

Endangered Species Advisory Committee (ESAC)
Confirmed Minutes of Meeting

Date : 14 May 2008 (Wednesday)
Time : 2:30 p.m.
Venue : Room 701, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)
Headquarters

Attendance

Chairman

Dr TAM Wing-kun, BBS, JP

Members

Mrs Justina LEUNG NGAI Mou-yin, JP

Prof. Albert LEUNG Wing-nang

Dr Paul SHIN Kam-shing

Dr SUN Mei

Mr TSANG Sau-yuen

Miss CHEUNG Siu-hing, JP Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

Miss Florence CHAN Senior Administrative Officer (Nature Conservation),
Environmental Protection Department

Secretary

Ms Jenny WONG Assistant Secretary (Boards)1, AFCD

In Attendance

AFCD

Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun	Senior Endangered Species Protection Officer
Miss Pauline TONG	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Enforcement
Mr Alfred WONG	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Licensing 1
Mr FUNG Ho-lam	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Licensing 2

CUSTOMS & EXCISE DEPARTMENT

Mr. LAM Kam	Acting Senior Staff Officer (Prosecution and Management Support)
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OCEAN PARK, HONG KONG

Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON	Executive Director, Zoological Operations & Education, Ocean Park
Mr Timothy NG	Director, Zoological Operations & Education, Ocean Park

Absent with Apologies

Mr CHIU Ching-cheung

Dr Craig Kirkpatrick

Ms Katherine MA Miu-wah

Prof. Frances MAHR Ching-ki

Mr Thomas WONG Cheung-chi

Mr WONG Hing-keung

Mr C.C. LAY	Assistant Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (Conservation)
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Mr CHOW Kwong	Assistant Commissioner (Boundary and Ports), Customs & Excise Department
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Opening Remarks by the Chairman

01/08 The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular, Mr LAM Kam, Acting Senior Staff Officer (Prosecution and Management Support) of Customs and Excise Department and Mr FUNG Ho-lam, Endangered Species Protection Officer (Licensing) 2 of AFCD who were attending the meeting for the first time, as well as the two representatives from Ocean Park i.e., Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON and Mr Timothy NG.

02/08 The Chairman informed members that, as an established practice, to facilitate the taking of meeting minutes, sound recording would be made during the meeting. The audio records would be destroyed after the meeting minutes had been confirmed.

03/08 The Chairman said that the recent earthquake in Sichuan, China had attracted wide community concerns and sympathies. On behalf of the Committee, he extended condolences to the earthquake victims and wished that lives of those affected would be restored to normal as soon as possible.

Agenda Items

I. Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 8 November 2007

04/08 The minutes of the last meeting held on 8 November 2007 were confirmed without amendments.

II. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting

(a) Introduction of New Animals at Ocean Park in 2008 (Para. 41/07)

05/08 Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON said that as a world leader in providing excellent guest experiences in a theme park environment, Ocean Park was committed to connecting people with nature. She advised that Ocean Park had been an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums since 2002 and 2003 respectively, and both associations had renewed Ocean Park's accreditation membership with effect from 2008 after their inspectors had visited the Park's facilities and reviewed the corporation's governance, viability and best practices, including policies, procedures and educational, conservation and training programmes.

06/08 Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON went on to provide a general update on the four giant pandas in Ocean Park i.e. An An, Jia Jia, Ying Ying and Le Le. Short videos on the giant pandas during their behaviour training were shown to the meeting. She also briefed members

on the work progress of Ocean Park's Master Redevelopment Plan. Members noted that the new giant panda facility had been renamed from "Astounding Asia" to "Amazing Asian Animal". It was scheduled to open by end of 2008. [Post-meeting note: The facility was scheduled to open in the first quarter of 2009.]

07/08 Ms GENDRON advised that Ocean Park participated actively in conservation research and publication. A small reserve in Mabian, Sichuan had been adopted through Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong. Apart from funding a 4-year monitoring programme from 2008 to 2011 to build a database for conservation management and to provide training to staff in the reserve, it also sponsored the printing of materials to enhance community awareness of the reserve's ecosystem, rules and regulations on wildlife protection and conservation.

