

**Advisory Council on the Environment
Nature Conservation Subcommittee**

**Nature Conservation Management Agreement Project –
Progress of Implementation of the
Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley 2012 - 2015**

Purpose

This paper seeks to update Members on the latest progress of implementation of the Nature Conservation Management Agreement (MA) project “Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley 2012 -2015”.

Background

2. Under the MA Scheme, the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) had approved an allocation of \$9,797,050.64 to the Conservancy Association (CA) in association with the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) for a MA project entitled “Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley 2012 -2015” (the Project) in January 2012.

3. The MA Project in Long Valley and Ho Sheung Heung was first launched in November 2005. The Project was a continuation of previous MA projects with an aim to enhance the conservation value and the biodiversity in the Long Valley and Ho Sheung Heung areas through a partnership programme between CA/HKBWS and local farmers or land owners. The Project includes a series of active habitat and species management programmes on protection of freshwater wetland dependent species, in particular waterbirds and amphibians. The current Project was launched on 1 March 2012.

4. At the ECF Committee Meeting on 4 December 2012, it was recommended that the recipient organization should report the progress of the ongoing MA projects regularly to the Nature Conservation Subcommittee (NCSC) under the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) for better monitoring of MA projects.

5. In this regard, the recipient organisations (i.e. CA and HKBWS) have prepared a progress report at **Annex 1** summarizing their implementation of the

Project during the period from 1 March 2012 till 30 September 2013. The report provides Members with information on the implementation of conservation measures and efforts taken to fulfill the funding requirements, including the latest findings of the biodiversity surveys; problems encountered as well as remedial measures taken to overcome problems and their effectiveness.

6. As a condition for the use of the funding, the recipient organisations are required to submit a progress report with statement of accounts to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Environmental Protection Department every six months. Both departments have examined the progress reports submitted and consider that the Project has been satisfactorily implemented.

Advice Sought

7. Members are invited to give views on the implementation and progress of the Project.

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Environmental Protection Department
December 2013**

Annex I

Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley 2012-2015

Objectives and Goals

- To **enhance long term conservation** of entire Long Valley and Ho Sheung Heung area
- To **conserve** Long Valley and Ho Sheung Heung's landscape and biodiversity, particularly **freshwater wetland dependent avifauna, amphibians and other species**
- To promote and develop Long Valley into an **Eco-agriculture Area** to benefit wildlife and achieve long-term sustainability of the landscape
- To **continue the working partnership with local stakeholders**, particularly landowners, farmers and villagers to conserve their lands and promote eco-agriculture
- Backed up with strong scientific basis. **Specific habitat and biodiversity monitoring and surveys** will be conducted to provide up-to-date ecological information to continuously fine tune project and formulate long-term strategies
- **Education elements will be strengthened** and an education center will be set up to provide more opportunities for the public to enjoy and learn in Long Valley

Habitat Conservation Management

Seven types of habitat with 157,810 m² of area were managed under the MA project.

Habitat Types	Proposed Area (m²)	Managed Area (m²)	Completion rate
Shallow Water Habitat	28,558	36,281	127%
Less Intensive Wet Agricultural Land	23,690	34,303	145%
Intensive Wet Agricultural Land	32,107	38,264	119%
Water Flea Ponds	5,946	2,500	42%
Fish and Marsh Ponds	17,512	12,462	71%
Fallow Agricultural Lands	12,077	87,00	72%
Total managed farming area =	119,890	132,510	110%
Fung Shui Wood	34,000	34,000	100%
Total managed area =	153,890	157,810	103%

Biodiversity Conservation Management

Bird Monitoring Programme

During the reporting period, 10 new species were recorded in Long Valley: Mandarin Duck 鴛鴦, Eurasian Curlew 白腰杓鷸, Terek Sandpiper 翹嘴鷸, Speckled Piculet 姬

斑啄木鳥, Red-backed Shrike紅背伯勞, Greater Short-toed Lark大短趾百靈, Verditer Flycatcher銅藍鶇, Hainan Blue Flycatcher海南藍仙鶇, Eurasian Siskin黃雀, Pallas's Reed Bunting葦鶇. The total no. of species recorded in Long Valley has increased to 295.

