

From: Sharon Kwok Pong  
Mission Blue

I'm here today because I've been troubled by local habitat loss for sea turtles. Shum Wan at Lamma Island, also known as Turtle Cove, is one of the few remaining nesting sites for sea turtles in Southern China. The site is essential to the survival of this highly endangered species in both local and regional contexts.

Today, sea turtle deaths are mainly attributed to 3 things; garbage consumption resulting in impaction and septicaemia, death from drift net entanglement, and collusion from impact with motorised vessels. (Exhibit A, dead turtle with cracked shell) This aerial photo of Shum Wan was taken by the Hong Kong Police yesterday morning during our Turtle Cove Cleanup. (Exhibit B) As you can see, the area is full of pleasure crafts and some are enjoying great speed. In fact, at the time, divers were right under the vessel shown here and last week a turtle was seen at this exact spot. These areas need further restrictions and heavier policing. Qualified community wardens could be a good source of added man power.

The organisation I speak for today is Mission Blue. Our international conservation campaign helps recognise, empower, and support ecologically unique areas of ocean designated for global protection. At the moment, the largest Hope Spot is the Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Monument in Hawaii at 582,578 square miles and there are 92 Hope Spots in the world. These areas are not a luxury because resilience to climate change is dependent upon having significant areas of natural protection, for biodiversity and for all the things that hold the planet steady. This is vitally important to protect life as we know it, including ourselves.

Mission Blue fully supports AFCD's intention to increase restrictions of Shum Wan in order to protect a small but vital area of Hong Kong as a safe haven for marine species, especially sea turtles. I have personally nominated Shum Wan as a Hope Spot and if accepted, it will become the first in China. Let this be an area of hope to preserve Hong Kong's unique biodiversity for future generations.

