

Endangered Species Advisory Committee
Confirmed Minutes of Meeting

Date : 14 January 2010 (Thursday)
Time : 2:30 p.m.
Venue : Room 701, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)
Headquarters

Attendance

Chairman

Dr. Paul SHIN Kam-shing

Members

Professor CHU Lee-man

Dr. Craig Kirkpatrick

Ms. Katherine MA Miu-wah

Dr. SUN Mei

Mr. TSANG Sau-yuen

Mr. Thomas WONG Cheung-chi

Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P. Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

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

Miss Vivien LI Senior Administrative Officer (Nature Conservation)
Environmental Protection Department

Secretary

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

In Attendance

AFCD

Mr. Richard CHAN Ping-kwong Senior Endangered Species Protection Officer

Mr. Alfred WONG Kwong-chiu Endangered Species Protection Officer/Enforcement

Ms. Karrie WU Kar-ye Endangered Species Protection Officer/Licensing 2

Customs & Excise Department

Ms. YEUNG Wing-yan Senior Inspector (Strategic Research) 1

Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong

Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron Director

Absent with Apologies

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

Mr. CHIU Ching-cheung

Mr. WONG Hing-keung

Mr. CHOW Kwong Assistant Commissioner (Boundary and Ports), Customs
& Excise Department

OPENING REMARKS

1/10 The Chairman welcomed all members to the meeting, in particular Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P., Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation and Ms. YEUNG Wing-yan, representative from the Customs & Excise Department, who attended the meeting for the first time.

AGENDA ITEMS

I. Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 22 June 2009

2/10 The minutes of the last meeting held on 22 June 2009 were confirmed without amendments.

II. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting

- (a) An Update on Giant Pandas in Ocean Park and New Animals to be introduced (Para. 10/09 to 35/09)

Giant Pandas and Red Pandas

3/10 Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron updated members of the conditions of the Giant Pandas. While Jia Jia was receiving medication for old age related diseases, other Giant Pandas were doing well. As the young pandas were approaching sexual maturity, Ocean Park was closely monitoring their conditions and working with the Wolong authorities for a breeding plan. She supplemented that according to the agreement signed with the Wolong authorities, the offsprings of Ying Ying could be retained in Hong Kong.

4/10 Ms. Gendron introduced Members to the training and behavioral enrichment programs for the Giant Pandas. She highlighted that apart from the enrichment items, such as various puzzle feeders, smells, burlaps and various feeding spots, they had recently arranged a snow machine in the “Giant Panda Adventure” for Ying Ying and Le Le.

5/10 On the conditions of the four red pandas, Ms. Gendron advised that they had adapted to the Park’s environment, and were doing well with the public. The four red pandas might become sexually mature later this year or early next 2011.

Animal Acquisitions Plans

6/10 Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron briefed members on the new animal acquisitions plan for Ocean Park. She informed Members that the National Aquatic Wildlife Conservation Association had planned to donate ten tails of Chinese sturgeons to Ocean Park in 2010. The fish would be displayed at the renovated Chinese Sturgeon Aquarium.

7/10 Ms. Gendron also advised that Ocean Park would introduce more Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins so as to supplement the current population. Ocean Park would pay due diligence to ensure any capture of dolphins would be non-detrimental to the natural population.

8/10 Ms. Gendron introduced the new development plans of “Amazing Asian Animal (AAA)” to Members. She said that Ocean Park was seeking the Ministry of Agriculture’s support to import Chinese giant salamanders. Besides, Ocean Park was planning to acquire several captive bred macaws, including Military Macaw and Hyacinth Macaw, and other CITES listed bird species, such as Hooded Vulture and Toco Toucan, all of which except the Toco Toucan, were bred in captivity, mainly in the Philippines and the Netherlands.

9/10 A new attraction, “Polar Adventure”, would be launched in the near future. Two heads of Pacific walrus would be imported to Hong Kong. They would be housed at an aquarium in Japan before moving into Ocean Park.

