

Country and Marine Parks Board

Preliminary boundaries and management plans of the Proposed Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands Marine Parks

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper updates members on the proposed Southwest Lantau Marine Park (SWLMP) and Soko Islands Marine Park (SIMP), in particular proposed boundaries and management plans.

2. Background

2.1 The Government announced in 2000 a plan to designate the waters of Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands as marine parks for the protection of Chinese white dolphins (CWD) and for the long-term conservation of the marine environment there. The boundaries of the SWLMP and SIMP drawn up at that time are shown in **Figure 1**, enclosing about 660 and 1,270 hectares of waters respectively.

2.2 To take forward the proposals, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (AFCD) conducted extensive consultation exercises from 2000 to 2002 and again in 2009. In the exercises, fishermen organisations and Rural Committees expressed strong reservations about the management measures proposed for SWLMP and SIMP, worrying that the designation of new marine parks would further reduce the fishing grounds in Hong Kong waters, and therefore did not support the proposals.

2.3 In response to the public concern about protection of CWD, the Government re-affirmed in early September 2014 its commitment to the designation of SWLMP and SIMP. The Government aims to proceed with the designation expeditiously in order to enhance the CWD conservation programme implemented by AFCD.

2.4 The Country and Marine Parks Board (CMPB) was briefed on the proposals to designate SWLMP and SIMP in its meetings in October 2014 and June 2015, and members showed general support to the proposals. The Marine Parks Committee (MPC) of CMPB was also briefed on the revised proposals on 19 February 2016, and the MPC in principle supported the proposals.

2.5 Since late 2014, AFCD has been undertaking a detailed study on the design and management of SWLMP and SIMP, as well as conducting another round of public consultation on the proposals. Findings of the detailed study and views gathered in the public consultation have been taken into consideration in revising the preliminary boundaries and management plans of the two proposed marine parks.

3. Updated Ecological and Fisheries Information

3.1 A review on the latest available information, supplemented with fisheries and recreational fisher surveys, was conducted from late 2014 to early 2015 to update the environmental, ecological and fisheries profiles of the waters of Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands. The up-to-date information re-confirms that the waters of Southwest Lantau remains as key habitats for CWD while the waters of Soko Islands is a unique location where both CWD and the Finless Porpoises (FP) are regularly sighted.

3.2 The Dolphin Habitat Index methodology, which had previously been used in the design of the proposed Brothers Marine Park (BMP), has been adopted to evaluate the importance of West and Southwest Lantau waters to CWD and FP. Dolphin Habitat Index and Porpoise Habitat Index have been prepared with sighting data between 2005 and 2014 (**Figure 2**), which show that a majority of waters of West and Southwest Lantau is important for CWD, while certain areas around Soko Islands are important FP habitats.

3.3 Information from the Port Survey conducted by AFCD in 2006 indicated that the estimated value of fisheries production (adult and fish fry) was moderate at Southwest Lantau and high at Soko Islands (**Figure 3**), confirming the fisheries importance of these waters. Also, the Southern Lantau waters were identified as spawning and nursery grounds for commercial fish and this corroborated the importance of the waters of Soko Islands as important fisheries habitats.

3.4 Furthermore, a recreational fisher survey conducted in early 2015 revealed that whilst half of the respondents believed recreational fishing in the broad Southwest Lantau waters would not be affected by the proposed marine parks, 80% of the respondents hoped that recreational fishing would be allowed in the marine parks.

3.5 Overall, findings of the detailed study affirm that the waters of Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands are suitable for designation as marine parks. The Dolphin Habitat Index and Porpoise Habitat Index also provide the scientific basis to refine the previously proposed boundaries of SWLMP and SIMP for the conservation and protection of CWD and FP.

4. Public Consultation

4.1 Since July 2015, AFCD consulted relevant government bureaux/departments, major fishermen associations and fishermen representatives, concerned Rural Committees (RCs) and representatives from local villages, Tourism, Agriculture, Fisheries and Environmental Hygiene Committee of the Islands District Council, green groups and ecotour companies, recreational fisher representatives, MPC of CMPB and the Capture Fisheries Subcommittee (CFS) of the Advisory Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries (ACAF). The comments received have been taken into consideration to refine the boundary and design the management plan of SWLMP and SIMP. A full list of the parties consulted is in Table 1. Key comments received are given in the following paragraphs.

