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(ACE Paper 54/96)
for information

Off-site Environmental Mitigation Measures

Purpose

This paper informs members the government's policy on off-site environmental mitigation measures and the approach to address wetland compensation issues.

Policy on Off-site Environmental Mitigation Measures

2. The policy objective is to ensure that adverse environmental impact caused by a project can be minimized through off-site mitigation measures if all practicable on-site measures have been exhausted. Off-site mitigation measures should be considered along with other alternatives including change of site layout or abandoning the project.

3. The government's policy is as follows:

- (a) as a matter of principle, both on-site and off-site mitigation measures are regarded as an integral part of the EIA system;
- (b) the scope, type and broad order of the cost of any off-site mitigation measures, should be clearly set out in the EIA of a development project;
- (c) the project proponent shall be responsible for funding the necessary measures and for any co-ordination of the implementation aspects of off-site measures;
- (d) the off-site mitigation measures should be within the boundaries of Hong Kong;
- (e) the measures shall be provided on a 'like for like' basis to the extent that this is practicable; and
- (f) the measures shall not require further EIA for their implementation.

4. The policy will apply to both public and private projects. However, the Administration is aware that there may be difficulty in the application of the policy to private development projects as the project proponents may not have any land available to implement off-site mitigation measures. The feasibility and practicality of off-site measures, including land availability, should be addressed during the EIA process.

5. Past experiences have indicated that off-site traffic noise mitigation measures and off-site ecological mitigation measures are the two key areas of concern. Guidelines on the implementation of the former have been promulgated. The guidelines on how off-site ecological measures would be applied are being prepared and will be circulated for Members' information in due course.

Ecological Mitigation Measures for Wetland

6. It is government policy to avoid detrimental impacts on wetland considered as important and to compensate for such areas if they are lost due to essential development projects. Please refer to ACE paper 56/95 (copy attached).

7. One of the main concerns for ecological off-site mitigation measures is the potential loss of wetland in and around Mai Po as a result of a number of major public works projects in Yuen Long and the North districts. In order to address the combined effects of the projects on the wetland and to devise a co-ordinated approach to wetland compensation, a comprehensive study on wetland compensation will be commissioned subject to allocation of resources.

8. The study will make a comprehensive assessment of the implications on wetlands resources resulting from all the projects, recommend practical means of mitigation, identify specific areas where wetland could be restored, enhanced or created to compensate for the detrimental impacts, and develop criteria and guidelines for on or off-site mitigation measures for future application. A paper to seek members' views on the outline of the study will be presented separately.

Planning, Environment and Lands Branch
October 1996



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for information

Government policy on wetland conservation and compensation

Purpose

On 13 November 1995, the EIA subcommittee of ACE considered the EIAs for the Shenzhen River Regulation Project and Route 3 Tai Lam Tunnel Project. Members requested a position paper on Government's policy on wetland conservation and compensation.

Wetland Conservation

2. Government recognizes the ecological importance of wetlands and is committed to the protection of important wetlands in Hong Kong. Mai Po Marshes, for example, was listed as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on 4 September 1995. To establish a comprehensive conservation strategy for the area, a consultancy study will be commissioned in 1996. In addition, studies are on-going to examine the ecological value of fishponds surrounding the Marshes and assess the impact of water pollution in the Deep Bay area on the Marshes. These studies will help guide future land use, planning and conservation of the area.

3. It is Government policy to compensate for areas of conservation value lost to essential development projects. With regard to wetlands, it is our policy to try to avoid detrimental impacts on wetland considered as important. Where that is not feasible or practical, we will look at each case on its merits to determine whether any off-site mitigation measures are necessary, cost effective or practicable. Implementation of any proposed environmental mitigation measures, in line with existing policy governing public expenditure, is subject to approval by the necessary authorities, including the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council.

Planning, Environment and Lands Branch
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