

**Country and Marine Parks Board**  
**Summary Report of the Marine Parks Committee**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 This paper seeks to inform members of issues discussed at the Marine Parks Committee meeting held on 1 December 2011. Major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

**2. AFCD's Underwater Ecological Surveys**

2.1 Members were informed that AFCD's Diving Team had been established in July 2011 to strengthen the manpower and expertise of the Department in diving and conducting scientific underwater ecological surveys. The tasks of the Diving Team included: (i) to co-ordinate the overall training and development of AFCD's scuba divers; (ii) to provide advice on diving safety and related occupational risk assessment; (iii) to participate in long-term monitoring of corals and artificial reefs; and (iv) to conduct ad hoc/thematic underwater ecological studies. The Diving Team had recruited a total of 15 colleagues experienced in scuba diving and conducting underwater research for 2011 to 2012. Team members would take part in team activities on top of their own daily duties.

2.2 Members were informed that Diving Team members would join 6 underwater ecological survey groups based on their interests and expertise to conduct surveys in different areas (i.e. corals, coral reef fish, seaweeds, and artificial reefs). A total of 6 survey items had been drawn up and would be conducted in 2011 to 2012.

2.3 A representative from AFCD briefed members on the project on "Bioerosion" of corals caused by sea urchins (*Diadema setosum*) and its preliminary findings. Members were informed that coral communities in the 8 investigated sites were healthy in general. Occasional collapse of coral heads was observed near Double Island and Kat O in eastern waters. Among the 18 recorded coral species, *Platygyra carnosus* was most susceptible to consumption by sea urchins.

2.4 The Chairman asked about the recruitment of the Diving Team and who would be responsible for team members. Members were informed that, as part of the Team's medium to long term planning, the Diving Team aimed at recruiting colleagues interested in diving techniques and know-how required in underwater ecological surveys, and had acquired a certain level of experience to join the Team. They could remain as team members should they be transferred or deployed to take up other duties, so as to pass on the techniques and know-how regarding underwater ecological surveys. As team members were civil servants and underwater ecological surveys would be conducted during office hours, the Government would be obligated if members were involved in accidents.

2.5 A member suggested that the Department invite community diving clubs to participate in conducting the underwater ecological surveys. Members were informed that there were already community diving teams participating in the Hong Kong Reef Check. The Department would invite the teams to participate in suitable survey items.

2.6 A member suggested that the Department co-organise training courses with Hong Kong Underwater Association or diving groups to enrich the knowledge of divers in fish and corals. Divers could then participate in underwater ecological surveys to assist in information gathering. Members were informed that the Department and the Underwater Association had looked into whether there were suitable survey items (including data analysis and compilation) for divers to take part in, and the feasibility of co-organising training courses.

2.7 A member suggested that the Department look into ways to attract large fish to return to the ecosystem of Hong Kong waters as a long term measure to control the number of sea urchins in a natural way. He also suggested that the Department take into account the seasonal impact when investigating the "bioerosion" of corals caused by sea urchins.

### **3. Function and Management of Marine Parks and Marine Reserve in Hong Kong**

3.1 AFCD briefed members on the background of the establishment of marine parks and marine reserve in Hong Kong, their physical and ecological characteristics, as well as the management, education and publicity done by AFCD.

3.2 A member enquired about the use of fishing permits inside Marine Parks by fishermen. Members were informed that there were over 1 000 fishing permits at the establishment of marine parks and the current number had dropped to about 400. Therefore, the pressure brought by fishing on marine parks had been decreasing.

3.3 A member enquired about the impact of sewage discharge from Hoi Ha dwellings on Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park. Members were informed that new houses to be built in Hoi Ha had to be equipped with septic tanks and no sewage would be allowed to be discharged to Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park. As to the impact caused by the sewage from existing dwellings in Hoi Ha, the water quality monitoring data kept by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) showed that the water quality of Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park continued to be good. EPD and AFCD would continue to closely monitor the water quality.

3.4 A member suggested that the Marine Police and AFCD should step up law enforcement in Cape D'Aguilar Marine Reserve to deter mainland fishermen from picking up sea urchins unlawfully during winter, which was the peak season of sea urchins. After the meeting, AFCD followed up on the matter with the Swire Institute of Marine Science of the University of Hong Kong and discussed ways to monitor illegal fishing activities more effectively.

#### **4. Progress Report on Marine Parks and Marine Reserve**

4.1 A representative of AFCD presented the work of the Country and Marine Parks Authority in marine parks and marine reserve during the period from 1 June to 31 October 2011. Members noted the content of the paper.

#### **5. Presentation**

5.1 This paper is prepared for members' information.

Country and Marine Parks Authority

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