4.2 There are a number of existing and planned marine facilities and usages in West and Southwest Lantau waters, which must be taken into account carefully in taking forward the proposals. These include the Lantau Channel Traffic Separation Scheme (LCTSS) in the Lantau Channel mainly for ocean going vessels, and the recommended Traffic Separation Schemes South of Lantau (SLTSS) mainly for high speed passenger ferries (**Figure 4**). From the marine traffic safety point of view, the Marine Department (MD) advised that an inshore traffic zone of at least 400m in width should be maintained between the western boundary of SWLMP and SIMP with the boundary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, as well as the eastern boundary of LCTSS. Similarly, an inshore traffic zone of at least 300m in width should be maintained between the southern boundary of SWLMP and the northern boundary of SLTSS.

4.3 MPC of CMPB, green groups and eco-tour operators in general supported the proposals and agreed that the proposed SWLMP and SIMP would be important to the protection of CWD and FP. Some green groups also recommended an extension of the boundary of SWLMP northward to cover the waters at Tai O.

4.4 Recreational fishers have no strong objection to the proposals but reiterated their request to allow recreational fishing in SIMP.

4.5 Fishermen associations have mixed reactions to the proposals. Some have no objection while many others have strong reservations, which were shared by CFS of ACAF. Their main concerns were the further reduction in fishing grounds in the western waters as a result of the proposals and restriction of their fishing activities under the marine park fishing permit system. They were also concerned about the proposed Core Area in SIMP and the related enforcement issues.

4.6 Members of the Tourism, Agriculture, Fisheries and Environmental Hygiene Committee of the Islands District Council considered that there was no urgency to designate the two marine parks. Mui Wo and Tung Chung RCs had concern about the proposals as fishermen were worried about the size of the proposed Core Area of SIMP and the fishing permit system. Tai O fishermen generally supported the proposals, but villagers there maintained strong objection, worrying that the marine parks would restrict their normal fishing activities, marine transport, village house developments and the corresponding sewage disposal issues. The South Lantau RC and villagers of Soko Islands objected to the proposals and believed that village developments would be restricted after designation of the proposed marine parks.

5. Measures/ Following Up Actions to Address the Concerns of the Stakeholders

Marine Safety Concerns

5.1 To address MD's concerns, a Marine Traffic Impact Assessment (MTIA) was carried out in December 2015 to assess the potential marine impacts and navigational risks posed by the proposed marine parks, and to propose mitigation measures to address any impacts and risks identified. According the findings of the assessment, an inshore traffic zone of about 300m to 400m in width should be maintained between the boundary of the proposed marine parks and the nearby LCTSS / SLTSS (**Figure 5**). Further consultation with the consultative committees of MD would be conducted in April 2016.

Dolphin Conservation

5.2 The proposed boundary of SIMP covers habitats of CWD and FP and waters of high fisheries importance. Recent dolphin sighting data reveal that

there was an increasing trend in dolphin usage at the surrounding waters of Kau Ling Chung (狗嶺涌) and Pak Kok (白角). In view this, the boundary of SWLMP is proposed to extend eastward. In addition, the revised proposed boundary of SWLMP would adjoin the boundary of the Lantau South Country Park along the coastline between Kau Ling Chung (狗嶺涌) and Pak Kok (白角), thereby enabling the integrated management of the country park and the marine park.

Recreational Fishing

5.3 In addition to conservation and education, recreation is also one of the major functions of marine parks. After consideration of various factors, including current status of ecology and fisheries resources, visitor safety and management, and enforcement issues, we propose to set up recreational fishing areas at certain coastal areas of SIMP. This would allow recreational fishing without compromising the objective of conserving CWD in SIMP.

