

Endangered Species Advisory Committee
Confirmed Minutes of Meeting

Date : 14 January 2011 (Friday)
Time : 3:00 p.m.
Venue : Room 701, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)
Headquarters

Attendance

Chairman

Dr. Paul SHIN Kam-shing

Members

Dr. CHIU Sein-tuck

Professor CHU Lee-man

Dr. Kenneth LEUNG Mei-yee

Ms. Erica LO Lai-shan

Ms. Katherine MA Miu-wah

Mr. TSANG Kwok-keung

Mr. TSANG Sau-yuen

Mr. Thomas WONG Cheung-chi

Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P.	Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
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Mr. CHAN Yiu-keung	Assistant Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (Conservation) (Acting)
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Miss Vivien LI	Senior Administrative Officer (Nature Conservation) Environmental Protection Department
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Secretary

Mr. Patrick TSANG	Assistant Secretary (Boards)1, AFCD
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In Attendance

AFCD

Mr. Alfred WONG Kwong-chiu	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Enforcement
Ms. Azaria WONG Kam-yan	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Licensing 1
Ms. Karrie WU Kar-yee	Endangered Species Protection Officer/Licensing 2

Ocean Park, Hong Kong

Ms. Suzanne M. GENDRON	Executive Director, Zoological Operations & Education
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Absent with Apologies

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

Professor Albert LEUNG Wing-nang

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

1/11 The Chairman welcomed all members to the first meeting of the new term, in particular, four new members, Dr. CHIU Sein-tuck, Dr. Kenneth LEUNG Mei-yee, Ms. Erica LO Lai-shan as well as Mr. TSANG Kwok-keung, and Ms. Azaria WONG Kam-yan, Endangered Species Protection Officer/Licensing 1, who attended the meeting for the first time.

2/11 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.

AGENDA ITEMS

III. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting

3/11 With members' consent, The Chairman invited Ms. Suzanne M. GENDRON to update members on Animal Acquisitions Plan of Ocean Park and Giant Pandas in Ocean Park.

(b) Updates on the Animal Acquisitions Plan of Ocean Park (Para. 80/10 to 93/10)

4/11 Ms. Suzanne M. GENDRON informed members that Grand Aquarium and Rainforest Exhibits would be opened to the public on 27 January and in mid April 2011 respectively.

5/11 Ms. GENDRON briefed members on the facilities of Grand Aquarium and the new animals. She said that the imported seahorses were captive born in other aquariums. Besides, there were other animals acquired from the wild or confiscated animals donated by AFCD.

6/11 Ms. GENDRON informed members that Rainforest would show the cultural connection with rainforests, the importance of rainforest products in our lives and the importance of conserving rainforests. She then introduced the layout of Rainforest and the new animals to be acquired including mammals (e.g. red-handed tamarins, capybara and kinkajous), birds (e.g. great curassow and yellow-crowned amazon), amphibians, and reptiles (e.g. anaconda and emerald tree boa). These birds, amphibians and reptiles were all captive-bred in other zoological facilities.

7/11 Ms. GENDRON answered a member that no CITES Appendix I species would be acquired for Grand Aquarium or Rainforest.

8/11 Ms. GENDRON replied to an enquiry raised by Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P. that the seahorses were mainly imported from Indonesia while the corals were exotic species.

9/11 Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P. remarked that it would be useful to make a cross-reference between exotic coral species in Grand Aquarium and local coral species in Marine Parks to publicize Marine Parks if visitors wished to see the local species in their habitats.

10/11 In response to a member's enquiry on whether any species newly acquired by Grand Aquarium died, Ms. GENDRON replied that there was some loss of bluefin tuna when they arrived. The bluefin tuna appeared to be more sensitive to changes in water chemistry and stress due to transport. They now settled well. The mortality rate of mackerel tuna was very low and there was no unusual death of other coral reef fish.

11/11 In response to the member's enquiry on whether the incidents would shed light on the strategy of animal acquisition of Ocean Park in the future and management of Grand Aquarium, Ms. GENDRON replied that Ocean Park had worked closely with their Japanese counterparts in keeping these animals alive as well as monitoring the Aquarium. Ocean Park always reviewed their strategy of animal acquisition in order to minimize the loss of animals.

