

PROVISIONAL LOCAL VESSEL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Proposed Marine Parks at Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands

1. Purpose

To seek members' view on the preliminary proposal of designating two marine parks at Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands.

2. Background

2.1 A study on the suitability of the waters around Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands was conducted by Hong Kong Institute of Education in 1998 and 1999. Results of the study show that the waters around Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands are frequented by the Chinese White Dolphins. These areas are found to be important habitats for the species. In particular, waters around Soko Islands are also home to Finless Porpoise.

2.2 In The Policy Address 2000, Chief Executive announced in October that two more marine parks would be designated in 2001-2002. The Authority plans to designate the above areas as marine parks with a view to conserving the natural environment and protecting the Chinese White Dolphins, Finless Porpoises and other species.

3. Conservation Value

3.1 The waters around South and Southwest Lantau are important habitats for the Chinese White Dolphins and have been heavily used by them (Tsang and Milicich, 1999). The area near Fan Lau, in particular, is a location where dolphins are frequently found in all seasons.

3.2 The area around Soko Islands is a unique location where both the Chinese White Dolphin and Finless Porpoise are regularly sighted (Jefferson 1998; Tsang and Milicich 1999). The two species use the site in different seasons. In winter and spring, the site is heavily used by the Finless Porpoise and their abundance in Hong Kong peaks in spring. In summer months, the site appears to be largely vacated by Finless Porpoise and the Chinese White Dolphin move in. In autumn, Finless Porpoise abundance appears to reach a low point, probably resulting from offshore movement of animals south of the Hong Kong (Jefferson and Braulik 1999). On the other hand, the Chinese White Dolphin heavily use the site in autumn and their abundance in Hong Kong reaches a maximum in this season.

3.3 Both the Chinese White Dolphin and the Finless Porpoise are listed under Appendix I of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). In Hong Kong, the two species are protected under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170) and the Animals and Plants (Protection of Endangered Species) Ordinance (Cap. 187). In Mainland China, the Chinese White Dolphin and the Finless Porpoise are regarded as a "National First Class Protected Species" and "National Second Class Protected Species"

respectively.

3.4 Study indicated that the sheltered shores along Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands supported a diverse community of gastropods, acorn barnacles and goose barnacles. Subtidally, communities are surprisingly diverse with sponges, bryozoans, barnacles, oysters, mussels, ascideans, gorgonians, soft coral and patches of encrusting faviid corals making up most of the live benthic cover. Although relatively diverse, abundance and coverage is not high with bare rock, rock encrusted with barnacles and coralline algae forming the most common substrate types.

3.5 Invertebrates such as urchins, holothurians, gastropods and crabs were found throughout the subtidal zone along with more than 22 species of fish, including snappers and butterfly fish. The Soko Islands appear to support the more significant fish fauna with large snappers sighted more than once along the north shore of Siu A Chau. These shores also used to support a reasonable coral community, however, after a die-off in 1997, remaining corals are restricted to encrusting faviids occurring in patches. Further offshore, benthic communities are dominated by fish, shrimp, crabs, mantis shrimps, cephalopods and other molluscs.

3.6 The waters around Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands are found to have no obvious pollution from domestic source.

4. The Boundaries of the Marine Parks

4.1 The Southwest Lantau site covers an area of 657 ha while the Soko Islands site covers an area of 1,290 ha.

4.2 The boundaries of the proposed Southwest Lantau and Soko Marine Parks are shown in Appendices 1A and 1B respectively. We have consulted government departments including Marine Department and Marine Police in drawing up the proposed boundaries and their concerns have been addressed. We intend to deploy marker buoys to demarcate these boundaries. The numbers and locations of these buoys would be decided upon further consultation with Marine Department.

5. Management Strategy

5.1 The proposed marine parks will be managed in similar manner as the existing marine parks such as no fishing, no anchoring and a speed limit of 10 knots.

5.2 At present, the waters around Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands are heavily utilized by surface navigators. The average frequency of vessels in the waters around Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands was found to be 51 vessels per hour. Amongst all, high speed ferries were the major users of the nearby waters (Tsang and Milicich, 1999).