Fishermen's Concerns

5.4 Under the Marine Parks and Marine Reserves Regulation (Cap 476A) (the Regulation), the Authority (i.e. the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation) may at his discretion, grant permits to bona fide fishermen to fish in marine parks. Fishing Permits have been granted to fishermen to continue their fishing activities within the marine parks in Hong Kong subject to the eligibility criteria and similar arrangement will be made in SWLMP and SIMP (except in the Core Area). In addition, to address fishermen's concern, the size of the proposed Core Area in SIMP has been reduced. It should be noted that the Core Area would contribute to the enhancement of fish stocks in its vicinity, and thus would benefit the sustainability of fisheries resources in the area.

District Council and Local Communities' Concerns

5.5 In response to the concerns raised by the Islands District Council, we further consulted the Mui Wo, Tung Chung, Tai O and South Lantau RCs in July and August 2015. We briefed the consultees the proposals in detail and the importance of dolphin conservation, and explained the current mechanism of issuing marine park fishing permits. For SWLMP, to address the local communities' concerns and taking into account the latest MTIA findings, it is proposed that a water channel between the eastern boundary of SWLMP and the coastline would be provided for transit of local vessels and for recreational fishing.

6. Revised Preliminary Boundaries and Management Plans

6.1 Taking into consideration the up-to-date scientific data, MTIA findings and views gathered from relevant stakeholders so far, we propose to set the preliminary boundaries of SWLMP and SIMP as depicted in **Figure 5**. The areas of SWLMP and SIMP are maintained at about 660 ha and 1,270 ha respectively.

6.2 The two proposed marine parks would be managed and controlled in a similar manner as the existing marine parks in accordance with the Regulation for conservation, recreation, education and scientific research purposes. Activities such as boating (within the 10 knots vessel speed restriction) and dolphin watching will be allowed in the proposed marine parks. Eligible bona fide fishermen will be allowed to continue fishing within the marine parks (except the Core Area) under a permit system.

6.3 . The proposed Core Area of SIMP (Figure 6) would contribute to the enhancement of fish stocks in the region and benefit the sustainability of fisheries resources in the area. It is also proposed to set up recreational fishing areas along the coast of the three islands, namely, Cheung Muk Tau, Ma Chau and Tau Lo Chau of the Soko Islands. AFCD would monitor the fisheries resources within the proposed marine parks including the Core Area and proposed recreational fishing areas for future management consideration.

7. Way Forward

7.1 Subject to the views of CMPB and further comments from the remaining consultation with other stakeholders, the Authority plans to seek the direction of the Chief Executive in Council to prepare draft maps of SWLMP and SIMP in accordance with Section 7 (1) of the Marine Parks Ordinance (Cap. 476) (the Ordinance) and then, in consultation of CMPB, prepare draft maps in accordance with Section 7(4) of the Ordinance for public inspection by 2016.

8. Advice sought

8.1 Members are invited to comment on the proposals set out in this paper.

Country and Marine Parks Authority
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
March 2016

Table 1**Stakeholders consulted in Public Consultation**

Group	Consulted Parties
Marine Operators <i>(to be consulted in early April 2016)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Speed Craft Consultative Committee • Local Vessels Advisory Committee • Pilotage Advisory Committee • Port Operations Committee
Rural Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mui Wo • South Lantau • Tai O • Tung Chung
District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Islands District Council – Tourism, Agriculture, Fisheries and Environmental Hygiene Committee
Advisory/ Statutory Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Parks Committee of the Country and Marine Parks Board • The Capture Fisheries Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries
Fisheries Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major fishermen's associations and fishermen representatives
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green groups • Ecotour operators • Recreational fishing representatives • Representatives of local villagers

