



NO-TAKE ZONE AT HOI HA WAN



THE ISSUE

Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park was one of the first marine parks to be established in Hong Kong in 1996. It is recognized as a marine ecological hotspot due to its rich habitat diversity and presence of threatened species. Hoi Ha Wan has 64 species out of the 84 species of coral that occur in Hong Kong, and over 153 fishes, including the endangered Hong Kong grouper.

Despite Hoi Ha Wan being a marine reserve, Hong Kong fishermen are still allowed to fish in the area through a licensing system, as in other marine parks. The government has proposed to ban all fishing activities by fishing vessels in some marine parks, including Hoi Ha Wan, though this will not be fully in place until the end of 2021 due to the long legislation and negotiation process involved. Local fishing by hook and line would still be allowed.

No-take (that is, no fishing at all) marine reserves have proven to be a highly effective way to protect and restore coastal marine habitats, including coral reefs, and fish communities around the world. WWF is a strong advocate for developing a network of no-take zones within systems of marine protected areas to ensure healthy and resilient ecosystems, fisheries, and species populations.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

WWF-Hong Kong plans to engage the government and relevant stakeholders to launch a pilot no-take zone within the bay before the formal fishing ban, and conduct systematic baseline biodiversity surveys within the concerned area with involvement of experts, youth, citizen scientists, AFCD specialists and managers, fishers, and the public. The lessons learned in the designation of no-take zone and the biodiversity baseline will ultimately support better management of the marine parks, inform next steps in the expansion of no-take zones elsewhere in Hong Kong waters.

WWF will focus on five objectives:

- Establish a true no-take area within the HHW Marine Park;
- Engage local villagers, one of the key stakeholders to discuss and test the co-management approach;
- Engage local fishers and marine reserve managers to better understand the challenges and solutions to enforcement;
- Train WWF members and youth in techniques for marine biodiversity monitoring; and,
- Gather and update ecological data and establish the first-ever baseline study on HHW Marine Park.

OUR ASK

WWF-Hong Kong urges the government to establish a 12ha no-take zone within the Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park (Figs. 1 & 2). The government has proposed to make all of the 260 ha reserve as a no-take zone (except for shore-based line fishing by local people) over the next few years.

We further urge the government to designate 30% of Hong Kong’s waters at MPAs by 2030 with commercial fishing excluded from the three existing marine parks in eastern waters, namely Hoi Ha Wan, Tung Ping Chau and Yan Chau Tong. This includes offering a nursery and resting space for vulnerable habitats and species at Hoi Ha Wan, and to allocate more resources to conduct habitat restoration projects with academics and conservation organisations, including coral rescue and restoration at Hoi Ha Wan.

Resources are also needed to promote the proper surveillance and enforcement of MPAs to combat illegal fishing activities and ensure the fisheries resources can recover without unexpected disturbance. A well-managed MPA will support the livelihoods of people relying on marine resources, eventually helping to achieve long-term ecological, social and economic objectives .



Figure 1. The proposed no-take zone within the Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park. The location of the reserve within Hong Kong is shown with a red circle on the inset map.

Figure 2. Proposed trial no-take zone within the Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park.