

**Confirmed Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the
Environment and Conservation Fund Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee
held on 7 December 2007 at 9:30 a.m.**

Present

Mr. Joseph Lee, BBS, JP	(Chairman)
Prof Chan Chak-keung	
Prof Jonathan Wong Woon-chung	
Prof Chau Kwai-cheong	
Dr. Kenneth Leung Mei -yee	
Dr. Alain Lam Kwok-lun	EPD
Mr. Richard Chan Ping-kwong	AFCD
Mr. Lawrence Cheung Shing-hsi	EPD
Ms Winifred Chan Suk-ha	EPD (Assistant Secretary)

In-attendance

Mr. Francis Wong Hon Wai	EPD
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Absent with Apologies

Mr. Man Mo-leung	
Ms Emba Leung Wun-man	
Ms Sandy Cheung Pui-shan	EPD

Welcoming Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all Members to the fourth 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 17.9.2007 were confirmed subject to the following amendments:

In paragraph 27, the 10th line, the words "practical need" to be replaced by "practicality"; and in the 11th line, the word "recommendations" to be replaced by "results". In paragraph 28, the 3rd line, the words "such as" to be replaced by "including".

Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising

Para. 4 ECF Project 4/2002 a terminated project

3. Ms Winifred Chan reported that the Secretariat eventually met Mr. Suen Kai-yuen, the principal investigator (PI), on 25.10.2007. Mr. Suen subsequently provided a pile of receipts as documentary proof for the expenditure involved during the later half of the project period. There was however over-expenditure in individual items.

4. Members generally agreed that as the project was completed unsatisfactorily and the project had been terminated before the PI provided the receipts, no further disbursement would be arranged to the recipient organization. Moreover, the audited statement of account was still outstanding. After some deliberation, Dr. Alain Lam proposed and members agreed that the Secretariat would further liaise with the recipient organization for the outstanding audited statement of account for the project. (Post-meeting note: The Secretariat discussed with Mr. Suen again on 20.12.2007 and obtained an audited statement of account afterwards.)

Para. 37 ECF Project 04/2007 Stock and ecological status of Echinoderms in Hong Kong: Evaluation of effectiveness of marine protected areas using sea urchins as model organisms

5. Ms Winifred Chan reported that subsequent to the support recommended by the RPVSC to the project proposal, the ECF Committee endorsed the RPVSC's recommendations and approved the proposal partially with a grant of \$392,620.00 at the meeting held on 8.11.2007.

Proposed variations to details of ECF funded project

[ECF Paper 30/2007-08]

6. Ms Winifred Chan reported that the PI of the ECF Project 9/2005 namely "Development of a novel and low-cost membrane bioreactor (MBR) for treating Hong Kong village sewage" requested to extend the project period by 6 months, i.e. from 14.1.2008 to 14.7.2008. The PI explained that due to various reasons such as site safety concerns and site constraints for installation and operation of the plant, it was difficult for the PI to locate a suitable site outside the campus of HKUST within a short period of time and limited resources. Additional time was also required for obtaining approval from the university, site testing and explanation to the contractors. No additional fund would be required from ECF.

7. Members noted that the project period would be extended and concerned with the proposed changes of installing the plant from a local village setting to a site within the campus of HKUST. The potential low temperature during the winter period would have impacts on the performance of the MBR plants during Phases II and III of the projects. Furthermore, the MBR plant was switched and redesigned to handle wastewater generated from a student hall located at HKUST, there might be differences between daily design flow rates for modern village housing and student residential area and thus implications on the performance of the MBR plants. The PI should therefore study effect of the differences in flow patterns between the two land usages on the performance of the MBR plant.

Para. 12 ECF Project 11/2006 Ecological sustainability of vegetated soil-nailed cutslopes

8. Ms Winifred Chan reported that in responses to Members' comments and requirement of no duplication with CEDD's work, the PI of the project had revised the proposal and discussion with CEDD on further refinement of the proposal was in progress. The revised proposal might be discussed at the next meeting.

Para. 21 ECF Project 03/2007 Development of a web-based tool for teaching and learning of road traffic noise pollution in primary school, with research on its

value and effectiveness on environmental education

[ECF Paper 31/2007-08]

9. Ms Winifred Chan reported that in response to Members' comments, the PI proposed to include an evaluation on an education model for environmental education. The project title has also been revised to reflect the changes, whereas the project period and budget remained unchanged.

10. Note

11. After further discussion, the Chairman concluded that the PI should consider to further revise the proposal or to consider other funding source for educational projects. (Post-Meeting note: The PI subsequently withdrew the project application.)