5.3 Fishing vessels operating in Southwest Lantau mainly come from Tai O, Castle Peak Bay and Cheung Chau while those operating in the vicinity of Soko Islands mainly come from Tai O, Cheung Chau, Silvermine Bay, Castle Peak Bay and Peng Chau. The major gear types operating in Southwest Lantau include shrimp trawl, gill net and hang trawl. The major gear types operating in the vicinity of Soko Islands include gill net, hand line, long line and shrimp

trawl.

5.4 As coastal areas of the Soko Islands are frequented by amateur fishers, we intend to allow a certain degree of recreational fishing in this area. Recreational fishers would be restricted to one-line-one-hook basis. With regard to *bona fide* fishermen and local villagers, we would issue fishing permits to them to continue with their fishing activities which would be similar to the control in existing marine parks.

6. Way Forward

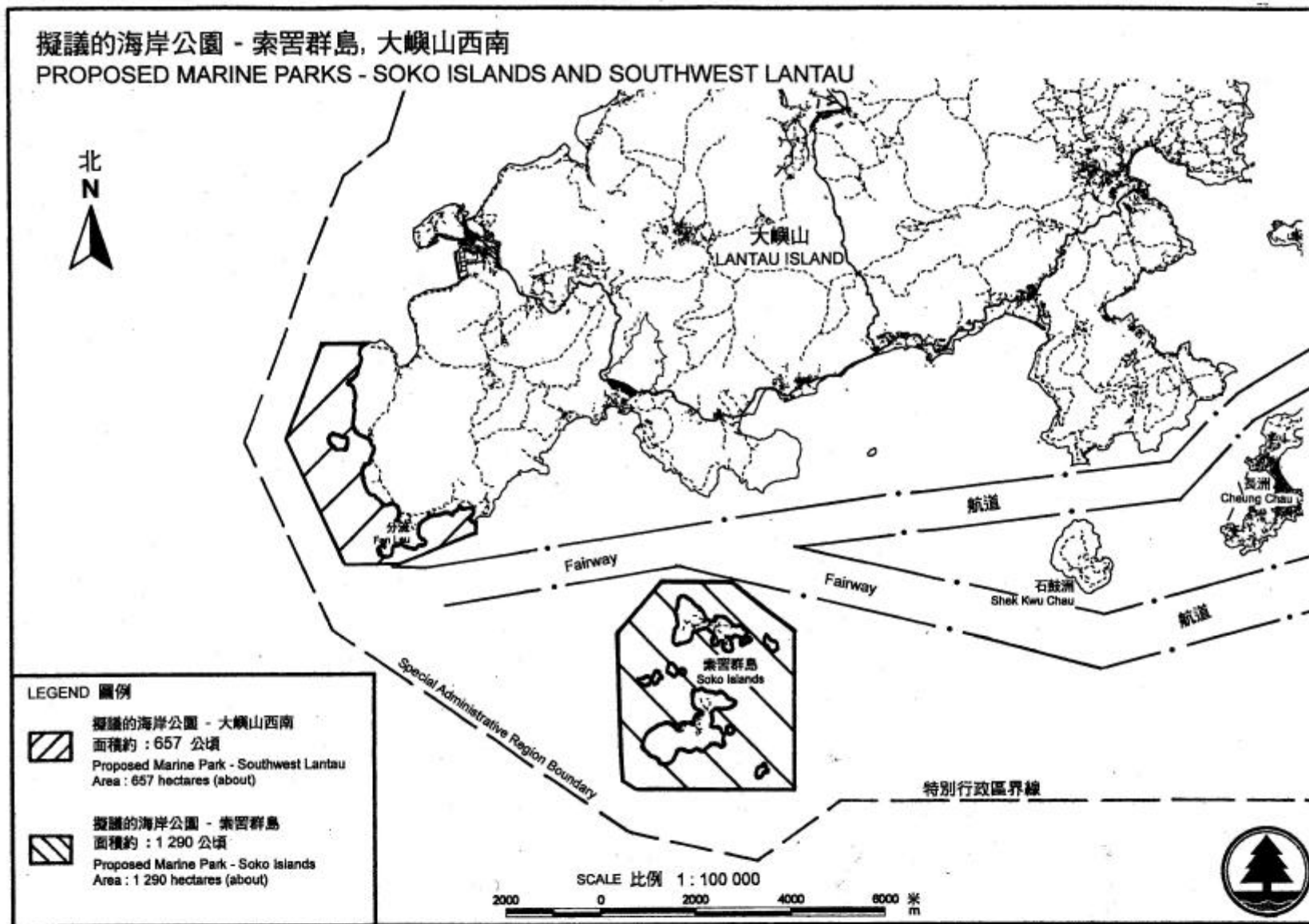
Subject to members' comments, detailed planning of the proposed designation would be worked out, and the advice of the Country and Marine Parks Board would be sought before submitting to the Chief Executive in Council for the preparation of the draft maps.