08/08 Ms GENDRON was pleased to inform members that two 2.3m long Chinese Sturgeons from Xiamen Aquarium had arrived Ocean Park on 12 May 2008, and another three 1.3m long Chinese Sturgeons from Beijing Aquarium would arrive on 19 May 2008. Ocean Park would work with the Ministry of Agriculture, Beijing Aquarium and Xiamen Breeding Centre to explore captive-breeding and re-introduction of Chinese Sturgeons to the wild. Ms GENDRON also thanked AFCD for offering assistance to enable smooth transportation of the Chinese Sturgeons.

09/08 A member enquired about the age of the Chinese Sturgeons and why there was a big difference in their sizes. Ms GENDRON replied that the 1.3m long Chinese Sturgeons were about two years old. Mr Timothy NG added that the 2.3m long Chinese Sturgeons were at the age of five. They would attain sexual maturity at about eight to ten.

10/08 Members had no further questions and comments. The Chairman thanked Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON and Mr Timothy NG for attending the meeting.

(Ms Suzanne M. GENDRON and Mr Timothy NG left the meeting at this juncture.)

(b) Education and Publicity Work in 2007-08 (Para. 51/07)

11/08 Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun said that the department had seized every opportunity to strengthen education and publicity work on endangered species protection. Following the opening of the Hong Kong - Shenzhen Western Corridor, roll-up display stands reminding travelers the licensing requirement for the import of endangered species had been set up at the control point with the assistance of the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED). Moreover, a video on the control of import and export of endangered species was produced and delivered to

C&ED for broadcast at control points. He thanked C&ED for their assistance. More details about the education and publicity work would be reported under Agenda V.

III. Progress of the Introduction of New Animals at Ocean Park

12/08 An update on the captioned issue had been given under Agenda II (a) above.

IV. Amendments to the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/1/2008)

13/08 Mr Alfred WONG presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/1/2008 and updated members about the progress of the amendments to the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (the Ordinance), Cap. 586.

14/08 The meeting noted that apart from the changes as adopted at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP14), there would also be changes to the listing of its Appendix III and other technical amendments. The Department proposed to replace the existing Appendices of Schedule 1 to the Ordinance by the up-to-date CITES Appendices to ensure consistency between the two Appendices and easy reference by users. The proposed amendments to Appendices of Schedule 1 to the Ordinance were summarized at Annexes 1 to 4 to Committee Paper CP/ESAC/1/2008.

15/08 Mr Alfred WONG advised that the Drafting Instructions for the legislative amendments had been issued and it was anticipated that the new controls would come into operation in 2008.

16/08 A member noted that all species of wild birds previously listed in Appendix III by Ghana were proposed to be deleted. He was concerned whether such a move would have any implications on the birds in the Mai Po Nature Reserve. Mr Alfred WONG advised that any Party which proposed the inclusion of a species in Appendix III might withdraw the inclusion by notification. Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun supplemented that CITES was concerned about international trade. In spite of the deletion by Ghana, Mr CHEUNG advised that the protection of wild birds would remain unaffected in Hong Kong which was afforded under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance, Cap 170.

17/08 Mr LAM Kam asked if AFCD would arrange briefings for Customs officers to familiarize them with the legislative amendments to facilitate law enforcement. Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun replied that, when the new legislation was to be enacted, training courses would be arranged for Customs officers and AFCD's frontline enforcement officers.

18/08 In view of the large number of species involved, a member was interested to know whether AFCD had sufficient information and expertise to identify endangered species being brought into Hong Kong. Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun responded that there were over 30,000 endangered species, and it was unlikely that anyone could know them all. When identifying a species, frontline officers often used a reverse method, i.e. through identifying species of the same family which were non-endangered. Suspected cases would then be referred to professional officers for further identification.

**V. Education and Publicity Work in 2008
(Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/2/2008)**

19/08 Mr FUNG Ho-lam presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/2/2008 and briefed members on the education and publicity work on endangered species protection since the last meeting and the new work ahead in 2008.

20/08 Members noted that, to tie in with the amendments to the Ordinance, press releases and circular letters would be issued in due course to inform traders and concerned parties the commencement date of the new control. The department would also keep close contact with the trade and arrange talks or seminars when needed to facilitate their compliance with the new controls. Endangered species protection would be included in the new school curriculum with effect from September 2009, AFCD would compile teaching materials for use in the subject of Liberal Studies. The department would liaise with the Education Bureau on the matter.

