

Country and Marine Parks Board

Proposed Designation of Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands Marine Parks

1. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to brief and seek members' views on our proposal on designation of Southwest Lantau Marine Park and Soko Islands Marine Park (SWLMP and SIMP).

2. Background

2.1 The Government announced in 2000 that it had a plan to designate the waters at the Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands as marine parks for the protection of Chinese White Dolphins. The proposed marine parks at Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands cover about 660 and 1,270 hectares of waters respectively (**Figure 1**). These waters are among the major habitats of Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises. Designating the waters as marine parks is conducive to the long-term conservation of the local marine environment.

2.2 To take forward the proposed designation of the two marine parks, we carried out public consultation during the period between 2000 and 2002. In view of the large water areas covered in these two marine parks and diverse user groups involved, extensive consultation exercises were conducted covering various stakeholders, green groups, the AFCD statutory / advisory committees (i.e. Country and Marine Parks Board (CMPB), Marine Parks Committee under CMPB and Capture Fisheries Subcommittee of Advisory Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries), as well as the relevant District Councils (DCs) and the Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs. However, the parties consulted in particular fishermen, relevant rural committees and DCs had reservation over the proposed designation of these two marine parks.

2.3 To follow up, AFCD had consulted the stakeholders again on the proposal in 2009. However, the relevant fishermen organizations, the Tai O Rural Committee and South Lantau Rural Committee still expressed reservations over the management measures to be implemented for the two proposed marine parks and worried that the designation of new marine parks would further reduce the fishing grounds in Hong Kong waters, and therefore did not support the proposed designations.

2.4 Since 2000, the Government has been implementing a conservation programme for

Chinese white dolphins in Hong Kong through a four-pronged approach including management, public education, research and cross-boundary co-operation. As regards the waters covered by the proposed SWLMP and SIMP, AFCD has been conducting patrols and dolphin surveys in these waters to collect information for the designation of the proposed marine parks in parallel with consulting the interested groups including fishermen and the local community.

3. Current Progress and Way Forward

3.1 In response to the public concern about protection for Chinese white dolphins, the Government made an announcement in early September this year to re-affirm its commitment to the designation of the SWLMP and SIMP. The Government aims to proceed the designations expeditiously in order to enhance and support the Chinese White Dolphin Conservation Programme administered by the AFCD. The overall long-term goal of the programme is to enable the Chinese white dolphins to continue to use waters of Hong Kong as a part of their population range and to enhance the continued survival of this dolphin population inhabiting the Pearl River Estuary.

3.2 Building on earlier preparatory work including discussions with various stakeholders, we will prepare draft maps and preliminary management plans in consultation with CMPB and relevant government bureaux / departments before launching a fresh round of public engagement in early 2015. We will then revise the draft maps and management plans for the two proposed marine parks taking into account the views and comments from the public engagement and consult CMPB again before the draft maps are gazetted for public inspection. If there is any objection to the draft maps, the CMPB would conduct hearings. Afterwards, the Authority would submit the draft maps together with the objections to the Chief Executive in Council for consideration with an aim to completing the statutory procedures for the designation by early 2017. The tentative timeline for the designation of SWLMP and SIMP is at **Annex A**.

4. Advice sought

4.1 Members are invited to note and advise on the proposal set out in this paper.

Country and Marine Parks Authority
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

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Tentative Timeline for the Designation of Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands Marine Parks

Time	Tasks
Sept 2014 – Q1 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prepare draft maps and preliminary management plans for the two proposed marine parks ➤ Consult relevant government bureaux / departments and CMPB on the draft maps and preliminary management plans
Q2 – Q3 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Conduct public consultation/ engagement with the relevant advisory/ statutory committees (e.g. Capture Fisheries Subcommittee), fishermen groups, environmental groups, concerned marine users and related consultative committees (e.g. Port Operation Committee, Local Vessel Advisory Committee and High Speed Craft Consultative Committee), recreational fishing organizations, relevant District Councils and Rural Committees, LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs, etc.
Q4 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Revise the draft maps and management plans for the two proposed marine parks taking into account the views and comments from public engagement in consultation with CMPB
Q1 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gazette the draft maps in accordance with section 7 of the Marine Parks Ordinance ➤ 60-days statutory public inspection period
Q2 – Q3 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ CMPB to hear objection
Q4 2016 - Q1 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Seek ExCo's approval on the draft maps and designation orders ➤ Tabling of designation orders at LegCo for negative vetting ➤ Completion of the statutory procedures for designation of the two marine parks

Figure 1