Figure 1

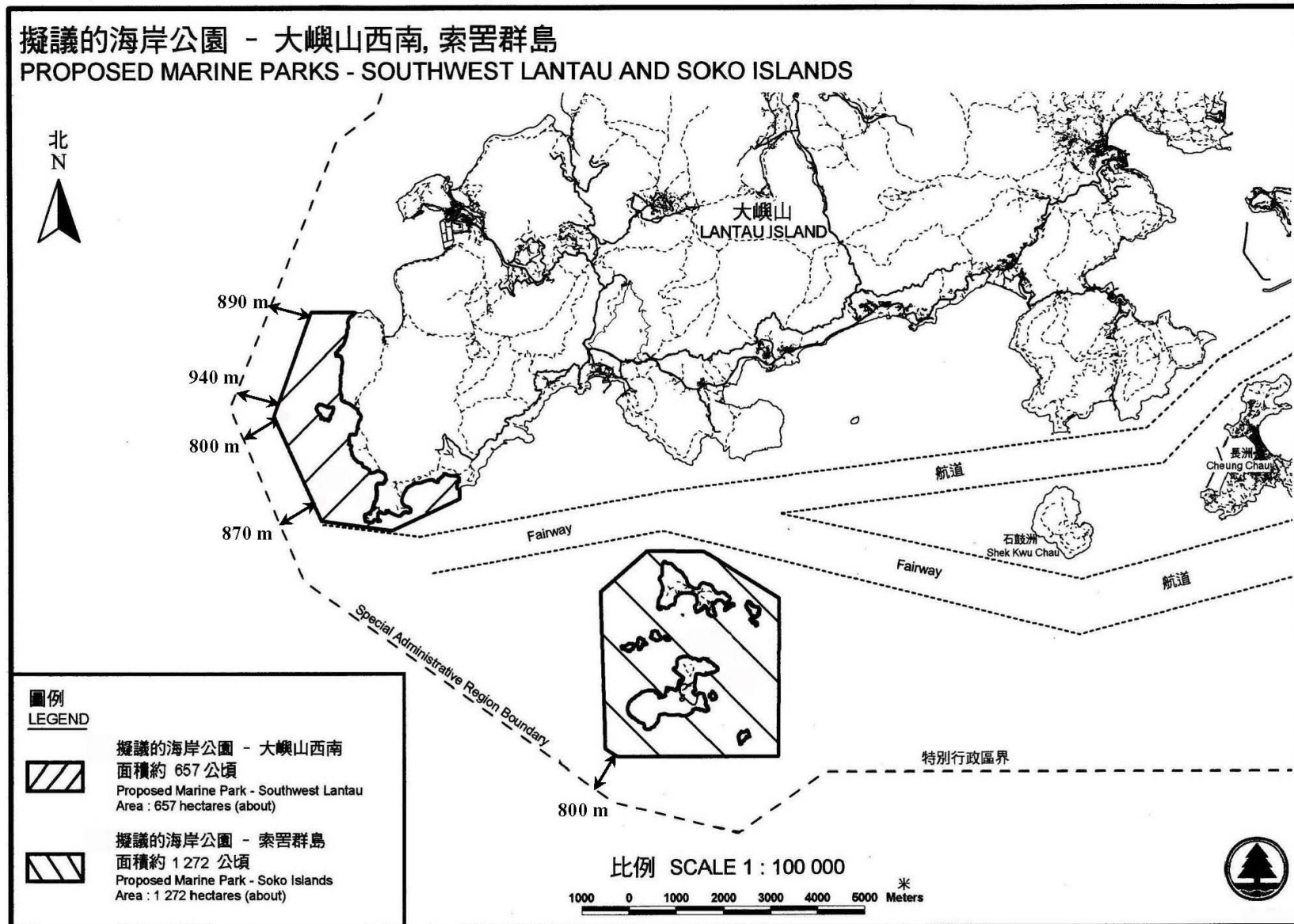
