

Endangered Species Advisory Committee
Confirmed Minutes of Meeting

Date : 22 June 2009 (Monday)
Time : 2:30 p.m.
Venue : Room 701, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)
Headquarters

Attendance

Chairman

Professor Albert LEUNG Wing-nang

Members

Professor CHU Lee-man

Mrs. Justina LEUNG NGAI Mou-yin, J.P.

Dr. SUN Mei

Mr. TSANG Sau-yuen

Mr. Thomas WONG Cheung-chi

Ms. CHEUNG Siu-hing, J.P. Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

Mr. C.C. LAY Assistant Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and
Conservation (Conservation)

Secretary

Miss Helen TAM Ho-ying Assistant Secretary (Boards)1, AFCD

In Attendance

AFCD

Mr. Richard CHAN Ping-kwong	Senior Endangered Species Protection Officer
Miss Pauline TONG Yee-fan	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Enforcement
Mr. Alfred WONG Kwong-chiu	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Licensing 1
Mr. Karrie WU Kar-ye	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Licensing 2

CUSTOMS & EXCISE DEPARTMENT

Mr. LAU Ching-lung	Senior Inspector (Shenzhen Bay Cargo) (Acting)
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OCEAN PARK, HONG KONG

Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron	Executive Director, Zoological Operations & Education
Mr. Timothy NG	Director, Zoological Operations & Education
Mr. Grant ABEL	General Curator

Absent with Apologies

Dr. Paul SHIN Kam-shing

Mr. CHIU Ching-cheung

Ms. Katherine MA Miu-wah

Dr. Craig Kirkpatrick

Mr. WONG Hing-keung

Mr. CHOW Kwong	Assistant Commissioner (Boundary and Ports), Customs & Excise Department
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Miss Vivien LI	Senior Administrative Officer (Nature Conservation) Environmental Protection Department
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CHAIRMANSHIP

1/09 Mr. C. C. LAY informed members that Dr Paul SHIN Kam-shing, Chairman, could not attend the meeting due to unforeseen commitments. Members were advised to nominate a member to preside at this meeting.

2/09 A member proposed and members agreed Professor Albert LEUNG Wing-nang to preside at this meeting.

OPENING REMARKS

3/09 The Chairman welcomed all members to the meeting, in particular Mr. Richard CHAN Ping-kwong, Senior Endangered Species Protection Officer and Ms. Karrie WU Kar-ye, Endangered Species Protection/ Licensing 2, who attended the meeting for the first time.

AGENDA ITEMS

I. Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 9 December 2008

4/09 The minutes of the last meeting held on 9 December 2008 were confirmed without amendments.

II. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting

(a) Amendments to the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Para. 37/08)

5/09 Mr. Alfred WONG said that the Orders amending the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance had been submitted to the Legislative Council and published in the Gazette in January 2009. The new control had come into operation on 13 March 2009, and so far, the implementation of the new control was smooth.

(b) Education and Publicity Work in 2009 (Para. 58/08)

6/09 Ms. Karrie WU reported on the education and publicity work in the first two quarters of 2009. She said that AFCD had launched a CD on endangered species protection in May. It would serve as a reference for teachers under the New Senior Secondary Curriculum. AFCD would also conduct a briefing session in late June to promote the CD and introduce the

other resources available from AFCD, including display boards, leaflets, specimens, talks and visits to Endangered Species Resources Centre, which could aid both teaching and learning. Ms Karrie WU supplemented that drafts of the reference materials had already been circulated among members. She thanked Dr. Paul SHIN and Dr. SUN Mei for their valuable comments and suggestions on the materials.

7/09 Ms. Karrie WU said that the Endangered Species Protection 4-Panel Comic Drawing Competition, co-organized by Sing Tao Daily, was launched in April 2009. More than 2,000 entries were received. An award presentation ceremony would be held at Hong Kong Wetland Park in August. The award-winning works would be exhibited at community halls and printed on publicity materials for distribution to the public.

8/09 Ms. WU added that a joint public education activity was organized with Mr. WAN Wo-fai, a North District Councillor, to organize an activity at Sha Tau Kok and Chung Ying Street to remind shopkeepers and residents of the import and export requirements for endangered species. Display boards were exhibited with publicity materials distributed to members of the public.

9/09 Ms. Karrie WU reported that the Guangdong–Hong Kong Protect Endangered Species Summer Camp 2009 was cancelled due to the spread of Human Swine Influenza in the region.

(Professor CHU Lee-man joined the meeting at this juncture.)

III. An Update on Giant Pandas in Ocean Park and New Animals to be introduced

New Animals to be introduced to the Ocean Park

10/09 Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron briefed members the new animals to be introduced to the Ocean Park in late 2009 and early 2010, including 5 heads of Chinese Giant Salamander (Appendix I of the CITES), 10 heads of Bottlenose dolphins (Appendix II of the CITES). She informed that Ocean Park would apply for the relevant import licences from AFCD as required.

