

COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

Marine Parks 30th Anniversary Celebration Programme

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper aims to brief members on the programme to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of marine parks and the marine reserve (MP30).

2. Background

2.1 The first batch of marine parks and the marine reserve, including Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park, Yan Chau Tong Marine Park and Cape D'Aguilar Marine Reserve, was designated in 1996. This year marks the 30th anniversary of their establishment. At present, a total of eight marine parks and one marine reserve covering over 8 500 hectares have been established to promote marine conservation, scientific research, recreation (excluding the marine reserve), and outdoor education.

2.2 These marine protected areas are instrumental in preserving marine biodiversity in Hong Kong's waters. The marine parks in the eastern waters, particularly Hoi Ha Wan and Tung Ping Chau, are renowned for their coral communities, contributing to Hong Kong's coral diversity, which surpasses that of the Caribbean Sea. These habitats support a rich ecosystem of fish, crustaceans, and other marine organisms. In the western waters, the recently designated North Lantau Marine Park is connected with the nearby Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau Marine Park, the Brothers Marine Park and the Guangdong Pearl River Estuary Chinese White Dolphin National Nature Reserve, forming a matrix of protected areas for the conservation of the Chinese White Dolphin.

2.3 Over the past three decades, marine parks have served as important platforms for environmental education and public outreach. A wide range of education programmes, guided eco-tours, exhibitions, school activities, and community events have been organised to raise awareness of marine conservation. These initiatives foster a sense of stewardship among students, families, and coastal communities,

encouraging them to become active participants in protecting Hong Kong's marine environment.

2.4 Marine parks and the marine reserve also function as living laboratories for marine scientific research. Long-term ecological monitoring, habitat mapping, coral restoration experiments, and biodiversity assessments are regularly conducted within these protected areas. In addition to their conservation and educational functions, marine parks provide the public with unique opportunities for sustainable recreation and nature appreciation.

2.5 To commemorate MP30, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) will organise a series of events between May and December 2026 for the public to participate and celebrate this special occasion. AFCD will also take the opportunity to promote among participants the concepts of marine biodiversity conservation and responsible marine-based recreational practices.

3. MP30 Celebration Programme

3.1 The theme of the celebration programme is "Marine Parks 30: Together We Treasure, Together We Explore". This signifies the Government's three-decade-long commitment to marine conservation and its vision for the future. It reflects the collective effort to protect and cherish Hong Kong's marine biodiversity, while highlighting the joy of discovery and the significance of public engagement. The major events planned under the celebration programme are as follows:

"Marine Parks 30th Anniversary" Roving Exhibitions cum Launching Ceremony

3.2 Commencing in mid-2026, AFCD will organise roving exhibitions in five venues, including three popular shopping malls, Hong Kong Maritime Museum and Ocean Park, to promote the MP30, the history and milestones of marine parks and marine reserve over the years, the rich marine biodiversity, as well as responsible marine life appreciation and marine-based recreational activities. These exhibitions will feature information panels, interactive displays such as VR experiences and photo-taking booths, and weekend workshops. A launching ceremony will be organised during the first roving exhibition to inaugurate the series of celebration events of the MP30.

Eco-Exploration (Public Ecotours)

3.3 Marine parks are not only key sites for nature conservation, but are also open to sustainable recreational use. From June to December, AFCD will organise a series of free guided public tours in collaboration with partner organisations to explore Hong Kong's rich marine biodiversity and ecology, offering participants fascinating outdoor experiences that are both educational and mutually beneficial for the natural environment. While some marine-based recreation tours take place outside marine parks (i.e. Coral-safe Snorkelling Tours and Kayaking Eco Adventure Tours), they align with the goals of our celebration programme by highlighting the value of marine parks for both conservation and recreation. By incorporating these tours into the programme, we demonstrate how marine-based recreation can be carried out responsibly within and outside marine parks, supporting enjoyment without harming fragile ecosystems. Ultimately, these efforts promote a culture of environmental stewardship and support broader effort to protect marine ecosystems in Hong Kong as a whole. These tours include –

- (i) Coral-safe Snorkelling Tours – guided tours to enjoy the beauty of the underwater world while supporting responsible snorkelling etiquette.
- (ii) Kayaking Eco Adventure Tours – ecologists introduce the principles of marine biodiversity, conservation efforts, and the importance of sustainable practices during the tours.
- (iii) Hoi Ha Eco Explorer Fun Day – guided tours to explore the beauty of the underwater world on a glass-bottomed boat, learn about marine ecosystems and enjoy a hands-on clay workshop at the Hoi Ha Visitor Centre.
- (iv) Tung Ping Chau Nature Quest – a family-friendly treasure hunt with the aim of deepening public appreciation for the natural environment and encouraging responsible exploration.
- (v) Blue Reverie: Southwest Lantau Marine Park Art Experience – engaging the public in creative expression through art, gaining insights into sustainable marine resources management.

