



21 January 2009

WWF Supports Banning of Commercial Fishing in Marine Parks

WWF welcomes the Government's decision to ban commercial fishing in marine parks, which currently account for only 2% of all Hong Kong waters.

WWF launched a signature campaign in March 2008 to enlist public support for our Save our Seas movement, including the halting of commercial fishing in marine parks. Over a two month period, 59,000 people signed the petition online and offline to show their support, making it the biggest ever environmental petition in Hong Kong.

Banning commercial fishing in the existing four marine parks will mark an historic moment for marine life conservation, and the rebuilding of fisheries in Hong Kong. According to studies from WWF and the Government, within five years we should see noticeable increases in the amount of fish inside the parks, and the start of greater catches outside.

A recent study¹ commissioned by WWF found that an overwhelming majority (over 80%) of people in Hong Kong agree that protection for threatened marine life and habitats in Hong Kong is insufficient. Almost all respondents agreed that the marine parks should be designated as "no-take" protected areas for marine creatures to grow and reproduce. The petition was presented to Government in June 2008.

- 90% agree that more effort should be made to protect threatened marine life and habitats in Hong Kong
- 95% found it reasonable to establish no-take zones for providing sanctuaries to marine life.
- 87% believe all marine parks in Hong Kong should be made no-fishing protected areas
- On average respondents thought that a hefty 47% of Hong Kong waters should be no-take zones.

WWF understands that the proposed measure will affect the livelihood of some commercial fishers who currently fish inside marine parks waters. Since Hong



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Kong's marine parks make up only a tiny fraction of local waters and were established in 1996 for the purpose of protecting marine life, we hope the industry will realise that an increase of fish stocks inside the marine parks will eventually benefit waters around them, following similar successful cases in other countries. The establishment of marine protected areas has been proven as a necessary and important measure to prevent a vicious circle of – No Fish, No Fishers, let alone the fact that the natural assets under our seas belong to all Hong Kong citizens and their future generations.

With our expertise and experience in developing alternative livelihoods for local communities, and, as a global conservation organisation WWF is willing to work closely with the Government and various stakeholder groups in Hong Kong to develop strategies and help them shift to more sustainable practices. It is our understanding that the Government and some community groups have been looking into other options including eco-tourism and education opportunities.

¹TNS & WWF (2008). Awareness of Marine Conservation: Survey of public opinion towards marine environment protection (1,003 people interviewed).