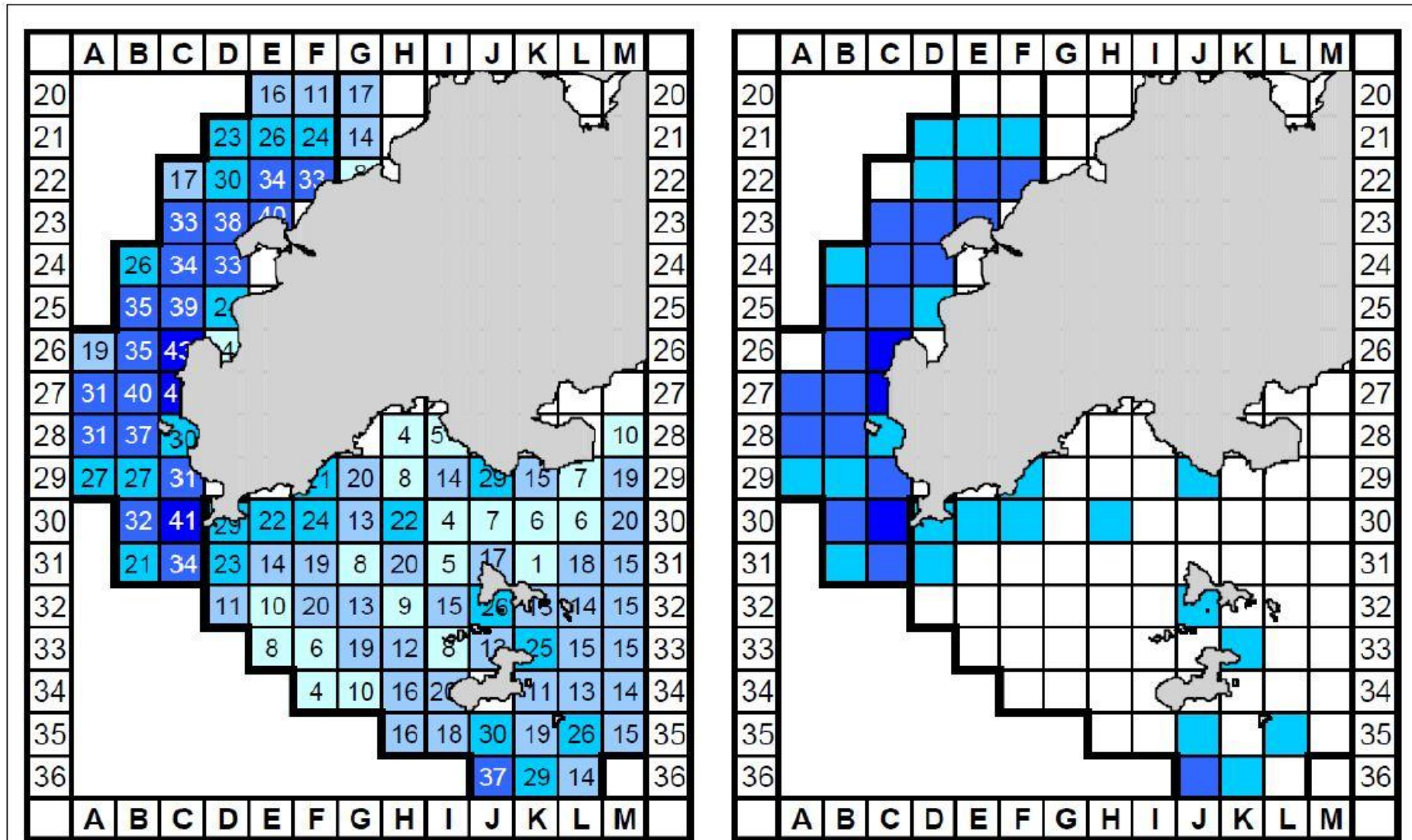