10/10 In reply to a member’s enquiry, Ms. Suzanne Gendron advised that Chinese giant salamander was listed in CITES Appendix I, whilst Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin and Chinese sturgeon were listed in Appendix II. The member further enquired whether Ocean

Park would take the opportunity of introducing new animals to promote the protection of endangered species. Ms. Suzanne Gendron replied that the promotion of endangered species protection was one of the main focuses of Ocean Park's education program. Over the years, the resources and staff engaged in the animal conservation had increased. Ocean Park would also keep up its efforts on publicity and education to help promote endangered species protection in Hong Kong.

11/10 In reply to a member's enquiry, Ms. Gendron advised that the Chinese sturgeons would be kept at the renovated Chinese Sturgeon Aquarium that simulated the fresh water habitat of the Yangtze River. Apart from the sturgeons, other fishes and animals inhabiting in the Yangtze River would also be displayed at the aquarium.

12/10 The member appreciated Ocean Park's consideration in keeping the Chinese sturgeons. She opined that the public had focused on the symbolic meaning of animals bearing the name of "Chinese" and suggested that Ocean Park should get well prepared for managing public expectation.

13/10 Ms. Suzanne Gendron noted the Member's suggestion and would follow up with her marketing team. She supplemented that Ocean Park would maintain a close contact with the Ministry of Agriculture on handling the sturgeons when they come to Hong Kong.

14/10 Mr. Alan WONG, J.P. supported the member's view and opined that experts could give advice to Ocean Park and the public on the difficulties of keeping Chinese sturgeons.

15/10 A member enquired about the latest position of the Chinese sturgeons that were returned to the Mainland China. He considered that the Committee should follow up and keep Members abreast of the conditions of those sturgeons.

16/10 The Chairman concurred with the member and asked whether Ocean Park had any updates on the situation about the sturgeons returned to the Mainland China.

17/10 Ms. Suzanne Gendron replied that Ocean Park had been providing financial support to the facilities keeping those returned sturgeons. Experts of the Ministry of Agriculture also regularly visited the facilities and inspected the conditions of the sturgeons. It was noted that all seven sturgeons were healthy.

18/10 In reply to a member's enquiries, Ms. Suzanne Gendron said that new sturgeons would come to Hong Kong in February 2010, and they were now preparing for the technical agreements and other relevant procedures. She added that, considering the size of the aquarium, sturgeons of less than two meters long would be imported to Hong Kong.

19/10 The member enquired about Ocean Park's strategic plans for recruiting new animals.

20/10 Ms. Suzanne Gendron replied that animals exhibited in Ocean Park should help disseminate the message of endangered animal conservation and provide a global view of conservation. Animals would be recruited worldwide.

21/10 In reply to the member's further enquiry, Ms. Suzanne Gendron said that according to the Park's development plan, a significant proportion of the acquisition resources would be used for recruiting staff and provision of training to staff for animals conservation work. In addition, Ocean Park had recruited volunteers and university students to supplement the manpower and attract more students working in the field.

22/10 A member asked if Ocean Park would plan to exhibit endangered plants in the Park and she could provide a list of endangered plants to Ocean Park for this purpose.

23/10 Ms. Suzanne Gendron responded that Ocean Park planned to exhibit some endangered plants in AAA and were identifying a suitable location in the Park for this purpose. She added that the exhibition would be focused on local flora and the Chinese Medicinal Herb plants. She thanked the member for her support, and expressed that they would welcome her plant list when planning the project.

24/10 Knowing that Members were interested to know more about the Chinese sturgeons, the Chairman proposed to arrange a visit to Ocean Park to inspect the Chinese sturgeons after their arrival.

25/10 Mr. Alan WONG, J.P. welcomed the proposal. He considered that this would facilitate Members to give advice on Chinese sturgeon related issues.

26/10 Ms. Suzanne Gendron said that after the sturgeons arrived, they would be quarantined for one month before public exhibition. She welcomed Members visiting the Ocean Park at that time, and inspecting the sturgeons and the keeping facilities.

