

Project 03/2006 – A critical problem in sustainable conservation of mangroves in Hong Kong: Barnacle fouling on survival and growth of mangrove plants

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' advice on funding the captioned application for ECF submitted by The City University of Hong Kong.

Background

2. The funding requested by this project is \$510,566 for the staff cost of employing one Research Assistant for 24 months (\$350,826) and one student helper (\$39,140), the traveling expenses for field trips (\$9,600), consumables and chemicals (\$60,000), setting up of greenhouse (\$40,000), airfare for the co-investigator to visit Hong Kong (\$6,000) and other miscellaneous expenses (\$5,000). The project is expected to last for 27 months.

3. The present proposed study attempts to understand the effects of barnacle fouling on the survival and growth of mangrove plants, in particular at the seedling stage, identify the problem in different mangrove stands in Hong Kong, and provide solutions to control the fouling through field studies and a series of greenhouse experiments. The study aims to enhance the success of mangrove planting and establishment in Hong Kong. Results from this study will be essential for a better management and conservation of mangroves.

4. The Agricultural, Fisheries & Conservation Department (AFCD) and two external expert assessors have reviewed the proposal. The AFCD considers the project would provide information for better understanding of the mangrove ecosystem and barnacle fouling of mangroves in Hong Kong. However, the deliverables of the project are unlikely to carry sufficient practical values to avoid/control barnacle fouling of mangroves in Hong Kong.

5. Assessor 1 supports the proposal as the information obtained can serve as a good basis for controlling biofouling on mangrove seedlings which is important to mangrove management. He opines that large part of the proposed research can be considered as a fundamental research and may be considered for funding by Research Grant Council (RGC). Assessor 2 also points out that the

proposal should be supported by RGC. He states that as the main outcome of this work will be an understanding of the potential effect of barnacle infestation on mangrove growth and its implications for managing planting attempts. The proposal could make an interesting research study on species interaction in a stressful environment but the need for this research in terms of conservation and protection of mangroves is doubtful.

6. Regarding the budget of project, the “Guide to Application for the Fund” stipulates that overseas participants in a local function are normally expected to pay for their own traveling and living expenses. The principal investigator has included in the proposed budget a sum of \$6,000 being the airfare for the co-investigator to travel to Hong Kong for two times during the project period.

Advice sought

7. Members are invited to advise whether the application for ECF should be supported as detailed in paragraphs 2 to 3 above and if supported, the exact amount of fund to be recommended to the ECF Committee for approval.

**Secretariat, ECF Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee
August 2006**