for the fishing community, and notes that the above plan retains the majority of area (70%) accessible to fishing. We recommend fishery management objectives to be set for all of the marine parks. However, a significant proportion of area protected in MPAs could foster recovery of brood stocks that support the entire ecosystem, including fished areas -if supported by good fisheries management more widely.

Marine ecosystems, biodiversity, and fisheries can rebound quickly if a network of strict no-take marine reserves is established along our coastlines. Effective management and enforcement are critical for their potential benefits to be realized. We believe that the above recommendations are necessary to ensure a prosperous future for Hong Kong's sustainable fisheries. We hope to see Hong Kong being Asia's most sustainable and liveable city which we will all be proud of.

Yours faithfully,



David Olson, PhD
Director of Conservation
WWF-Hong Kong



Laurence McCook, PhD
Head of Oceans Conservation
WWF-Hong Kong