(Ms. Suzanne M. Gendron left the meeting at this juncture.)

III. CITES 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP15) – proposals to Amend the Appendices I and II (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/1/2010)

27/10 Mr. Alfred WONG presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/1/2010, informing Members of the proposals to amend Appendices I and II to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and annotations to certain CITES-listed species. Members noted the contents of the paper.

28/10 A member enquired about the Administration's view to the proposal of inclusion of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) (Proposal 19) in Appendix I.

29/10 Mr. Alfred WONG replied that Hong Kong's representatives would attend the meeting as members of the Chinese delegation. The AFCD had been consulting the trades on

the proposal and would work closely with the Mainland counterparts to form a consolidated view.

30/10 The member considered that the Administration should pay special attention to the proposal for inclusion of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna as it aimed to regulate a commodity which was traded in large volume.

31/10 Mr. C. C. LAY said that the Administration did not have much disputes over the scientific findings presented in the listing proposal. The main consideration of the Administration was the enforceability of the proposed CITES listing. He explained that unlike other CITES Management Authorities, the AFCD was also responsible for enforcement work on the control of CITES species. Considering that there were many similar species in the trade and the difficulties in identifying parts of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna, it would be difficult to regulate its import and export if the proposal was adopted.

32/10 Regarding the proposals for inclusion of eight shark species (Proposals 15 to 18) and Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (Proposal 19) in Appendices II and I respectively, a member asked whether the AFCD was satisfied that the scientific information warranted their inclusion in the Appendices. He also expressed concerns over the difficulties in identifying different species.

33/10 Mr. C. C. LAY advised that species in Appendix I was threatened with extinction and was or might be affected by trade. Species in Appendix II was not threatened with extinction now, and it was projected that trade regulation was necessary to avoid the species becoming eligible for inclusion in Appendix I. Having assessed the available reference materials, the AFCD generally agreed with the assessment made by the CITES Secretariat on the listing proposals that some of these species might satisfy the listing criteria. Yet, the main concern of the AFCD was the practicability of regulating these species if the proposals were adopted. The AFCD had also raised its concern to the proponent at the early stage of consultation, and would bring this to the attention of Parties at the CoP15 meeting. To prepare for the implementation of the proposals if adopted, the AFCD had sought assistance from the shark fin trade which agreed to provide training to the AFCD staff on the identification of different types of shark fins. The training could facilitate the AFCD's enforcement work.

34/10 Mr. Alan WONG, J.P. said that the AFCD would reflect the difficulties in the implementation and enforcement of CITES provisions at the meeting as appropriate. Considering that shark fin was popularly consumed by the Chinese communities, he thought that the Chinese delegation and other countries would also reflect similar concerns at the CoP15 meeting. He added that since Atlantic Bluefin Tuna was not very popular in Hong Kong as compared with other countries due to its high price, the impact of the proposal was considered minor.

35/10 Mr. C. C. LAY supplemented that the AFCD had consulted the shark fin trade on the shark related proposals. If the proposals were adopted, it was anticipated that the impact

was acceptable as traders were generally familiar with CITES procedures and they should have no difficulties in complying with the permit requirements.

36/10 The member considered that it would be difficult to identify shark fins by their appearance, and asked if the AFCD had considered the application of DNA testing in enforcement work.

37/10 Mr. C. C. LAY replied that, as usual practice, DNA testing work would be carried out by contractors. Given the time required for the test, it would be difficult for frontline staff to apply DNA testing for on-site enforcement work.

38/10 A member considered that the control on shark products, in particular the dried fin and meat, would be very difficult, as it was hard to distinguish the species of sharks both visually and genetically. She suggested that the Administration should make more efforts to promote the protection of sharks among the general public, and, for example, advise restaurants not to serve shark fin and related products.