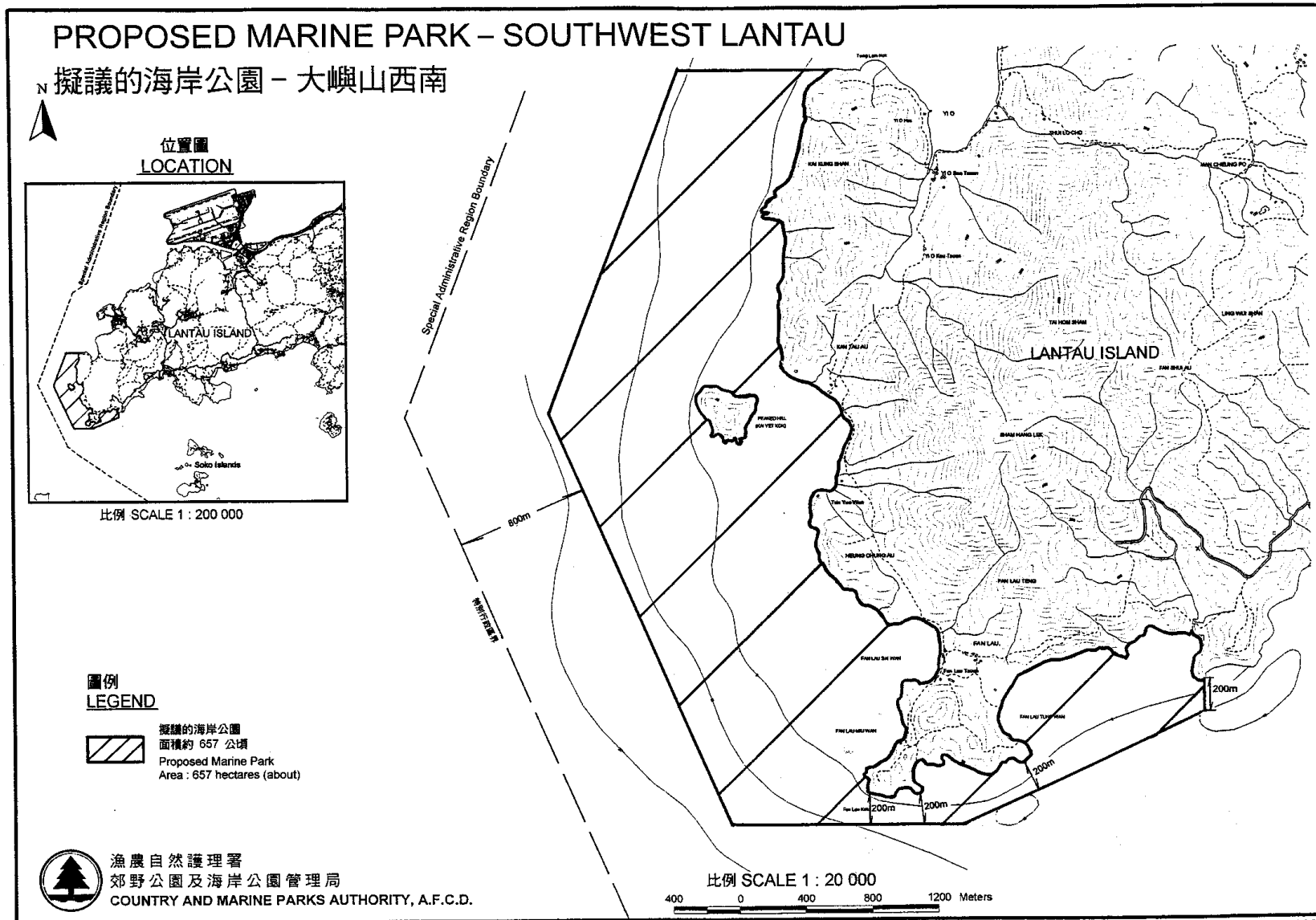
7. Advice Sought

Members are requested to comment on the proposal of designating two marine parks at Southwest Lantau and Soko Islands.