The yearly average no. of birds recorded during 2006-2012 has increased 68% while the yearly no. of species recorded has increased 38%.

Breeding Bird Monitoring

A total of 34 bird species have been found utilizing Long Valley and Ho Sheung Heung area as breeding ground or young raising ground since 2011, including egrets, Slaty-breasted Rail, White-breasted Waterhen, Greater Painted-snipe, kingfishers, and prinias. Little Grebe, Chinese Pond Heron, Slaty-breasted Rail, Plaintive Cuckoo and White-rumped Munia were recorded in 2012 for the first time. Greater Painted-snipe breeding pairs are more difficult to be found because the breeding habitat is inconspicuous. The breeding records were relied on farmers' report.

Amphibian Breeding Monitoring

The result showed that marshy habitat, less intensive wet agricultural land and shallow water habitat had the highest species richness. Marsh pond #223 yielded high species richness that summed up to 8 species. Water flea ponds had consistent records of species of conservation concern – Chinese Bullfrog. Concrete ponds provide good condition for diverse species of breeding amphibians. The invasive Apple Snail and Red Imported Fire Ants were identified as a threat to amphibian community. Exotic frog species *Eleutherodactylus planirostris* (Greenhouse frog) was found in Long Valley since 2011. Their population is expanding and become quite common in Long Valley.

Sustainable Eco-agriculture

In order to promote eco-agriculture and the wetland conservation work in Long Valley as well as to maintain sustainability of the project, different kinds of farm produces were produced under the MA project: Long Valley eco-rice, Green Mooncake and Water Chestnut pudding. The Eco-produces were promoted in farmers' market and Farmfest 2013, which altogether served about 15,930 visitors.

Public Engagement, Education and Publicity

Various kinds of activities were organized to attract participants with different backgrounds. In addition, we have established connections and good relationship with some schools and organizations such as Education Bureau, Geography and Resources

Management Department of CUHK, HKU Kadoorie Institute, CityU, Lingnan University, IVE, HKPTU, HKCSS, Hong Chi Association, Yan Oi Tong, Voltra etc.

Category	Events	Target no.	Total no.	Completion
Sustainable agriculture	Farmers' market and Farmfest 2013	1,500	15,930	1062%
Eco-tourism	Eco-guides training	70	19	27%
	Night Safari workshops	360	277	77%
	Paddy rice workshops	-	232	-
	Harvest Fest	1,200	878	73%
	Long Valley Olympic Game	-	52	-
Wetland conservation/eco-farming education workshop or competitions	School educational workshops and seminars	1,020	45	4%
	School exhibitions	4,000	4,200	105%
	Education Centre	3,000	0	0%
Voluntary conservation activities	Conservation and farming volunteering	180	324	180%
	International workcamps	-	21	-
Publicity events	Public exhibitions	18,000	7,500	42%
	The Big Bunting	-	1393 hits	-
	Eco-tours	600	5	1%
	Total number of participants	29,930	51,983	174%
	Total online hits		1,393 hits	
	Estimated visitors number		50,000	

Difficulties Encountered

During the project period, we have encountered problems and difficulties which made conservation works difficult to implement. Invasive species and visitor disturbance directly affected the effectiveness of conservation measures. We have organized invasive species removal activities to tackle the first problem. For the second one, we have made announcement in the internet pleading the visitors not to disturb wildlife and behave well when watching/photographing birds and wildlife. Also, we tried to organize more education activities so that the public can learn positive and correct attitude towards nature appreciation. However, various problems, which are still awaiting the solutions, were derived from the Government's North East New Territories New Development Area proposal: termination of engagement by farmers, increase in farmland rent, farmlands withdrawal by landowners, disturbance by landowners etc. It is predicted that more cases of the above problems will happen in the rest of the project period.