

**Confirmed Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the
Environment and Conservation Fund Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee
held on 9 December 2005 at 2:30 p.m.**

Present

Mr. Joseph Lee, BBS, JP	(Chairman)
Prof. Chan Chi-ming	
Prof. Chan Chak-keung	
Prof. Chu Lee-man	
Dr. Richard Cheung	
Mr. Richard W Lee	
Ms Emba Leung WM	
Dr. John Leung Kon-chong	
Mr. Frankie Yick Chi-ming	
Mr. Eric Chan	EPD
Mr. Richard Chan	AFCDD
Mr. Lawrence Cheung	EPD
Miss Christina Chong	EPD (Secretary)
Ms Winifred Chan	EPD (Assistant Secretary)

Absent with Apologies

Ms Lau Ka-shi
Mr. Man Mo-leung
Ms Edith Ngan Man-ling
Prof. Jonathan Wong

In attendance for Agenda Item 3

Mr. Joseph Chan EMSD

Welcoming Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all Members to the fifth meeting of the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee (RPVSC).

Agenda Item 1 : Confirmation of the Minutes of the Last Meeting

2. The draft minutes of the last meeting held on 7 September 2005 were confirmed without any amendment.

Agenda Item 2 : Matters Arising

Proposed variations to details of ECF funded projects

[ECF Paper 21/2005]

3. Ms Winifred Chan reported to the meeting that the Principal Investigator (PI) of the ECF Project 12/2003 namely “Conservation of Horseshoe Crabs in Hong Kong” proposed to defer the project completion date from 31 December 2005 to 30 June 2006. No additional fund would be required for the extended project period. The PI explained that the survey work had been limited by the suitable days of low tide and weather conditions for carrying out the extensive surveys of the juvenile horseshoe crab populations. After visiting the PI’s laboratory and discussion with the PI on the work of the project in September 2005, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) considered PI’s explanation for extending the project period reasonable. Details of the proposed extension were set out in ECF Paper 21/2005. Members discussed and agreed to the proposed extension of project duration.

Para. 6-7 ECF Project 23/2004

4. Ms Winifred Chan reported that upon recommendation by the RPVSC, the proposal was discussed and approved by Members of the ECF Committee on 6.10.2005 with a grant of \$351,000. The Woo Wheelock Green Fund also agreed to support the project on an equal-share basis with the ECF. The project commenced on 15 November 2005.

Para. 17

5. Ms Winifred Chan reported that upon Members' suggestion, the Secretariat had written to the Secretariat of Research Grants Committee (RGC) to explore the possibility of their providing contact information about their international assessors. The Secretariat of RGC had declined our request due to the legal requirements under the Personal Data (Protection) Ordinance. Miss Christina Chong supplemented that in processing new applications, EPD and other relevant departments would provide nominations for international assessors for applications over \$150,000. As proposed by Prof Chan Chi-ming and supported by other members, the Chairman agreed that the Secretariat could also request the PIs to nominate assessors to enable to build up ECF's own database. The meeting also agreed that the Secretariat should approach ECF members and individual universities to invite nominations for international assessors as and when necessary.

Agenda Item 3 : New Application

ECF Project 2/2005 Research Priorities for Reducing Particulate Pollution in Hong Kong

[ECF Paper 22/2005]

6. Prof Chan Chi-ming declared interests in this application and the ECF Project 6/2005 as he was from the same university. Prof Chan Chak-keung was the PI of the ECF Project 2/2005 and he also declared interests in the ECF Project 6/2005 as he was also from the same university. They left the meeting.

7. Miss Christina Chong briefed Members on the project proposal and the assessments given by the EPD and two external expert assessors as summarized in ECF Paper 22/2005. The objective of the proposal was to conduct a comprehensive literature review of research publications on the state of particulate pollution research in Hong Kong. The funding requested by this project was \$635,850.00 and the project was expected to last for 15 months. EPD supported the proposal. External Assessor 1 considered that the potential outcome of the project was unclear. External Assessor 2 considered that conducting a literature

survey would help the scientific community as a whole but would not lead to a better understanding of air quality problem and control strategies in the Pearl River Delta region. A representative of the project team then joined the meeting to answer questions in relation to the proposal.

8. Note

9. Note

10. After discussion, the Chairman concluded that the proposal should not be supported.

ECF Project 6/2005 Environmentally-Friendly Nanosorbents for Recovery of Precious Metals from Waste Effluents

[ECF Paper 23/2005]

11. Miss Christina Chong briefed Members on the project proposal and the assessments given by the EPD as summarized in ECF Paper 23/2005. The main objective of the study was to establish a method for separation and recovery of precious metals from wastewater generated from electroplating and electronic industries. The goal was to create selective nanosorbents via modification of mesoporous silica. The funding requested by this project was \$149,250.00 and the project was expected to last for 10 months. EPD supported the proposal. A representative of the project team then joined the meeting to answer questions in relation to the proposal.

