



THE ISSUE

The sea is everyone's asset. If the sea is reclaimed without proper and holistic planning, it will lead to environmental problems such as water pollution, loss of habitat, and damage to fisheries resources. Currently there is no plan on how to utilize our marine resources strategically, leading to conflict between conservation priorities and development.

In order to better conserve our valuable marine and seabed area while catering for the growing needs of our city, the government should implement a coastal and marine spatial planning (MSP) exercise to strike a balance between planned development, and effective conservation and restoration of the sea and marine species.

This type of planning usually involves a baseline assessment of coastal and marine environments, which further helps determine what uses are compatible or incompatible with the environment and to define which areas are best suited for protection, and which could be made available for development.

Effective MSP can facilitate the allocation of Hong Kong's marine resources in the most appropriate way and find synergies among sectors. Disputes have been escalating in recent years with numerous large-scale infrastructure projects that are either underway or in the planning process. Increased demand is being placed on the limited space and resources of the sea. It is time to end unplanned use of our sea resources, and to implement MSP, to allocate the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas, and to achieve a mix of ecological, economic, and social objectives. The implementation of MSP can reduce the ongoing cumulative impact and degradation of nature, reducing the fragmentation of marine habitats, and encouraging stakeholder participation during the planning.

MSP requires the government, the private sector, the public, and academia to work together to ensure that biodiversity, species populations, ecological processes, and ecosystem services are adequately protected and will be sustained over time, with solutions that include zonation for the coastal waters and different sets of management guidelines and restrictions within each zone.

Around 20 countries, including China, have completed, or are in the process of completing, national spatial plans for part or all of their EEZs (e.g. the Yellow Sea). It is essential to identify and manage current and future sea uses in a way that best meets the priorities and goals of various stakeholders.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

WWF-Hong Kong has been a strong proponent of MSP in the city for many years. During the five-month public consultation in 2018 for the government's Task Force on Land Supply, we launched a campaign against marine reclamation as one of the options to solve the city's housing needs.

In January 2019, the Executive Council endorsed the Task Force on Land Supply's final report, which includes reclaiming 1,000 hectares of land in Kau Yi Chau. It now expects to carry out an infrastructure study in the area as part of the Chief Executive's Lantau Tomorrow Vision project.

One of the proposed reclamation sites in Lung Kwu Tan is an important habitat for the Chinese white dolphin and its natural coastline is a breeding ground for various marine species. All of

these ecologically important habitats would be destroyed if reclamation was carried out at Lung Kwu Tan.

OUR ASK

WWF objects to marine reclamation for the purpose of building land reserves before fully exhausting other options and regards reclamation as a last resort. WWF believes the government should:

- immediately conduct a coastal and marine spatial planning exercise, aiming to strike a balance to first protect and provide resources to restore areas of marine conservation priority before starting further reclamation-based development, to help marine managers, planners, developers, and sea-users make strategic decisions related to policy, regulation, licensing and investment, that are sustainable and ensure biodiversity is conserved; and
- consider establishing a new authority for the process of MSP, with implementation to be carried out through existing authorities and institutions. New legislation may be required to cover the designation and management of new types of zonation.