12/11 The member said that she was asked by a reporter of a local weekly magazine about her views on incidents of death for the species newly acquired by Grand Aquarium. She informed the reporter that Ocean Park was a very responsible organization as they had always been keeping members of the Committee abreast of the latest situation of endangered species in Ocean Park. To help Committee members to handle enquiries of this kind, she suggested that Ocean Park should provide information to members at appropriate time. Ms. GENDRON thanked the member for her suggestion.

13/11 Ms. GENDRON pointed out that it was very unfortunate that the magazine did not report the incident accurately despite Ocean Park had given the correct information.

14/11 Ms. GENDRON added that Ocean Park would strive to ensure that the life support system of Grand Aquarium worked properly. She highlighted that there was a backup of 1,000 m³ of water for the system which had a full capacity of 5,000 m³. In case there was a failure in part of the system, Ocean Park could change 20% of the water in the system in one day to keep the water in acceptable quality, so as to ensure the survival of the animals.

15/11 Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P. said that it would be useful for members, particularly new members, to check with the secretariat of the Committee, subject officers of AFCD as well as Ocean Park for relevant information when they prepared for enquiries from various interest parties, including the mass media.

16/11 Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P. proposed that Ocean Park should organize a tour for members to Ocean Park to let them understand the ways in which Ocean Park took care of the animals.

17/11 Ms. GENDRON invited members to visit Ocean Park and to have a preview on Grand Aquarium before the opening of Grand Aquarium on 27 January 2011.

[Post-meeting note: Members attended the preview tour to Grand Aquarium on 22 January 2011.]

18/11 Ms. GENDRON replied to a member's question that Ocean Park did not allow discharge of the water of Ocean Park to the sea except chlorinated water from Ocean Theatre. Water from other facilities was channeled to the sewage system of Ocean Park. As a result, exotic species kept in Ocean Park would not be released to local waters.

19/11 The Chairman concluded the discussion. Firstly, Ocean Park offered their invitation to members to visit Grand Aquarium. Secondly, members might contact the Chairman, AFCD subject officers or relevant organizations, including Ocean Park, for relevant information before responding to enquiries from the mass media or other parties. He also welcomed members to exchange views with him and other members. This would ensure consistency in terms of response from the Committee.

20/11 A member suggested that members should obtain an electronic copy of media coverage concerning incidents about endangered species so that they could be alerted of the situation and any possible questions from the media.

21/11 Mr. CHAN Yiu-keung advised that members could contact the secretariat or AFCD subject officers for relevant information if they had received enquiries on endangered species.

(a) An update on Giant Pandas in Ocean Park (Para. 65/10 to 79/10)

22/11 Ms. GENDRON updated members of the conditions of the Giant Pandas. The four Giant Pandas were doing well though An An and Jia Jia were receiving medication and supplement. An An would be 25 years old in September 2011. Jia Jia was about 33 years old and was the third oldest panda in captivity. The life expectancy of Giant Pandas was about 27 years. Both Ying Ying and Le Le were about five years old. It was expected that they would come to sexual maturity and would be ready for mating.

23/11 Ms. GENDRON said that the four Red Pandas were doing well. It was expected that their first breeding period would start in late 2011. She supplemented that Red Pandas typically breed in the winter and have cubs in June of the following year.

24/11 Ms. GENDRON remarked that Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong (OPCFHK) had just celebrated its 16th Ocean Park Conservation Day. OPCFHK had supported 23 projects dedicated to the conservation of Giant Pandas since 1999, including abundance and habitat monitoring, habitat restoration, sponsorship of equipment at nature reserves, as well as capacity building and community education. OPCFHK also supported earthquake rebuilding projects in nature reserves for Giant Pandas.

25/11 Ms. GENDRON supplemented that OPCFHK had commenced a new university student sponsorship programme that supported conservation biology students to conduct education projects for nature reserves in the Mainland. The results of these projects would be uploaded onto OPCFHK's website.

