

## **Provisional Local Vessel Advisory Committee**

### **Proposed Implementation of Artificial Reef Development Programme and Fisheries Resources Management Measures in Hong Kong Waters**

#### **Introduction**

A public consultation exercise on the main findings of and recommendations on the consultancy studies on “Fisheries Resources and Fishing Operations in Hong Kong Waters” and “Artificial Reef Deployment” was carried out in late 1998 and 1999 respectively. This paper briefs Members on the views collected during the consultation and proposes the implementation of Artificial Reef Deployment Programme and fisheries resources management measures in accordance with the findings of the consultations.

#### **Findings of the Consultations**

##### **Fisheries Resources Management Strategies**

2. During the 3-month consultation, 18 submissions were received. Most of the feedback supported the implementation of management measures to restore fisheries resources, and agreed to the recommendations of the consultant that the high priority options should be implemented first. These options include the establishment of a fishing licence system, limiting entrants, setting up nursery and spawning ground protection areas, habitat enhancement, habitat restoration and restocking. However, there were divergent views on the extent and pace of implementation. Fishermen were concerned about the likely impact of the management measures on their livelihood. Some fisherman associations suggested that ex-gratia allowance should be given to offset the impact of some of the proposed management measures. On the contrary, green groups in Hong Kong pressed for a faster pace of implementation of fisheries management measures to rectify the current situation of overfishing. Apart from the high priority options, other options were also suggested in the submissions, including the control of the use of non-selective fishing methods (such as trawl and trammel nets) in certain areas.

##### **Artificial Reef Deployment Programme**

3. During the 3-month public consultation, 24 forums for various fishermen sectors were held in various districts. 18 Provisional District Boards (PDBs), various consultative committees and working group of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the Advisory Council on the Environment, various consultative committees of the Marine Department, green group, recreational fishing organizations and the public were also consulted. It was noted that most small craft fishermen supported the

implementation of artificial reef programme and the establishment of marine special areas to protect inshore waters from destruction by trawling. On the contrary, many trawl fishermen objected to the deployment of artificial reefs and setting up of marine special areas in Hong Kong waters, especially the 3 marine special areas in the south of Hong Kong proposed for deployment of artificial reefs. Most PDBs, various government departments and their consultative committees, green groups, recreational fishermen and the public also supported those recommendations, but some of the people consulted also suggested that the government should take note of the possible impact on the livelihood of fishermen, for example, consider giving ex-gratia allowance to trawl fishermen.

### **Proposed Implementation of Strategies**

#### **Establishment of Fisheries Protection Areas and Deployment of Artificial Reefs in the Areas**

4. Based on the findings of the consultations and the assessment of fisheries resources and fishing operations in Hong Kong, we intend to implement fisheries management measures step by step according to the following strategies :
  - 4.1 Apart from the existing Working Group on Artificial Reefs, a Working Group on Fisheries Management was set up in mid-1999 to advise the Director of AFCD on matters relating to conservation and management strategies of fisheries resources. Members of the Working Group include representatives from fishermen's associations, green groups, academics and other government departments concerned.
  - 4.2 'Fisheries Resources Management' and 'Artificial Reef' are complementary to each. We intend to merge the 'Marine Special Area' and 'Fish Spawning and Nursery Ground' proposed by the Consultant into one as a 'Fisheries Protection Area'.
  - 4.3 We note that some fishermen consider that the above Programme, especially the 3 areas in the south of Hong Kong recommended for deployment of artificial reefs by the consultants, may have impacts on their operation or livelihood. In order to alleviate their worries, we intend to implement the programme progressively and promote it further when the fishermen realize the actual benefits of the artificial reefs and fisheries management.
  - 4.4 In view of the above consideration, we suggest to set up Fisheries Protection Areas in the waters near Port Shelter and Tolo Harbour first. The proposed protection areas would occupy some 14 000 hectares, representing about 9% of Hong Kong waters (See Figure 1).
  - 4.5 We intend to deploy artificial reefs in the proposed protection areas.

This would include deployment of a number of artificial reefs units made of different materials in Outer Port Shelter, Long Harbour and Tap Mun.

- 4.6 After considering the establishment of the above two fisheries protection areas, we will stock fish fry if necessary, so as to speed up the restoration of fisheries resources.
- 4.7 To rectify overfishing of fisheries resources and ensure the sustainability of the fishing industry, we suggest to set up a territory-wide fishing licence system.

### **Proposed Management Methods for Fisheries Protection Areas and Artificial Reef Sites**

5. The proposed Fisheries Protection Areas and Artificial Reef Sites must tie in with suitable management measures in order to achieve the aim of protection of fisheries resources. We suggest implementation of the following management measures :

- 5.1 To control fishing activities in the areas by means of a licence system. This would include restricting the sites and time for fishing, fishing vessels, fishing methods, catching of fish fry and fishing efforts. We also suggest revising the Fisheries Protection Ordinance to empower the Director of AFCD to formulate management measures for the protection areas.
- 5.2 To consider prohibition of fishing activities in some of the waters within Artificial Reef Sites.

6. We suggest that no control be imposed on vessels going in and out of the protection areas and anchoring therein.

### **Advice Sought**

7. Members are invited to comment on the proposed fisheries management measures indicated in paragraph 5.

### **Presentation**

8. Officers of AFCD, accompanied by Mr. K.C. CHAN of the Marine Department, will present the paper.