- (vi) Echoes of the Blue: Cetacean Conservation Workshops – a family-friendly series focused on the Chinese White Dolphin and the Indo-Pacific Finless Porpoise, and promoting responsible wildlife viewing practices.
- (vii) Cape D’Aguilar SWIMS Coastal Outreach Hub Visit – guided tours to explore local rocky shore marine species and specimens, and gain insights into the latest marine research and conservation efforts.
- (viii) Home of Dolphins Tours – guided dolphin-watching tours to acquire knowledge about the Chinese White Dolphin and raise awareness for the better protection of the species.

Regional Special Symposium on Coral Bleaching and Restoration

3.4 Marine parks have played a pivotal role in protecting and restoring coral ecosystems. In celebration of the significant progress made in safeguarding coral communities over the past three decades, we will host a three-day Regional Special Symposium on Coral Bleaching and Restoration in Hong Kong, tentatively scheduled for November 2026. The proposed symposium will bring together around 100 to 200 researchers, government officials, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and stakeholders from Hong Kong, the Mainland and Asia Pacific, providing a platform to foster open dialogue and share knowledge on the challenges climate change poses to coral communities, provide a collaborative space to examine emerging research, and explore potential directions for future conservation efforts and education initiatives. The symposium will highlight the diversity and progress of coral research and restoration work conducted in Hong Kong, including within marine parks, and facilitate knowledge exchange with experts from other parts of the region, helping to explore potential directions for future conservation efforts on corals in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong Reef Check 2026

3.5 Since 1997, Hong Kong has been conducting systematic surveys on the health status of local coral through reef checks. The number of dive teams and divers has increased from five teams and 40 divers at the outset to 109 teams in 2025. It was also the first time that the Reef Check was open to teams in other Greater Bay Area (GBA) cities in 2025, attracting seven teams to participate. We will continue to invite

teams from other GBA cities to participate to deepen co-operation on marine conservation and promote the sustainable development of marine ecology in the GBA. Upon the MP30 in Hong Kong, we will continue to build on the success of the Hong Kong Reef Check and invite divers from Hong Kong and other GBA cities to attend an opening ceremony for reef check at the first batch of reef check sites in the marine parks. This opening ceremony will not only mark the fruitful results of marine conservation over the past 30 years, but also aim to carry forward the precious spirit of conservation.

Fish Restocking Exercise

3.6 The AFCD has been conducting fish restocking trials in a number of marine parks deployed with artificial reefs since 2000. About 150 000 fish juveniles have been released so far. Fish restocking exercises have been conducted in a science-based manner in accordance with relevant national and international guidelines, such as Provisions on the Propagation and Release of Aquatic Organisms formulated by our country. Through releasing appropriate species in suitable waters to facilitate their propagation in the natural environment, scientific restocking aims at restoring and enhancing the fisheries resources in Hong Kong waters. In recent years, we have been proactively promoting scientific restocking to the public, thereby raising public awareness of the conservation of marine resources and environment as well as their understanding of the significance of restocking. To commemorate the MP30 in Hong Kong, we plan to collaborate with the Ocean Development Bureau of Shenzhen Municipality again to jointly organise a fish restocking exercise in the Mirs Bay waters on 6 June 2026, with a view to further deepening co-operation within the GBA and facilitating the restoration of the fisheries resources in the GBA.

4. Publicity Plan

4.1 To complement our long-term conservation efforts, AFCD will produce a short video highlighting the beauty of marine parks and the marine reserve and key achievements in conserving marine resources over the past 30 years. The visual initiative aims to raise public awareness of and appreciation for marine conservation, while reviewing the key achievements realised over the past 30 years. The video will be broadcasted on social media platforms or public spaces, with the hope to inspire a sense of stewardship, and continued commitment among a broad audience. In addition, the AFCD will issue a series of social media posts, press releases, advertorials and organise press ecotours and school talks to further engage the public in celebration

events. Partners and supporting organisations will also help spread the message through their networks and connections.

5. Multilateral Collaboration

5.1 The AFCD will actively work with local scholars, NGOs, and relevant institutions in the Mainland to promote exchange and collaboration by jointly participating in the MP30 celebration programme. By integrating the professional knowledge and research findings of the academia, enhancing engagement at community level, and promoting the exchange of experiences and resources with the Mainland, the AFCD hopes to raise public awareness of marine conservation and rally the efforts of all sectors to jointly promote the sustainable development of marine ecology, so that the celebration programme will serve meaningful purpose and long-term value.

6. Advice Sought

6.1 Members are invited to comment on the events planned for the MP30 celebration programme.

Country and Marine Parks Authority
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
March 2026