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for advice

Report of the EIA Subcommittee

The Subcommittee considered one Environmental Impact Assessment report and one Initial Assessment Report at its meeting on 7 July 1997.

Environmental Impact Assessment on Territorial Land Drainage and Flood Control Strategy Study - Phase III: Sedimentation Study (ACE EIA Paper 12/97)

2. The Territorial Land Drainage and Flood Control Strategy is aimed to develop a maintenance dredging strategy for the major tidal drainage channels in the Territory for the purpose of flood protection. Appropriate dredging, sediment disposal methods and management procedures for 13 drainage channels have been identified.

3. The EIA, conducted as part of the Study, has concluded that there is no insurmountable environmental problems arising from the proposed maintenance dredging works with the implementation of recommended mitigation measures. The key issues highlighted are disposal options, water quality and ecology.

4. The study estimated that about 80% of the annual average dredged volume are classified as potentially contaminated according to the existing criteria. It is recommended that local beneficial use of uncontaminated sediments should be considered and the contaminated mud would principally be disposed at East Sha Chau.

5. The EIA has identified that the release of sediments and associated pollutants during dredging and from the release of polluted water during handling of dredged material would have short term impacts on water quality. Dredging accuracy improvement has been recommended as an effective way to minimise potential impacts.

6. Channelisation would result in the removal of aquatic plants, marginal vegetation and species typical of the riparian zone. This habitat loss would reduce the ecological value of Hong Kong's river channels. It is recommended that maintenance works should be confined to areas which exceed the flood trigger levels only and the duration of works should be minimised. Moreover, unnecessary vegetation clearance and bankside damage should be avoided and *The Deep Bay Guidelines* should be followed when carrying out dredging works in Deep Bay.

EIA Subcommittee's Views and Recommendations

7. Members were concerned about the disposal options and the ecological impacts of the project. They recommended endorsement of the report on the following conditions:

(a) dredging works should be kept to a minimum;

(b) all sediment disposal options should be explored and a separate EIA study should be conducted if the option of disposing mud at Pak Shek Kok Public Dump was to be pursued; and

(c) DDT analysis be included as part of the EM&A programme.

Environmental Impact Assessment on Main Drainage Channels for Fanling, Sheung Shui and Hinterland - Initial Assessment Report (ACE EIA Paper 13/97)

8. The low gradient, large number of meanders and ox-bows of the River Indus Basin limit water flow and drainage, thus making it vulnerable to flooding. The proposed project aims to train River Sutlej, River Indus and River Beas to alleviate the flooding potential in these areas. Measures to decrease the amount of sediments reaching the rivers and those being transported to Deep Bay have also been examined.

9. The purpose of the Initial Assessment Report (IAR) was to invite the Council's endorsement of the gazettal of the project. The Council will be further consulted upon completion of the final EIA prior to the commencement of the project. The IAR has concluded that no insurmountable environmental problem will arise from the project. The

major impacts will be on the loss of habitat. The following mitigation measures have been recommended to alleviate the impacts:

(a) retention of abandoned meanders along the Beas and Indus Rivers, and subsequent management of those sites for recreation and conservation;

(b) River alignment to minimise habitat loss which has been taken on board during the alignment design; and

(c) Concrete lining of the channel banks and bottom should be minimised where possible, to allow for re-establishment of plant life and the ecosystem after the channel is constructed.

EIA Subcommittee's Views and Recommendations

10. Members were concerned about the extent of concrete channelisation and ecological impact associated with the project but had no objection to the gazetting of the project in August, subject to the Council's endorsement. Two members were not satisfied with the extent of concretisation of the channels and the proposed measures to mitigate ecological impacts and objected to its publication in the gazette.

11. The Subcommittee agreed to recommend endorsement of the IAR with the following conditions:

(a) detailed assessment on ecology should be included in the final EIA;

(b) concrete channelisation should be kept to a minimum and alternative strategies should be considered in the final EIA; and

(c) no construction works would commence before the final EIA report was endorsed by the Council.

Advice Sought

12. Members are invited to consider the recommendations of the EIA Subcommittee:

(a) endorsement of the environmental impact assessment report on Territorial Land and Flood Control Strategy Study - Phase III: Sedimentation Study (subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 7);

(b) endorsement of the initial assessment report on Main Drainage Channels for Fanling, Sheung Shui and Hinterland (subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 11).

Planning, Environment and Lands Bureau
July 1997