12. Note

13. Note

14. After discussion, the Chairman concluded that the proposal was worthy of support.

ECF Project 7/2005 Study upon the Vegetation Effects and Potential Economic Habitat Management Benefits of Introducing Asian Water Buffalo *Bubalus bubalis* into the Freshwater Ponds at Mai Po Nature Reserve

[ECF Paper 26/2005]

15. Prof Chan Chi-ming and Prof Chan Chak-keung re-joined the meeting at this juncture.

16. Miss Christina Chong briefed Members on the project proposal and the assessments given by the AFCD as summarized in ECF Paper 26/2005. The main objective of the study was to investigate the impact of buffalo grazing upon the composition and structure of freshwater pond bankside and internal vegetation; and the impact of buffalo grazing upon avifauna. The PI undertook to compare the cost effectiveness of habitat management between buffalo and human methods. The funding requested by this project was \$149,864.00 and the project was expected to last for 18 months. AFCD supported the proposal. A representative of the project team then joined the meeting to answer questions in relation to the proposal.

17. Note

18. Note

19. After discussion, the Chairman concluded that the proposal was worthy of support and the PI should be invited to provide some suggestions on the long-term management of water buffaloes in Kam Tin.

ECF Project 4/2005 Capacity building - identifying the missing links: developing the Model for future community-operated renewable energy (BIPV) projects

[ECF Paper 24/2005]

20. The Chairman declared interests in this application as the PI came from the same university of which he was a member of the Court. Dr. John Leung

also declared interests in this application. Mr. Eric Chan chaired this part of the meeting. Mr. Joseph Chan of EMSD also attended the meeting at this juncture.

21. Miss Christina Chong briefed Members on the project proposal and the assessments given by the EMSD and two external expert assessors as summarized in ECF Paper 24/2005. The main objective of the study was to identify the areas of capacity building to ensure the successful take-up (operation) by the community of renewable energy applications in order to create the model for future projects; to monitor the longer-term performance of the grid-connected BIPV systems focusing on maintenance issues and components' performance; and to design an appropriate low-cost BIPV monitoring system for general applications. The funding requested by this project was \$732,000.00 and the project was expected to last for 24 months. EMSD and the two external expert assessors supported the proposal. A representative of the project team then joined the meeting to answer questions in relation to the proposal.

22. Note

23. Note

24. After further discussion, Members concluded that the proposal was worthy of support in terms of its educational value but part of the study on long-term maintenance issues and components' performance should not be supported as these information should be provided by the manufacturers of the BIPV systems. The Secretariat would ask the PI to revise the proposal before inviting Members to further discuss the proposal.

25. Mr. Joseph Chan left the meeting after the discussion.

ECF Project 3/2005 Species identification, ecology and biological control of apple snails in Hong Kong

[ECF Paper 25/2005]

26. The Chairman declared interests in this application as the PI came from the same university of which he was a member the Court. Mr. Eric Chan

chaired this part of the meeting.

27. Miss Christina Chong briefed Members on the project proposal and the assessments given by the AFCD and two external expert assessors as summarized in ECF Paper 25/2005. The main objective of the study was to conduct an up-to-date and comprehensive survey of apple snails to determine the number of species present in Hong Kong, their distribution and environmental characteristics. The funding requested by this project was \$434,280.00 and the project was expected to last for 24 months. AFCD and the two external expert assessors supported the proposal. A representative of the project team then joined the meeting to answer questions in relation to the proposal.

28. Note

29. After further discussion, Members concluded that the proposal was worthy of support in principle but the PI should further clarify on the proposed budget of \$8,000 for “Conference”. The Secretariat would ask the PI to further elaborate this expenditure item before inviting Members to confirm their support to the proposal and the exact amount of fund to be supported by circulation.

Agenda Item 5 : Any Other Business

30. Miss Christina CHONG informed that the ECF Paper 27/2005 was tabled for Members’ consideration. Prof David Randall of the City University of Hong Kong, the PI of the ECF Project 6/2004 “Ecological and Physiological Response of Hong Kong Coral Communities to Changing Temperature and Oxygen Level”, had informed the Secretariat that he would leave Hong Kong next year upon his retirement from the University on 31.1.2006. Dr. Paul Shin of the City University of Hong Kong had agreed to take up the role of the PI for the concerned ECF Project. Members discussed the progress of the ECF Project 6/2004 and subsequently approved the proposed change of PI. The meeting also remarked that in processing future applications, the PI should be asked to confirm that he would oversee the project during the whole project period.

Agenda Item 6 : Date of Next Meeting

31. The RPVSC was scheduled to meet bi-monthly and the Secretariat would inform Members of the date of the next meeting in due course.

32. The meeting adjourned at 5:15 pm.

Secretariat, ECF Research Projects Vetting Sub-committee

January 2006

Note: The paragraph will not be included in the version of notes to be uploaded to the webpage of ECFC according to the standing practice of not disclosing the detailed reasons for supporting or rejecting an application. The ECFC webpage contains a general disclaimer that “Reasons for supporting/rejecting an application had been made known to the project proponents concerned, and the public could ask the project proponents direct for such information.”