

**ACE Nature Conservation Subcommittee**  
**Meeting on 26 May 2011 at 3 pm**  
**At Conference Room, 33/F, Revenue Tower, Wanchai**

**Minutes of Meeting**

**Present**

- Prof CHAU Kwai-cheong

**Members**

- Professor FUNG Tung
- Mr Hans Michael JEBSEN, BBS
- Ms HO Siu-fong, Betty
- Dr. MAN Chi-sum
- Ms Yolanda NG
- Dr. Alfred TAM
- Mr TSANG Kam-lam
- Dr YAU Wing-kwong

**Absent with Apologies**

- Mr LAU Che-feng, Edwin, MH
- Mr Simon Wong
- Ms Pansy Yau

**In attendance**

***EPD***

- Mr Albert LAM - Deputy Director (2)
- Mr Elvis AU – 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 KT Chan - Nature Conservation Officer (Tai Po)

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1. The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting, in particular Dr. Alfred Tam and Miss Yolanda Ng who attended the meeting for the first time.

**Agenda item 1 -Confirmation of meeting held on 17 November 2010**

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2010 was confirmed without any amendment.

**Agenda item 2 - Matters arising**

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

**Agenda item 3 - *The Proposed Action Plan for the Conservation of Freshwater Fish in Hong Kong (NCSC 01/2011)***

4. The Chairman invited Mr. KT Chan to brief members on the paper.
5. A member asked how the Government assessed risks imposed on Ecologically Important Streams (EIS), and how the Government protected them against massive development. She quoted Tung Chung Stream as an example, which was an EIS on one hand, and that the Government had plans to expand the Tung Chung area as a new town on the other. Mr. Simon Chan responded that all the environmental impacts arising from the proposed Tung Chung development would be properly identified and addressed in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report. All development nearby would take into account the need to protect the Tung Chung Stream.
6. Upon a member's enquiry, Mr. KT Chan pointed out that the freshwater fish of conservation concern in Hong Kong generally had a viable population. It was envisaged that they might have high genetic diversity. Mr. Chan added that water pollution and habitat destruction were the main threats to freshwater fish of conservation

concern, but with proper EIA done, listing of EIS, and legislation controlling water pollution; threats to the fish and their habitats could be substantially alleviated. Mr. Chan also informed the meeting that Hong Kong's freshwater fish of conservation concern did not have any known medicinal value.

7. Upon a member's enquiry, Mr. KT Chan explained that the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) had information on the habitats and population of freshwater fish along different courses of a stream, and relevant information was available to members of the public. In response to the member's another question, Mr. Simon Chan explained that some streams in lowlands had been channelised by the Drainage Services Department (DSD) for flood control reasons. But DSD was aware of the need to protect the habitats of those streams and put in place ecologically friendly measures, such as planting vegetation along the channels, retaining the natural river beds and providing fish ladders etc to minimize any ecological impacts as a result of the drainage works.
8. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, Mr. Simon Chan informed the meeting that members of the public could report any findings regarding freshwater fish, e.g. pollution or destruction of their habitats, to AFCD for further investigation.
9. A member asked how widespread was different freshwater fish of conservation concern in Hong Kong. Mr. KT Chan explained that most species were found at about 10 localities throughout the territory. A few species, having regard to their biology, would be less widespread. For example, Rose Bitterings depended on a particular species of clams for breeding, and hence their existence relied on the presence of the clam.
10. The member also asked if the rituals of releasing fish into the wild would have impact on the natural freshwater fish species. Mr. KT Chan explained that most of the fish used for releasing into the wild are aquarium species. Many of them could not adapt to the natural environment of Hong Kong and would die eventually. Hence, the impact of these fish to our native species would be limited. Indeed,

in most cases, members of the public released their unwanted pet fish into ponds in urban parks for the sake of convenience. Nonetheless, AFCD always promoted the concept of being a responsible pet owner to the public that pet fish should not be released into the wild so as to avoid affecting the local ecosystem.

11. Mr. Simon Chan confirmed the Chairman's understanding that although some freshwater fish were of conservation concern, the existing legislation did not prohibit the sale of such species. However, Mr. Chan added that since most of these species were found in country parks, the Country Parks Ordinance prohibited the hunting of such species within the country park area.
12. A member asked what the criteria were for listing a stream as EIS. Mr. Simon Chan explained that different factors such as the biodiversity and ecological importance of a stream, e.g. whether the stream had unique freshwater fauna/amphibians, would be considered. The list of EIS would be reviewed from time to time. Currently all of the 37 spots that had conservation value for freshwater fish were either within areas of country parks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest or were EIS.
13. In response to a member's enquiry, Mr. Simon Chan explained that AFCD carried out regular monitoring of EIS, in order to detect illegal development pressure. The monitoring also served the purposes of gathering updated information on the EIS, which could facilitate AFCD to provide conservation advice on various development proposals.
14. A member commented that to raise public awareness on nature conservation including conservation of freshwater fish, it would be necessary to make use of more multi-media tools, as well as online platforms. Mr. KT Chan and Mr. Simon Chan agreed that it would be necessary to gain support from general members of the public. Mr. Simon Chan shared with the meeting that in a joint exhibition held last year with Hong Kong Science Museum, youngsters were particularly enthralled by live specimens of different species, and that before we could secure support on protecting the environment, we

must raise their interest in such matters.