26/11 Ms. GENDRON briefed members on the layout of Polar Adventure and the animals acquired for South Pole Spectacular and North Pole Spectacular. She said that Polar Adventure was expected to be opened to the public in 2012. She added that king penguins, gentoo penguins and rockhopper penguins for South Pole Spectacular were born in captivity in Japan and the United States. A largha seal for North Pole Spectacular also arrived in June 2010.

27/11 Ms. GENDRON reiterated the principle of Animal Acquisitions Plan of Ocean Park. She emphasized that Ocean Park would first source surplus animals from other zoological facilities and its sister aquariums and rescued animals. She elaborated that before acquiring any animals from the wild, especially marine mammals and CITES-listed animals, Ocean Park would determine if the capture was sustainable and non-detrimental to the wild population. She highlighted that Ocean Park, being a statutory body, pledged to abide by all the laws, including the laws of Hong Kong and of the country of acquisition.

28/11 Ms. GENDRON answered a member's enquiries that Ocean Park had already prepared a media communication plan for Giant Pandas, especially for the oldest Jia Jia. Ocean Park would convey to the public that both An An and Jia Jia were getting old, in stable conditions and under good care.

29/11 A member said that he was asked by the media about mortality rate of marine mammals. He suggested that it was appropriate to provide more information on this issue to members for reference. Ms. GENDRON replied that Ocean Park would present a fact sheet on life expectancy of marine mammals under human care in next meeting. Mr. CHAN Yiu-keung

added that if the fact sheet was available before next meeting, Ocean Park could send it to the secretariat for distribution to members.

30/11 The Chairman thanked Ms. GENDRON for attending the meeting.

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

31/11 The Chairman introduced members and government representatives to each other. He also took the opportunity to thank four retired members, Mr. CHIU Ching-cheung, Dr. Craig KIRKPATRICK, Dr. SUN Mei as well as Mr. WONG Hing-keung for their contribution to the Committee.

I. Declaration of Interests and Transparency Measures

32/11 Mr. CHAN Yiu-keung briefed members on the guidelines on declaration of interests and transparency measures.

33/11 Mr. CHAN Yiu-keung replied to a member's enquiry that a member might exchange view with other members of the Committee in formulating his opinion before responding to the media.

34/11 Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P. remarked that a member might communicate with the Department to obtain relevant background information for response when enquired by the media or the public on issues of endangered species. Besides, he should state clearly that his views or replies were made in his personal capacity only, not for the Committee. If an issue was the subject of much public concerns, a special meeting could be convened so that members could exchange their views.

35/11 The member agreed to Mr. Alan WONG's remarks. He also proposed to minute Mr. WONG's remarks for members' information.

36/11 A member agreed that Committee members should communicate with each other and the Department before they would respond to the media. She said that a member should inform the media that his reply solely represented his personal views. Besides, the member

should advise the media that he, being a member of the Committee, had the obligation to advise the Department on issues in connection with endangered species.

37/11 A member suggested that the Department should provide information about ad hoc issues of endangered species for members' reference.

38/11 Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P. replied that the Department would provide relevant information to a Committee member if the member would be interviewed by the media.

39/11 Members noted the guidelines on declaration of interests and transparency measures.

II. Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 14 July 2010

40/11 The minutes of the last meeting held on 14 July 2010 were confirmed without amendments.

III. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting

(c) Amendments to the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Para. 94/10)

41/11 Mr. Alfred WONG Kwong-chiu reported that the Department had been working closely with the Department of Justice in the process of legislative amendments to the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance. It was expected that the amendments would be submitted to the Legislative Council in February and come into effect in the end of April 2011.

[Post-meeting note: the amendments would come into effect on 20 May 2011.]

IV. Placement of Pets of Endangered Species handed over to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/1/2011)

42/11 Mr. Alfred WONG Kwong-chiu presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/1/2011, informing members of the principles of disposal of endangered species and the proposal on placement of pets of endangered species through SPCA. He advised that the proposal conformed to the CITES Resolution on disposal of live animals and would unlikely stimulate

illegal trade in the involved species. Moreover, such additional placement option would help shorten the time for disposal of the live animals and alleviate the burden of the Department in accommodating them in the limited local keeping facilities.