39/10 Mr. Alan WONG, J.P. concurred with the member that education was important for endangered species conservation. As the listing of the eight shark species in Appendix II was to be discussed at the CoP15 meeting, it was still too early to consider stopping the consumption of shark fin. In view that Hong Kong was an important trade centre of shark fin, different stakeholders should be consulted if there would be any change of control.

40/10 A member did not support a total ban on the consumption of shark fin. He considered that there were only a few species proposed to be listed in Appendix II and believed that the species would be protected by appropriate control measures.

41/10 The member clarified that she did not propose a total ban on the consumption of shark fin. Rather, she believed that more publicity work should be carried out to reduce the demand and consumption of shark fin in Hong Kong through educating the general public.

42/10 Regarding the proposal for amending the annotations for the population of African Elephants in Tanzania and Zambia (Proposals 4 to 5), the member considered that the re-opening of ivory trade would stimulate illegal activities. She opined that unless it was proved that the survival of the elephant populations would be genetically sustainable in the long term, she did not support the proposals for the re-opening of ivory trade.

43/10 Mr. C. C. LAY informed that the Chinese delegation had a group of experts responsible for assessing the scientific data submitted by other CITES authorities and said that the member's concerns would be taken into consideration.

44/10 A member opined that the consumption of shark fin was related to Chinese culture and consumers' behaviour, and it was difficult for the Administration to impose a total ban on the trade. Instead, she suggested that the Administration should keep up its efforts to educate the public the importance of conserving endangered animals. She added that some

organizations and universities had already removed shark fin from their official menus, and suggested that the Government should follow this practice.

45/10 The member enquired if pet owners would have any legal responsibility for keeping the iguanas or frogs which were proposed to be listed in Appendix II (Proposals 11 to 13), if the proposals were adopted at the CoP15 meeting.

46/10 Mr. Alfred WONG replied that according to the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap 586), a licence was not required for keeping a live animal in Appendix II as personal pet if it could be proven that the animal was acquired legally. He added that the AFCD had all along advised consumers to obtain a receipt from the sellers as proof of legal acquisition.

(Miss Vivien LI left the meeting at this juncture.)

IV. Education and Publicity Work in 2009 (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/2/2010)

47/10 Ms. Karrie WU presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/2/2010, providing an update on the Department's education and publicity work on endangered species protection. Members noted the contents of the paper.

48/10 A member appreciated the Department's efforts on education and publicity work. He enquired about the future plans and whether the Department would promote their activities through the Internet.

49/10 Mr. Richard CHAN responded that publicity work in 2010 would be mainly focused on the amendments to Cap 586 and the relevant controls after the CoP 15 meeting. It would include organizing roving exhibitions in public venues, and distribution of posters and pamphlets to the public. He continued that the Department was planning to launch a computer wallpaper design competition in the next few months. Besides, information, documents and promotional pamphlets on endangered species protection were also available on the AFCD's website.

50/10 The member suggested that the AFCD would use facebook and twitter as a means to promote endangered species protection. He also suggested launching an online wallpaper competition.

51/10 A member agreed with the member that online publicity could help disseminate the message of protection of endangered species among youngsters.

V. Summary Progress Report of CITES Work (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/3/2010)

52/10 Mr. Alfred WONG presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/3/2010 on the AFCD's enforcement work in relation to CITES during the period from 1 May to 30 November 2009.

He highlighted the significant cases involving import and export of endangered species without licences.

53/10 In reply to a member's enquiry, Mr. Alfred WONG said that the AFCD had donated some seized specimens to the Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden recently for an education campaign on endangered species protection.

VI. Serving the Community – Service Standards Committee 29th Monitoring Report (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/4/2010)

54/10 Ms. Karrie WU reported that for the quarter ended June 2009 and quarter ended September 2009, a total of 154 applications (5%) and 49 applications (2%) respectively 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.

VII. Any Other Business

55/10 Members did not raise any other business.

VIII. Date of Next Meeting

56/10 The Chairman said that Members would be informed of the date of next meeting in due course.

57/10 The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

- End -