15. The Chairman concluded that:

- (a) Members appreciated AFCD's action plan for protecting freshwater fish;
- (b) Members were concerned about the potential threats to the habitats of these species; and
- (c) It would be necessary to conduct continuous monitoring of these habitats in order to detect possible problems at an early stage.

**Agenda item 4 - *New Nature Conservation Policy: Review of the Management Agreement Scheme (02/2011)***

16. Before the discussion of the item, as the paper touched on issues relating to country parks as well as the Management Agreement (MA) scheme, a member declared that he was a member of the Countryside Foundation. Another member also declared that she was a member of the Country and Marine Parks Board (CMPB), and was associated with the Conservancy Association which ran an MA project at Long Valley. Another member also declared that he was a member of the CMPB and the Countryside Foundation. He was also associated with the Tai Po Environmental Association which ran an MA project at Fung Yuen. Noting the declarations, the meeting agreed that all three members should stay.
17. The Chairman invited Ms Vivien Li to take members through the paper. Mr. Simon Chan supplemented on the operations of the extended MA scheme.
18. Two members expressed support to the proposal to relax the existing requirement on self-sufficiency, because indeed, it would be difficult to achieve self-sufficiency for MA projects, due to the nature of the work involved in these projects.
19. Upon a member's and the Chairman's enquiry, Ms Vivien Li confirmed that there was no limitation on the number of times that an applicant could apply funding from ECF for an MA project to be

carried out at the same place, so long as the ECF Committee considered the project worth supporting.

20. As regards extending the MA scheme to cover country park enclaves, a member opined that it was a good move forward to protect the environment.
21. A member asked the Administration's views on the relatively few MA projects that had been implemented. Mr. Elvis Au opined that MA projects was a new initiative and was taken forward on a trial and error basis. It involved considerable efforts from the non-profit making organisation to liaise with relevant parties including landowners. With the experience gathered in the past five years, we would continue to promote the scheme and disseminate the experience with a view to attracting more projects. Mr. Simon Chan supplemented that the AFCD would hold briefing session for parties interested to run MA projects and attract more applications.
22. Regarding a member's enquiry on whether the Government would consider exchanging lands with owners of lands with ecological value, Mr. Elvis Au said that the existing nature conservation policy was to give financial incentive to landowners to enhance the ecological value of their sites.
23. A member opined that with the increased number of sites to be covered by the MA scheme, more non-profit making organizations that were not green groups might show interest in running MA projects. These organizations would need more advice from the Government on the ecologically friendly measures to be put in place. Mr. Simon Chan assured the meeting that AFCD would render necessary assistance to applicants, and the member added that the existing MA project operators, i.e. Conservancy Association and Tai Po Environmental Association, would be happy to share their experience.
24. A member opined that apart from advice on the ecological aspects, the Government should do more to assist interested applicants to approach the relevant landowners. Mr. CC Lay explained that

subject to the endorsement of the ECF Committee of the MA Extension Scheme, the AFCD would brief non profit making organizations on various matters relating to making an application, including means to approach and motivate landowners. To this end, the experience gathered by the Conservancy Association and Tai Po Environmental Association would be most valuable.

25. Upon the Chairman's enquiry, a member opined that the quality of the MA project would not be compromised with the relaxation of the self-sufficiency requirement. On the contrary, the quality should be improved because the organisation could focus more on the conservation of the site as well as public education, instead of generating income.
26. The Chairman concluded that Members were supportive of the proposals set out in the paper. He urged the Administration to launch the extended MA scheme as soon as possible, and to render assistance to the interested non profit making organizations as appropriate.

#### **Agenda item 5 - Any Other Business**

27. The Chairman informed Members that he received complaints about the cutting of incense trees in Hong Kong. Upon the meeting's agreement, the Chairman invited AFCD to brief members on the situation in Hong Kong.
28. Mr. Simon Chan explained that incense tree was a common and widespread species in Hong Kong. As the secretion of the trees had medicinal values, many illegal immigrants came to cut incense trees to reap financial benefits. In this connection, the AFCD conducted regular patrols at relevant locations in order to better protect the trees. The AFCD had previously made arrests with regard to illegal cutting of incense tree, and had asked the court to raise the penalty in order to reflect the severity of such offences. The highest penalty imposed for similar offence was imprisonment of four years. On the other hand, in order to replenish the damaged and cut trees, the AFCD had planted over 27,000 seedlings of incense trees in country

parks over the past three years.

29. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:55 pm. The date of the next meeting would be announced in due course.

**Secretariat  
Nature Conservation Subcommittee,  
Advisory Council on the Environment  
June 2011**

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