43/11 Mr. Alfred WONG answered a member's enquiry that the proposal was in the preliminary stage. After consulting the Committee, the Department would work out the detailed arrangements with SPCA including the reporting requirements.

44/11 Mr. Alfred WONG replied to the member's further enquiry that the proposal was on a non-commercial basis.

45/11 Mr. Alfred WONG answered a member's enquiry that the proposal aimed to rehome pets of endangered species through SPCA to suitable adopters, similar to SPCA's existing schemes for dogs and cats.

46/11 Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P. supplemented that he believed that SPCA was capable of keeping endangered species well.

47/11 Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P. replied to a member's enquiry that about 40 – 50 organizations had shown their interests in participating in the placement scheme for cats and dogs. However, after screening, the Department had selected only eleven organizations, including SPCA, to participate in the scheme. He pointed out that SPCA had established for more than 100 years and had rigorous standards. He believed that SPCA had appropriate mechanisms to safeguard the welfare of rehomed animals and to prevent them from being sold subsequently.

48/11 Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P. replied to the member that the Department would consider his suggestion on micro-chipping the rehomed animals to enhance their traceability.

49/11 Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P. replied to a member that the Department would consider including terms into the proposal with SPCA so that adopters were not allowed to give their rehomed animals to other persons and they were requested to return their rehomed animals to SPCA if they did not intend to keep the animals.

50/11 The Chairman concluded that the members supported the proposal. He supplemented that the Department should follow up with measures on record-keeping and monitoring to prevent adopters from either reselling or giving their rehomed animals to others.

V. Education and Publicity Work in 2010 (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/2/2011)

51/11 Ms. Karrie WU Kar-yee presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/2/2011, updating members of the progress of education and publicity work on endangered species protection in the second half of 2010 and the new work ahead in the first half of 2011.

52/11 A member appreciated the Department's education and publicity work on endangered species protection.

53/11 Mr. CHAN Yiu-keung replied to the member's enquiry that the Department had been well aware of the extensive use of mobile device technologies, such as iPhone and Android apps, for downloading information. The Department was open-minded in employing these technologies in its publicity work and welcomed members to provide advice.

54/11 A member suggested that the Department should also try to understand the interests and needs of young people in getting information of endangered species.

55/11 A member suggested that the Department could allocate resources to produce quiz or game apps for the publicity work.

56/11 Mr. Alan WONG Chi-kong, J.P. replied that the Department would explore making use of new IT technology to publicize endangered species protection to young people.

57/11 The Chairman concluded that the Department would consider making use of IT technology to enhance promulgation of endangered species protection to young people.

58/11 Mr. CHAN Yiu-keung supplemented that the Department had produced reference materials on endangered species protection for Liberal Studies under the New Senior Secondary Curriculum and had distributed them to all secondary schools. The Department

would continue its work in promoting the awareness of students and young people on this subject.

**VI. Summary Progress Report of CITES Work
(Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/3/2011)**

59/11 Mr. Alfred WONG presented Committee Paper CP/ESAC/3/2011 on AFCD's work in relation to CITES implementation in Hong Kong from 1 June 2010 to 30 November 2010. He highlighted the significant cases involving import, possession and re-export of endangered species without licences.

60/11 Mr. Alfred WONG replied to a member that the size of the 1,000 tails of live Arapaima in Case No. 269/2010 ranged from about ten to twelve inches. He informed that the fishes were either dead or in very poor conditions when the importer attempted to take clearance of the shipment. After confiscating the fishes, the Department found that it was impracticable to keep the fishes in captivity. Hence, those fishes which remained alive were disposed of by euthanasia.

VII. Serving the Community – Service Standards Committee 31st Monitoring Report (Committee Paper: CP/ESAC/4/2011)

61/11 Ms. Karrie WU reported that for the quarter ended June 2010 and that ended September 2010, all applications had met the target. She supplemented that no complaints had been received during the report periods and the overall service standard was satisfactory. Members had no comment on the Paper.

VIII. Any Other Business

62/11 There was no any other business to be discussed.

IX. Date of Next Meeting

63/11 The Chairman said that members would be informed of the date of next meeting in due course.

64/11 The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m..

- End -