

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

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper informs members of issues discussed at the Marine Parks Committee meeting held on 26 July 2012. Major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

2. Impact of *Diadema setosum* on Hong Kong Corals

2.1 Members were briefed by Dr Qiu Jianwen, Associate Professor of the Department of Biology, Hong Kong Baptist University, on a recent study on the impact of the sea urchin, *Diadema setosum*, on corals in Hong Kong waters. Members were informed that underwater field surveys had been carried out at eight sites in northeastern and eastern waters of Hong Kong to illustrate the relationship among the coral community composition, coral health and the prevalence of sea urchin *D. setosum*. The field surveys in the wet season and dry season were completed in 2011 and 2012 respectively.

2.2 Members noted that according to the findings of the study, it appeared that there was a positive correlation between the pattern of coral damage and the density of *D. setosum*. However, the impact of the sea urchin was localised at a few sites of northeastern waters in Hong Kong, and no consumption of coral tissue by the sea urchin was observed in the surveyed sites of Sai Kung in the eastern waters. Besides, among the 18 coral species recorded, *Platygyra carnosus* was the species most susceptible to such consumption by the sea urchin.

2.3 A member suggested that a survey on the number of parrotfish feeding on sea urchins in the wet season and dry season should be included in future studies. Members were informed that the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and Dr Qiu Jianwen would consider his suggestion.

3. Dolphin Field Trips for Secondary School Students

3.1 Members were briefed on the new service of providing dolphin field trips for secondary school students. Members were informed that AFCD, in collaboration with the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation (OPCF), had launched a new

programme in May 2011 to provide boat trips for secondary school students to watch Chinese White Dolphins (CWD) at Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau Marine Park and surrounding waters. The activity served to bring the subject of marine conservation from classrooms to the field and help students better understand the dolphin habitat. Making observations and gaining field experience formed a key part of the learning process.

3.2 Members noted that feedback from participants was surveyed by OPCF from October 2011 to May 2012. 98% of the participants responded that they gained better knowledge of the CWD after the trip. 96% of the participants felt greater affection for the CWD after the trip, and 91% of the participants wished to learn more about CWD conservation.

3.3 The Chairman and a member asked about the content of the presentations made by narrators during the field trips. Members were informed that apart from introducing the marine environment in the western waters of Hong Kong and the ecology and behaviour of the CWD, the undergraduates who served as narrators also mentioned the impact of infrastructure projects on CWD in their range. For example, to avoid or mitigate the impact of infrastructure projects, it was stipulated that such projects could not commence until they had passed the environmental impact assessment and taken into account the impact on CWD habitats. In addition, AFCD staff would provide supplementary information beyond biology or environmental science, particularly information on law enforcement and management.

4. Marine Parks Ambassador Scheme

4.1 Members were briefed on the Marine Parks Ambassador Scheme. Members were informed that the Scheme aimed at providing a platform for those who had interest and aspiration in marine conservation to participate in different activities of marine parks. Moreover, through their contribution in promotion activities, publicity of marine parks and conservation message to the public was enhanced. The target participants of the Scheme were primarily students of universities and tertiary institutes.

4.2 Members noted that since the launch of the Scheme in 2005, a total of 381 Ambassadors had been trained up. Forty training events and visits had been organised. The number of service activities held was 142. Accumulated participants had reached 1 079, and the total accumulated service hours were 5 965.

5. Progress Report on Marine Parks and Marine Reserve

5.1 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 February to 31 May 2012. Members noted the content of the paper.

5.2 A member enquired about the joint enforcement operation against illegal cross-border fishing activities following the amendment of the Fisheries Protection Ordinance (FPO) (Cap 171). Members were informed that the enforcement operation was jointly conducted by AFCD, Guangdong Provincial Bureau of Oceans and Fisheries and Hong Kong Marine Police. To tie in with the recent amendment of the FPO, AFCD would strengthen its patrolling and law enforcement efforts at sea, including actions against mainland fishermen who engaged in fishing with the use or aid of a non-local fishing vessel in Hong Kong waters. Moreover, AFCD had notified the Guangdong Provincial Bureau of Oceans and Fisheries of the new measures arising from the amendment of the FPO and the law enforcement actions to be taken. The mainland authorities concerned would draw the attention of mainland fishermen to these new measures, which would become an integral part of the Guangdong/Hong Kong joint enforcement operation to be carried out at the end of this year.

5.3 A member suggested that AFCD should step up publicity on the danger involved in landing on the tombolo near Sha Chau and advise visitors not to do so in disregard of the risk. Members were informed that AFCD would consider the proposal of stepping up publicity via warning signs or its website. Regarding the proposal of deploying staff to stand guard on Sha Chau on holidays, the department would look into its feasibility from the perspectives of manpower resources and distribution of visitor flow.

6. Presentation

6.1 This paper is prepared for members' information.

Country and Marine Parks Authority

October 2012