Country and Marine Parks Authority
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

August 2001



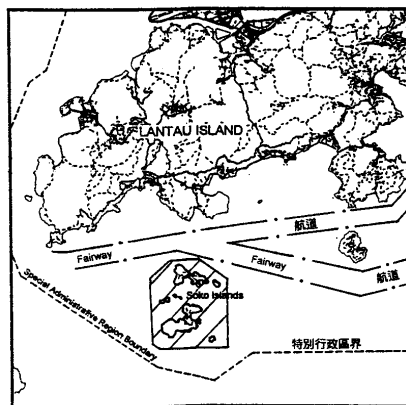


PROPOSED MARINE PARK – SOKO ISLANDS

擬議的海岸公園 – 索罟群島





位置圖
LOCATION



比例 SCALE 1 : 200 000

圖例
LEGEND

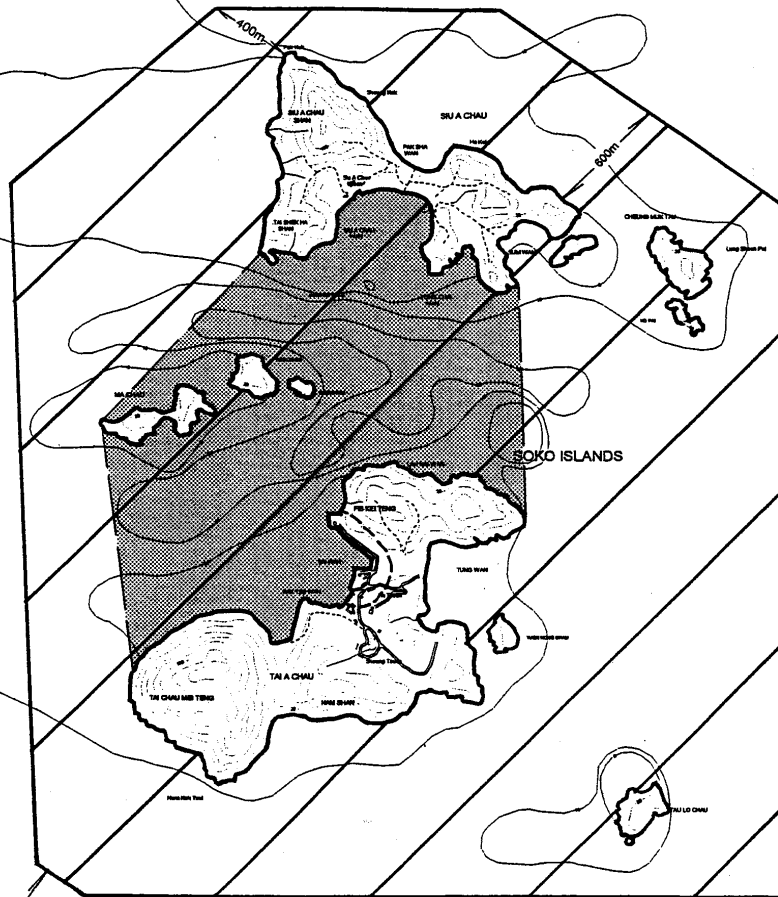
 擬議的海岸公園
面積約 1 290 公頃
Proposed Marine Park
Area : 1 290 hectares (about)

 核心區
面積約 280 公頃
Core Area
Area : 280 hectares (about)



漁農自然護理署
郊野公園及海岸公園管理局
COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS AUTHORITY, A.F.C.D.

特別行政區界
Special Administrative Region Boundary



比例 SCALE 1 : 20 000

400 0 400 800 1200 Meters

Comparison on the Control in General Use Area and Core Area

Activity	General Use Area	Core Area
Fishing	With permit	Prohibited
Anchoring	With permit	Prohibited
Organized group events/commercial activities	With permit	With special permission
Scuba diving	Allowed	Allowed
Snorkeling	Allowed	Allowed
Swimming	Allowed	Allowed
Boating	Allowed	Allowed