Figure 2



(left) Combined habitat ratings of dolphins and porpoises using quantitative habitat use information collected during 2005-14 (no. within grids represents the sum of scores totaled from 18 selection criteria); and (right) Grids rated as above average, important and critical marine mammal habitats.

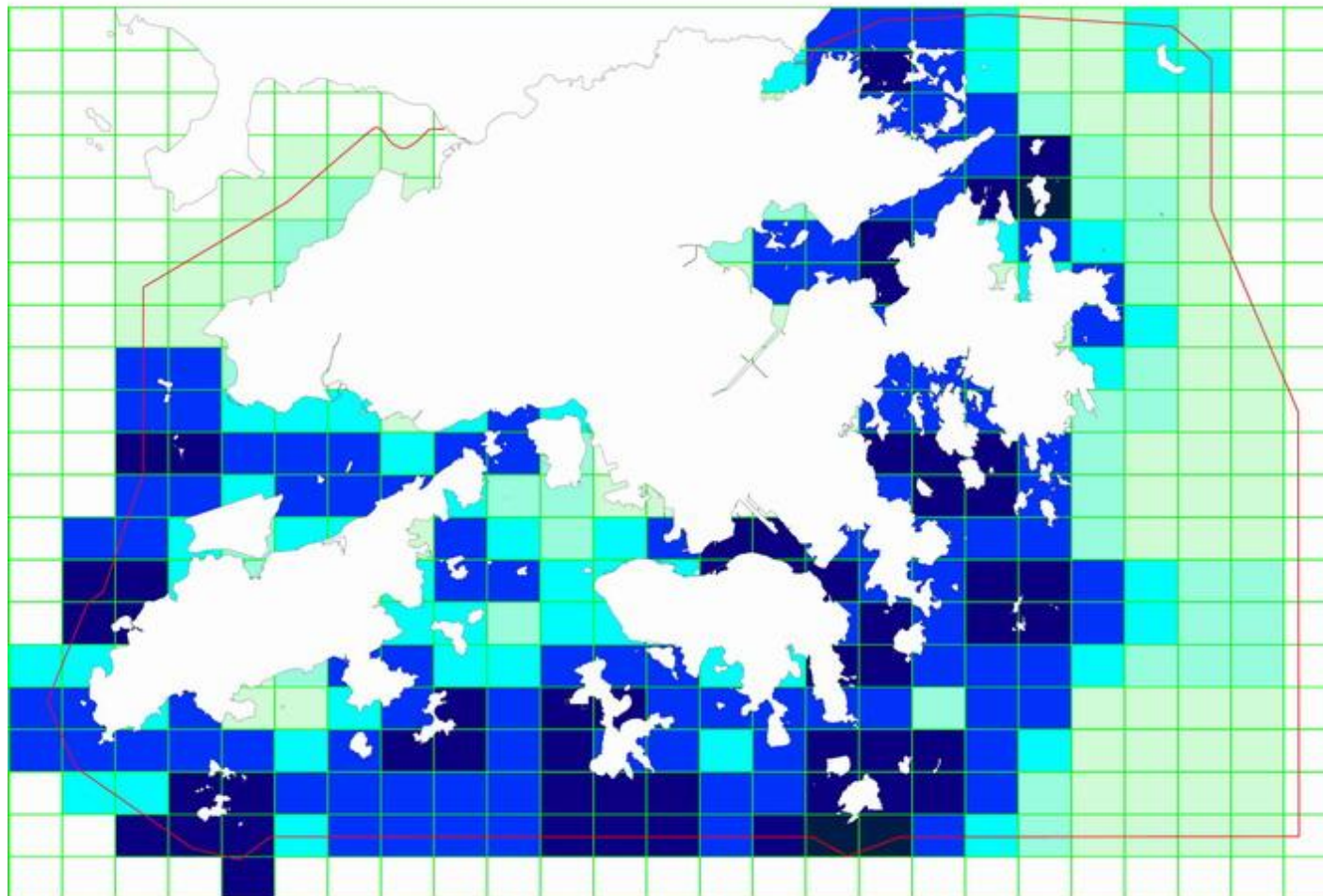
(左) 採用量化的棲息地使用率而得出的合併海豚及江豚棲息地指標(網格的數字代表18個評估標準的總分數); 及(右) 被評為高於平均、重要及要緊的海洋哺乳動物棲息地的網格。

Figure 3

Port Survey 2006
 Distribution of fisheries production (adult fish & fish fry)
 Overall

捕魚作業及生產訪問調查 2006
 漁產分布 (成魚及魚苗)
 總計

捕鱼作业及生产访问调查 2006
 渔产分布 (成鱼及鱼苗)
 总计



Production by vessel type
 漁產與作業形式比例
 渔产与作业形式比例



Vessel type:

作業形式:
 作业形式:
 PAT Pair Trawler
 STT Stern Trawler
 SHT Shrimp Trawler
 HAT Hang Trawler
 GN Gill Netter
 LL Long Liner
 HL Hand Liner
 PS Purse Seiner
 MSC Misc. Craft
 P4 Sampan

雙拖 雙拖
 單拖 單拖
 蝦拖 蝦拖
 摻網 摻網
 刺網 刺網
 延繩釣 延繩釣
 手釣 手釣
 圍網 圍網
 雜項船 雜項船
 舢舨 舢舨

Value (HK\$/ha)
 價值 (港元/公頃)
 价值 (港元/公頃)

