

ACE Nature Conservation Subcommittee
Meeting on 17 November 2010 at 3 pm
At Conference Room, 33/F, Revenue Tower, Wanchai

Minutes of Meeting

Present

- Prof CHAU Kwai-cheong

Members

- Mr Hans Michael JEBSEN, BBS
- Ms HO Siu-fong, Betty
- Mr LAU Che-feng, Edwin, MH
- Mr TSANG Kam-lam
- Dr YAU Wing-kwong

Absent with Apologies

- Prof FUNG Tung
- Dr MAN Chi-sum, JP
- Mr WONG Ka-wo, Simon, JP

In attendance

EPD

- Mr Albert LAM - Deputy Director (2)
- Mr Vincent TANG – Assistant Director (Nature Conservation and Infrastructure Planning)
- Miss Vivien Li – Senior Administrative Officer (Nature Conservation) EPD (Secretary)

AFCD

- Mr CC LAY – Assistant Director (Conservation)
- Mr Simon Chan – Senior Conservation Officer (Biodiversity)

For agenda item 3

- Mr Eric YH WONG – Executive Director (Hong Kong Wetland Park)(Ag)
- Ms. Josephine CY Cheng – Wetland Park Manager (Education and Community Services)

For agenda item 4

- Dr. Winnie PW Kwok – Senior Wetland and Fauna Conservation Officer

For agenda item 5

- Dr Winnie PW KWOK - Senior Wetland & Fauna Conservation Officer
- Mr SHEK Chung-tong - Wetland and Fauna Conservation Officer (Enforcement)

1. The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting. He invited the secretary to introduce to members the paperless meeting system, which was implemented for the first time at the ACE Nature Conservation Subcommittee meeting.

Agenda item 1 -Confirmation of meeting held on 29 April 2010

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2010 was confirmed without any amendment.

Agenda item 2 - No matter arising

3. There was no matter arising from the last meeting.

Agenda item 3 - Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Programme of Hong Kong Wetland Park

4. The Chairman invited Miss Josephine Cheng to brief members on the paper.
5. The Chairman commented that CEPA was a comprehensive program targeting at promoting conservation knowledge to teachers and students, and was therefore an important part of the Ramsar Site Management. He then invited members to offer views on the paper.

6. A member asked if the programme could be extended to benefit students in the urban areas, although the contents of CEPA were more related to the areas in the New Territories. For instance, she asked if there were visitor centres in town, so that students could save the trips to and from the Wetland Park. Mr. Eric Wong informed members that CEPA also had in place an outreach programme. Under the programme, staff from AFCD would visit interested local schools. Moreover, students of AFCD's summer internship programme contributed significantly to the outreach programme, visiting both community centres and elderly centres to spread the nature conservation messages.
7. Upon a member's enquiry, Mr. Eric Wong said that the Wetland Park had an area of 61 hectares, which included an indoor visitor centre. The whole Park and the visitor centre could receive a maximum of 20,000 and 3,000 visitors at any one time respectively. Generally speaking, the Wetland Park had the capacity to serve all those visiting at any one time.
8. Mr. Eric Wong added that the feedbacks of the visitors were also monitored through public surveys that AFCD conducted at the ticket counters and the visitor centre. AFCD could also track the origins of the visitors through these surveys, and for instance, about 10% of the visitors were from outside Hong Kong. In general, public comments received were positive and constructive. Besides, AFCD also kept close contact with WWFHK on training programs for Mainland officials, through which AFCD could also exchange views with the Mainland officials on the management of Wetland Park.
9. Upon a member's enquiry, Miss Josephine Cheng said that the Wetland Park volunteers were mainly responsible for guided tours conducted in Cantonese. AFCD staff was responsible for English and Putonghua tours, which could cater for the need of overseas and Mainland visitors.
10. A member asked AFCD to also consider integrating the educational materials developed for the CEPA programme in the senior secondary education curriculum, in particular in the light of the new academic

structure in place.

11. A member commended CEPA as a very successful program, attracting about 6,000 volunteers. He said that there could be more room for this program to cooperate with other green groups or NGOs. Another member added that expanding the CEPA program could create the opportunity to raise public awareness on civic responsibility, nature conservation, and how better to protect the environment.
12. In conclusion, the Chairman congratulated AFCD for the efforts. He invited AFCD to report to the Subcommittee on the progress of the program every now and then, in particular when there were new initiatives in the program.