21/08 Regarding the promotion of endangered species protection through the new school curriculum, a member suggested to attach more importance to conservation of endangered species rather than law enforcement from an educational angle. When the department had come up with more details about the teaching materials, he was willing to share his ideas with the department. Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun thanked Dr SHIN for his interest and would consult him in due course.

22/08 A member noted that the department had been doing a lot in education and publicity. He further suggested the department to put up display panels on endangered species protection in more public places, such as Wetland Park, Science Museum, etc. Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun replied that display panels had been set up in public places from time to time, including Town Halls and the Wetland Park, on a rotation basis. He would explore the feasibility of putting up display panels at other venues such as the Science Museum. Miss CHEUNG Siu-hing added that the department had made use of country park visitor centres, Wetland Park, Lions Nature Education Centre to put up information on conservation, and would continue to

look for more places for such purpose. She also called upon members' assistance to identify suitable locations for placing the display panels.

23/08 A member complimented the department's efforts on education and publicity of endangered species protection. She wondered if the department could also arrange to produce some sorts of video similar to those seen on the Discovery Channel. She believed that visual images would be more appealing to the general public as well as more effective in stimulating interest among youngsters. The Chairman added that AFCD might consider joining hands with Ocean Park to take forward the proposal. Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun replied that the department would follow up on these suggestions.

24/08 In producing the video, a member suggested to broaden the range to cover all fauna and flora in order to achieve a better publicity effect. Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun responded that cooperation would be made with other Divisions of the department to produce videos covering both endangered and non-endangered species.

VI Summary Progress Report of CITES Work (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/3/2008)

25/08 Miss Pauline TONG presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/3/2008 on AFCD's work in relation to CITES during the period from 1 September 2007 to 31 March 2008. She highlighted a number of significant cases involving the import and transit of endangered species without licences for members' attention. These cases were successfully prosecuted and the offenders were sentenced to imprisonment.

26/08 Members noted that an AFCD officer had attended a workshop on "Control of Trade in Endangered Species via the Internet" held by the CITES Management Authority of China in Hangzhou, China from 10 to 11 January 2008. Miss Pauline TONG said that there was an increasing trend of illegal trade in endangered species via the internet globally. The workshop provided a good opportunity for law enforcement agencies and service providers to discuss feasible measures and to explore areas of cooperation on controlling internet trade in endangered species. She said that internet criminals had become more and more alert about the department's undercover operations. Recently, the department had to use Wi-Fi technology to overcome the investigation difficulties. It would continue to be alert to technological development to maintain enforcement effectiveness.

27/08 A member enquired how the goods were delivered after an internet transaction. Miss Pauline TONG replied that usually the suspect would request to meet at a certain place such as an MTR station to handover the goods.

VII. Serving the Community - Service Standards Committee 26th Monitoring Report (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/4/2008)

28/08 Mr FUNG Ho-lam reported that, for the quarter ending September 2007, 884 applications representing 17% of the total number of applications for import / export / re-export / possession licence in respect of endangered species [i.e. item 2(a)] could not meet the target. This was due to an influx of applications for licence to possess traditional Chinese medicines within a short period of time as the grace period for not requiring a possession licence for the subject specimens expired by the end of May 2007. For the quarter ending December 2007, 622 applications (14%) on item 2(a) could not meet the target. As two submissions of 600 and 262 applications for re-export licence were received from an applicant on a single day in October and December respectively, the performance pledge could not be fully met. Mr FUNG was pleased to report that the performance results for the quarter ending March 2008 and for the month April 2008 had greatly improved. Over 99% of applications on item 2(a) had met the target. The slight deviation for not meeting the performance pledge was merely due to receipt of a large number of applications from one single submission.

29/08 A member asked whether it was common for one applicant to submit a large number of applications at one go. Mr CHEUNG Chi-sun replied that several applicants were doing business with tourists. In this respect, they might from time to time lodge a batch of applications to make spare licences available for tourists patronizing their shops. Setting aside such special circumstances, the performance targets would normally be fully met.

VIII. Any Other Business

30/08 Members had no other business to discuss.

IX. Date of Next Meeting

31/08 The Chairman said that members would be informed of the date of the next meeting in due course.

32/08 The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

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