(Mr. Thomas WONG Cheung-chi joined the meeting at this juncture.)

11/09 Mr. Grant ABEL supplemented that the purpose of bringing in additional Bottlenose dolphins was to add genetic diversity to the existing populations in the Ocean Park. He advised that there were a total of 16 dolphins in the Park, including 5 males and 11 females, among which, 9 were born in the Park.

12/09 In response to a member's enquiries, Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron said that in addition to Hong Kong, Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops aduncus*) were also kept in captivity in Australia, Dubai, Taiwan, Shenzhen, South Africa and Mexico. She added that the global population of Bottlenose dolphins under human care was rather small, it was important to maintain global genetic diversity through bringing in new dolphins from other countries. Ocean Park and the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation (OPCF) would also work with the other dolphin facilities to exchange dolphin semen in order to better manage the population under human care.

13/09 A member asked if there were any measures to prevent the dolphins in the Park from inbreeding.

14/09 Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron responded that a breeding programme for Bottlenose dolphins had been launched since 1993. Veterinarians would identify ovulating female dolphins and put them with the desired partner for breeding in order to maintain a strong genetic diversity in Ocean Park's population.

15/09 The member enquired whether Ocean Park would consider sending out or exchanging dolphins with other countries.

16/09 Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron replied that they had entered into partnership with other oceanariums and aquariums to manage the population of the Bottlenose dolphins in captivity. It would take time to organize the exchanges and necessitate the support of the government of the partner's aquarium's country. Ocean Park did not have any MOU in place as yet to support semen exchange.

Update on Giant Pandas and Chinese Sturgeons

17/09 Mr. Timothy NG gave members an update on the condition of the four giant pandas and four red pandas in Ocean Park. He also briefed members on the education, publicity and conservation work related to the animals.

18/09 A member asked how the Ocean Park might handle the carcass of the giant pandas, if any of the two elder giant pandas died in Hong Kong. He also expressed his concern over the baseline survey of red pandas conducted in Nepal.

19/09 Mr. Timothy NG said that they had signed an agreement with the Wolong authorities. Under the agreement, if any of the giant pandas died, the Ocean Park should inform the Wolong authorities and AFCD immediately of the incident, and a joint post-mortem would be conducted in Hong Kong to examine the cause of death. The carcass would be returned to Wolong after post-mortem.

20/09 Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron supplemented that, rather than returning the carcass to Wolong, the opportunity of keeping the carcass in a local museum for educational or research purposes could be explored.

21/09 She added that Ocean Park staff would closely monitor the health condition of Jia Jia, the eldest panda in the Park whilst establishing a close liaison with the Wolong authorities. She said that Jia Jia was in stable condition.

22/09 In reply to the member's enquiry about the publicity plan in case of the death of the giant pandas, Mr. Timothy NG said that they would communicate with the government departments in arranging appropriate publicity measures.

23/09 Regarding the baseline survey of red pandas, Mr. Timothy NG said that the final report of the survey would be completed by late June. He highlighted that a few university students had gone to Nepal and participated in the survey. The survey was very beneficial to the students in acquiring experience of conducting research on animals and fieldwork.

24/09 A member noted that Ying Ying and Le Le were becoming sexually mature and asked if Ocean Park had a breeding plan for them.

25/09 Ms. Suzanne M Gendron advised that the female and male giant pandas would become sexually mature when they reached the age of 4 and 6 respectively. Ying Ying was expected to be sexually mature in the coming breeding season, i.e. February to April 2010. She added that the Ocean Park would discuss with the Government and the Wolong authorities on their breeding plan as appropriate.

26/09 Mr. Timothy NG supplemented that according to the agreement signed with the Wolong authorities, the offspring of Ying Ying and Le Le, and those of the four red pandas could stay in Hong Kong.

27/09 A member enquired whether the Chinese Sturgeons would be returned to Ocean Park by late 2009.

28/09 Ms. Suzanne M Gendron responded that the majority of the Chinese Sturgeons had recovered and would come back shortly. She said that the new Chinese Sturgeon Aquarium would be installed with fresh water facilities and re-opening of the Aquarium was scheduled in late 2009.

New Facilities and New Attractions

29/09 Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron introduced to members the new veterinary centre, the "Bird Theatre" at "Amazing Asian Animals" and "Polar Adventure". These facilities would be

opened to the public in late 2009 and early 2010. For the “Bird Theatre”, various birds, including Hooded Vulture, Steppes Eagle, Toco Toucan, Eclectus Parrot, etc would be introduced to the Ocean Park whilst two F2 Bottlenose dolphins from South Africa would be imported next month. Walrus from Russia and Gentoo penguins from Japan would also be brought to “Polar Adventure” in late 2009.