Agenda item 4 - Review and Renewal of the Ramsar Site Management Plan

13. The Chairman invited Dr. Winnie Kwok to brief members on the paper.
14. A member declared that he was associated with WWF HK, which also managed wetlands inside the Ramsar Site. The Chairman and the rest of the meeting agreed that the member should stay at the meeting and offer his views.
15. A member opined that “wise use zone” seemed to suggest too flexible a definition. She further opined that the zone might facilitate private developments. Another member shared the view.
16. Mr CC Lay explained that the newly proposed wise use zones were originally (1) biodiversity management zone and (2) public access zone. He advised that in the earlier years, Conservancy Association (CA) had plans to develop agreements with landowners in those zones for conservation management and wetland education purposes. But the plan was not taken forward. Hence the original zonings, which anticipated the materialization of CA’s plan, were no longer appropriate. The proposed “wise use zone” could better reflect the

existing use of those zones. Dr Winnie Kwok explained that AFCD followed the 'Wise Use' concept as defined by the Ramsar Convention and this zoning put emphasis on maintaining the ecological character of the wetland while taking care of the livelihood of local villagers concerned. Mr. CC Lay added that any development in the Ramsar Site was very stringently controlled under the Town Planning Ordinance and needed to go through transparent processes.

17. A member said that it was inevitable to have infringing activities on the wetlands, such as. illegal dumping. He asked how AFCD could rectify these happenings in the light of the Ramsar Convention.
18. Dr. Winnie Kwok explained that AFCD staff carried out regular patrols to monitor illegal activities, e.g. AFCD would take enforcement actions against the erection of illegal bird traps over fish ponds. But she said that illegal dumping at the Ramsar Site was rare. To better conserve the Ramsar Site, AFCD was also exploring the feasibility to carry out Management Agreement projects with fishpond operators as introduced under the New Nature Conservation Policy, with a view to engaging local fishermen to operate in an ecologically friendly manner.
19. Upon a member's enquiry, Dr. Winnie Kwok advised that so far, there was no conclusive view on whether the growth of mangrove would affect the carrying capacity of the intertidal mudflat as a feeding ground for waterbirds. AFCD would further investigate into the issue, and in the meantime continue weeding exercises targeting known invasive mangrove species such as *Sonneratia*.
20. The Chairman asked whether climate change had any effect on the Ramsar Site. Dr. Winnie Kwok advised no evidence showed that there were any drastic changes of the ecological characters of the Ramsar Site, but AFCD would continue the yearly ecological baseline survey to track any changes. Upon the Chairman's further enquiry, Dr. Kwok advised that there were no specific statistics on the carrying capacity of the wetland for migratory birds, but the Ramsar Site should be able to support more migratory water birds.

21. The Chairman invited AFCD to report the progress of implementing the renewed management plan to the Subcommittee from time to time. And next time, AFCD could demonstrate how the predetermined goals were achieved.
22. Mr. CC Lay thanked members for the comments and suggestions, and advised that they would be considered and incorporated as appropriate when AFCD finalized the management plan.

Agenda item 5 - Contraceptive/Neutering Program of Wild Monkeys in Hong Kong

23. The Chairman invited Mr CT Shek to take members through the paper.
24. Upon a member's enquiry, Mr CT Shek advised that to combat the monkey nuisance problem at Hin Keng, Shatin, AFCD arranged a wildlife security guard to stand by from 6.30 am until 6.30 pm every day. The guard would chase the monkeys back to the forest when the monkeys came in sight in Hin Keng.
25. Referring to the video, a member asked whether the trapped monkeys would warn their peers not to enter the big cage, although it was a big monkey restaurant in pretence. Mr. CT Shek advised that the trick would usually work again after two to three days when the monkeys were too greedy to remember the trick.
26. A member asked whether monkeys would become extinct in Hong Kong when AFCD carried on with the neutering operations. Mr. CT Shek said that AFCD would monitor the changes in the monkey population, and will review the scope and scale of the programme annually.
27. In response to a member's enquiry, Mr. CC Lay advised that AFCD's target was to keep the monkey population at a low level. In particular, efforts would focus on reducing the nuisances that monkeys would bring to the Sha Tin residential areas, and hence

Kam San would be a key site for AFCDC to carry out their works. When the situation came under control, AFCDC could re-divert their resources to Sai Kung or Tai Po Kau areas. Mr. CC Lay added that without human intervention, such as feeding, monkeys would naturally be kept at a low level. Indeed, valid monkey feeder licences had decreased from 66 to 11 over the years. The number would keep decreasing as AFCDC no longer issued such licences.

28. The Chairman opined that before a solitary monkey in Tai Po Kau caused nuisances, it would be useful for AFCDC to step in and take more control measures in order to nip the problem in the bud.
29. Upon the Chairman's enquiry, Mr. CT Shek advised that a dose of SpayVac™ cost around CAD\$100. But for neutering treatments, the contractor charged AFCDC a fixed rate for services provided over a certain period of time. For instance, in 2010, around 500 to 600 monkeys were treated by the contractor.

Agenda item 6 - Any Other Business

30. The Chairman announced that the next meeting would be held on 12 April 2011 (Tue) 3.00 pm.
31. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5.00 pm.

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