Para. 25 ECF Project 06/2007 Investigation on the feasibility and enhancement methods of wind power utilization in high-rise buildings of Hong Kong

[ECF Paper 32/2007-08]

12. Ms Winifred Chan reported that in response to Members' comments, the PI chose the Lee Shau Kee Building of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University as the reference building. The building is close to the weather data station of the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) in Tsim Sha Tsui. The weather data including wind velocity, wind direction and air temperature from HKO would be chosen as the initial input data in the simulation of the built environment. The Secretariat reminded that funding for overhead administrative costs incurred by the applicant organization in undertaking the project would not normally be given. Accordingly, the proposed overhead administrative cost of \$19,500 should not be supported.

13. Note

14. After further discussion, the meeting concluded that the proposal should be supported with a grant of \$130,000 without funding on overhead administrative cost and the PI should undertake to conduct a public lecture to publicise her study result.

Agenda Item 3: New Applications

ECF Project 02/2007 Easy identification of dinoflagellates: Phase I ó Rapid Identification of Dinoflagellates With Protein/peptide Mass Fingerprints Obtained Using MALDI-TOF Mass spectrometry

[ECF Paper 33/2007-08]

15. Ms Winifred Chan briefed Members on the proposal and the assessments given by the AFCD, EPD and two external assessors as summarized in Paper 33/2007-08. The objective of the proposal was to develop a fast identification method using peptide fingerprints obtained with matrix-assisted-laser-desorption-ionisation mass spectrometry. It would assist to develop an early warning system of the occurrence of harmful algal blooms. The total budget of the project was \$397,500 and the project was expected to last for 18 months. Both AFCD and EPD supported the project and considered the project deliverables practical. If successful, it could provide a fast (within few hours) identification method of phytoplanktons. It would be valuable in assisting stake-holders, in particular the mariculturist, to identify toxic red tide causing species and appropriate actions such as relocation of mariculture rafts could be taken to reduce possible economic loss and associated environmental impacts. For external assessment, external Assessor 1 considered it a strong research proposal and the results may be ultimately used by government agencies. Assessor 2 considered the project basically methodology development and thus should be funded by the Competitive Earmarked Research Grant (CERG).

16. Note

17. Note

18. After discussion, the Chairman concluded that the proposal should be further revised to avoid any duplication of work that had been carried out in previous studies. The revised proposal would be circulated to Members for formal approval.

ECF Project 05/2007 On the Public's willingness-to-pay for improved acoustics of

residential environments

[ECF Paper 34/2007-08]

19. Ms Winifred Chan briefed Members on the proposal and the assessments given by EPD and two external assessors as summarized in Paper 34/2007-08. The objectives of the proposal were to explore the awareness of the Hong Kong general public on their surrounding acoustical environment and to understand whether they are willing to pay for any improvement of the acoustical environment. An extensive noise survey combined with a specially designed willing-to-pay survey with a special focus to the Hong Kong need will be carried out. The total budget of the project was \$622,920 and the project was expected to last for 18 months. EPD supported the project as the findings would be useful in gauging the public's willingness-to-pay (WTP) for reducing noise annoyance or environmental noise in the Hong Kong's context. Both external assessors agreed that the proposal would arouse public's awareness on the issue of noise and the public's tolerance to noise levels at their residential environments. Both assessors also pointed out that the budget for the head-and-torso was not essential to the survey

20. ^{Note}

21. After further discussion, the Chairman concluded that the proposal should be supported partially with a grant of \$401,920 without funding for the Head-and-torso. The recommendation would be forwarded to the ECF Committee for formal endorsement.

Agenda Item 4: Any Other Business

22. Ms Winifred Chan reported that the PI of the ECF Project 25/2004 entitled "Atmospheric Deposition of Mercury in Hong Kong" had left the university during summer without notifying the Secretariat nor informing of any replacement arrangement for the PI to continue the project. The Secretariat recently liaised with the University Research Services and understood that no other academic staff of the department would take up the relevant project. The University Research Services agreed to provide the latest financial report for the project and liaise with

the PI to see if she would agree to complete the completion report of the project as a formal record to close the project. The approved funding for the project was \$149,372 and a sum of \$74,686 had been issued as initial payment in January 2006. No further payment has been arranged since then. The project commenced on 1.2.2006 and the original schedule of completion date was 31.1.2008.

23. Prof. Jonathan Wong said that as far as the PI had completed progress reports for the project, there was no reason to ask for reimbursement of those initial payment. He added that similar principle was adopted by ITF. The Chairman advised the Secretariat to search for information from other funding secretariats on processing incomplete cases for further discussion at the next meeting.

Agenda Item 5: Date of Next Meeting

24. The Secretariat would inform Members of the date of the next meeting in due course.

25. The meeting adjourned at 12:20 pm.

Secretariat, ECF Research Projects Vetting Sub-committee January 2008

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."