

COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

Summary Report of the Marine Parks Committee

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper aims to inform members of the major issues discussed at the Marine Parks Committee (MPC) meeting held on 16 April 2020.

2. New Fisheries Management Strategy in Marine Parks - Progress and Way Forward

2.1 The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) briefed members on the new fisheries management strategy in marine parks (hereinafter referred to as “the new strategy”), which commenced on 1 April 2020. Under the new strategy, commercial fishing by local fishing vessels registered under the Fisheries Protection Ordinance (Cap. 171) are allowed to continue in The Brothers Marine Park, Southwest Lantau Marine Park and new marine parks to be designated in the western waters through the marine park fishing permit system. Commercial fishing will be banned in four specified marine parks, namely the Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park, Yan Chau Tong Marine Park and Tung Ping Chau Marine Park in the eastern waters and the Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau Marine Park in the western waters. No new fishing permits will be granted for commercial fishing in the four specified marine parks. There is a transitional period of two years, during which the fishing permits already granted for the four specified marine parks will remain valid and be renewed upon request with a validity period up to 31 March 2022. Members were also informed of the preparations AFCD made for the implementation of the new strategy. They included the formation of an Inter-departmental Working Group for handling matters relating to the processing of applications for Ex-gratia allowance from affected fishing permit holders, strengthening enforcement effort, conducting ecological and fisheries resources monitoring surveys, and designing fisheries enhancement measures.

2.2 In general, members hoped that the new strategy would help achieve long-term sustainability of marine resources in Hong Kong. Some members expressed concern that illegal fishing activities would threaten the sustainability of fisheries resources and undermine the effectiveness of marine parks and other marine conservation efforts. They also commented that the current penalty for illegal fishing might not be heavy enough to create adequate deterrent effect. They advised AFCD to step up patrol and make use of new technologies to combat illegal fishing. Besides, some members suggested that AFCD should adopt a co-management approach in marine parks' management (e.g. partnership with local fishermen).

2.3 AFCD responded positively to these suggestions and indicated that the Department would seek additional resources under the new strategy to set up more enforcement teams and patrol vessels and would enhance cooperation with the local community and interested groups in the future planning and management of the marine parks. Besides, the Department was exploring the feasibility of using new technologies to support routine monitoring and law enforcement in collaboration with relevant departments. Moreover, AFCD informed members that regular ecological and fisheries resources monitoring surveys would be carried out in existing and new marine parks to monitor the effectiveness of the new fisheries management strategy in marine parks.

3. Fisheries Resources Surveys at Existing and Proposed Marine Parks and Cape D'Aguilar Marine Reserve - Results and Conclusion

3.1 AFCD and its consultant briefed members on the results and conclusion of the fisheries resources surveys at the existing and proposed marine parks as well as Cape D'Aguilar Marine Reserve. The results showed a generally higher biomass, higher abundance, larger size and larger number of marine fauna species within existing marine parks and Cape D'Aguilar Marine Reserve compared with the respective control sites (outside the marine protected area). Besides, the consultant introduced the recommendations for the refinement of the standard survey protocols for monitoring fisheries resources within marine parks and marine reserve. They also answered members' questions concerning the results and the considerations for the selection of control sites.

3.2 Members were pleased to know the positive results and suggested AFCD to continue carrying out these surveys to monitor the trend in fisheries resources in

marine parks and marine reserve. In addition, some of them suggested AFCD to consider having fishermen participation in providing information of fisheries resources and obtaining more information about the status of fisheries resources and marine conservation efforts in the Pearl River Delta. Besides, members recommended that AFCD should consider publishing the survey results in academic journals and announcing them to the public. AFCD noted members' suggestions and indicated that the Department would continue with the surveys and would consider the appropriate ways to release the survey results to the public.

4. Advice sought

4.1 This paper is prepared for members' information.

Country and Marine Parks Authority
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