

Pilotage Advisory Committee

Establishment of Marine Parks, Marine Reserves and Artificial Reefs

Purpose

This paper is for the members' information on the establishment of Marine Parks (MPs), Marine Reserves (MRs) and Artificial Reefs (ARs).

Background

2. In 1989, the Marine Parks and Reserves Working Group of the then Country Parks Board carried out a feasibility study of establishing MPs and MRs in Hong Kong. The Working Group identified in 1990 seven sites considered to have the potential for development into MPs and/or MRs. The sites are at Hoi Ha Wan, Yan Chau Tong, Cape D'Aguiar, Ping Chau, Outer Port Shelter, South Lamma and Southwest Lantau.

3. The Marine Parks Authority (Director of Agriculture and Fisheries) has, since 1996, established three MPs and an MR (**Annex 1**).

Present Situation

4. Studies on the feasibility of developing potential sites into MPs are being carried out. Initial findings of the studies indicate that the rest of the sites are suitable. Plans showing the study areas are at **Annex 2 to Annex 5**.

5. The Artificial Reef Deployment Study recommends that five Marine Special Areas (MSAs), representing 10% of Hong Kong waters, should be set up for inshore fisheries management, protection, and for the second phase development of ARs. These MSAs, located outside the present MPs and MR, are at the West Sokos and Shek Kwu Chau, East Po Toi, Ninepins, Outer Port Shelter and Shek Nga Chau (**Annex 6**). The proposed management plans, goals and objectives for the five recommended MSAs have been promulgated for public consultation.

Control and Management

6. The control and management of MPs and MRs are vested in the Director of Agriculture and Fisheries (the Authority) in accordance with the Marine Parks Ordinance (Cap. 476) and the Marine Parks and Marine Reserves Regulation. Certain activities are **prohibited** within MPs and MRs, e.g. mooring and anchoring of vessels, water skiing, jet skiing or water scootering. In addition, swimming, diving and boating are prohibited in MRs.

Marine Impacts

7. It is noted that the proposed MPs will have the following marine impacts:

- ◆ Outer Port Shelter Island (**Annex 2**) - this popular area for water recreation and boating activities will be adversely affected
- ◆ Ping Chau (**Annex 3**) - the proposed area may impede the passage of vessels following the deep water access to and from the port of Yantian
- ◆ South Lamma (**Annex 4**) - the area encroaches upon the South Lamma Anchorages where considerable volume of vessel traffic and marine activities are expected
- ◆ Southwest Lantau (**Annex 5**) - the area encroaches upon the high speed craft traffic route

8. While setting up ARs within MSAs will not pose any restrictions to normal marine activities except for fishing, it limits the potential for any port or port related developments in the future. Also, ARs will reduce the available depth of water and therefore have an effect on safety of surface navigation.

Proposed Marine Conservation Areas

9. The Planning Department has recently commissioned two studies, i.e. the South East New Territories Development Strategy Review (SENT DSR) and the South West New Territories Development Strategy Review (SWNT DSR) with a view to recommending a development strategy for SENT and SWNT. It is noted from the working papers of the studies that large areas of waters have been proposed as Potential Marine Conservation Areas. Plans extracted from the draft SENT DSR and SWNT DSR are attached at **Annex 7** and **Annex 8** respectively.

10. The proposals from the two DSRs will inevitably create marine impacts, similar to those outlined in paragraph 7. Given that the Marine Department has already registered its reservations on the proposals. It is clear that the recommended proposals would, however, be supported by some environmental groups. Once the proposals are accepted, they would practically become “irreversible”.

Advice Sought

11. Members’ views are sought on the proposals to designate/establish the MPs and MSAs indicated in paragraphs 4 and 5.

Planning and Development Branch
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