30/09 A member was concerned about the origins of the birds to be introduced to the Bird Theatre in Amazing Asian Animals.

31/09 In reply to the member’s enquiry, Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron said that the majority of the new birds at the Bird Theatre come from Asian breeders.

32/09 A member expressed her concern over the living places for walrus and penguins at the Ocean Park.

33/09 Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron replied that they would establish temporary cold rooms for the animals originating in cold regions before transferring them to the “Polar Adventure”. She advised that “Polar Adventure” would be divided into two sections and animals from the North Pole and South Pole would be kept separately. As the aquarium would be an enclosed area, water and air temperature in the aquarium would be closely monitored to simulate the habitats for those animals.

34/09 After discussion on this item, the Chairman thanked Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron, Mr. Timothy NG and Mr. Grant ABEL for attending the meeting.

(Ms Suzanne M. Gendron, Mr. Timothy NG and Mr. Grant ABEL left the meeting at this juncture.)

35/09 Mr. Richard CHAN said that AFCD would process the applications to import the new animals to the Ocean Park in accordance with the requirements of CITES and Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586).

IV. Report on the 1st International Workshop on Red Corals and the 24th meeting of the CITES Animals Committee (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/1/2009)

36/09 Mr. Alfred WONG presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/1/2009. Members noted the content of the paper.

37/09 A member asked if the shark fin served in the restaurants was being regulated under the CITES.

38/09 Mr. Alfred WONG said that CITES currently only listed Great White Shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*), Basking Shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*) and Whale Shark (*Rhincodon typus*) in its Appendix II. Import and export of specimens of these species were subject to licensing control. He added that most of the shark fin served in the Hong Kong restaurants did not come from these species. In reply to the member's further enquiry, Mr. C.C. LAY said that AFCD would regulate the commercial trade in shark fin in Hong Kong in accordance with the CITES requirements.

39/09 A member considered that while there was the need to protect endangered species, many animals and plants were not endangered, including most of the sharks. He expressed that it would be individual's choice and preference and the Government should not ban the local consumption of non-CITES shark species.

40/09 In response to the query raised by the Chairman, Mr. Alfred WONG said that trade in Brown Sea Cucumber (*Isostichopus fuscus*), included in Appendix III of CITES in October 2003, was for food. Nevertheless, there was no record showing that this species had been imported to Hong Kong last year.

V. Summary Progress Report of CITES Work (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/2/2009)

41/09 Miss Pauline TONG presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/2/2009 on AFCD's enforcement work in relation to CITES during the period from 1 October 2008 to 30 April 2009. She highlighted a number of significant cases involving import, transit and export of endangered species without licences. Ms. Karrie WU then presented the publicity and education work of the Department in relation to CITES during the reporting period.

42/09 In response to a member's enquiry on a case in relation to 87 heads of freshwater turtle that the punishment was not sufficiently severe, Miss Pauline TONG said that the defendant of that case was charged under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586), and also charged of animals cruelty. He was fined a total of \$7,000 with confiscation of the animals, which the Department considered the deferent effect was considerable.

43/09 In response to the Chairman's enquiry, Miss Pauline TONG said a porter was also arrested in that case. Nevertheless, after consulting the Department of Justice, the porter was released due to lack of sufficient evidence.

44/09 In response to the Chairman's enquiry about the case on import of *Rhinoceros iguana* and Radiated Tortoise to Hong Kong, Miss Pauline TONG replied that import of these

animals had risen in recent years as there was an increasing trend of keeping these animals as pets.

45/09 The Chairman advised that AFCD should strengthen its educational and publicity work to the pet trade.

VI. Serving the Community – Service Standards Committee 28th Monitoring Report (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/3/2009)

46/09 Ms. Karrie WU reported that for the quarter ended December 2008, all applications on Import/Export/Re-export/Possession Licence in respect of endangered species could meet the target. For the quarter ended March 2009, 120 applications (4%) could not meet the target. This was due to an influx of applications within a short period of time. She added that no complaints were received during the report periods and the overall service standard was satisfactory.

47/09 A member asked if the Department would carry out a survey on the awareness of the citizens to the protection of endangered species.

58/09 Mr. C.C. LAY said that the awareness of the general public had increased in recent years. Nevertheless, the Department would continue its effort in education and publicity work on the protection of endangered species.

59/09 The Chairman complimented the Department's effort in educating the public the importance of protection of endangered species.

VII. Any Other Business

50/09 Members did not raise any other business.

VIII. Date of Next Meeting

51/09 The Chairman said that members would be informed of the date of next meeting in due course.

52/09 The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

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