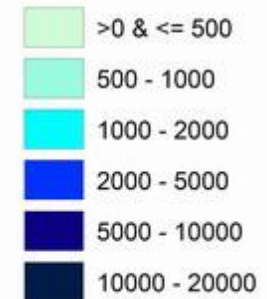


Figure 4

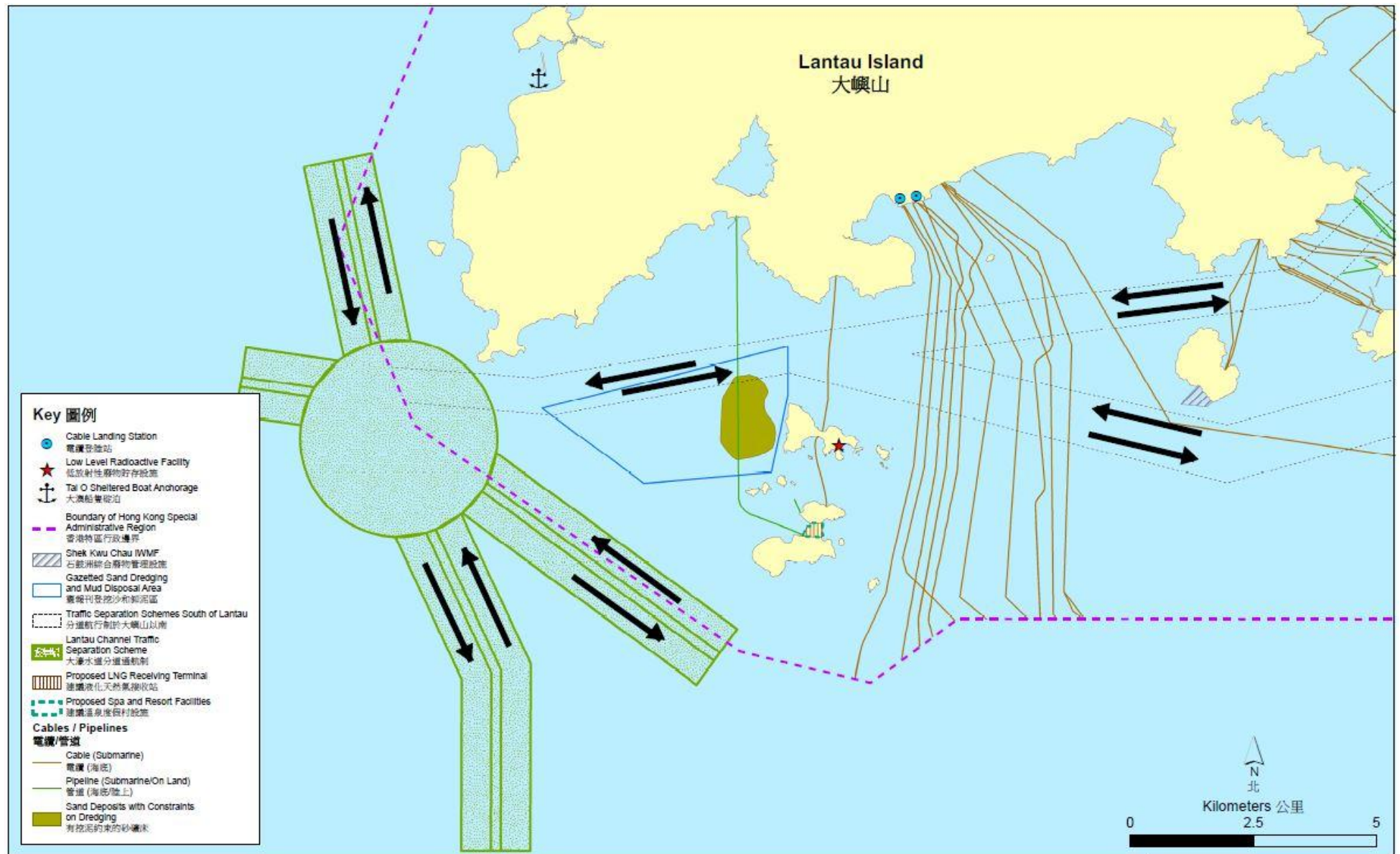


Figure 5

