

**Confirmed Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the
Environment and Conservation Fund Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee
held on 25 February 2008 at 2:30 p.m.**

Present

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|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mr. Joseph Lee, BBS, JP | (Chairman) |
| Mr. Man Mo-leung | |
| Prof Jonathan Wong Woon-chung | |
| Prof Chau Kwai-cheong | |
| Dr. Kenneth Leung Mei -yee | |
| Dr. Alain Lam Kwok-lun | EPD |
| Mr. Francis Wong Hon-wai | EPD (Secretary) |
| Mr. Richard Chan Ping-kwong | AFCDD |
| Mr. Lawrence Cheung Shing-hsi | EPD |
| Ms Winifred Chan Suk-ha | EPD (Assistant Secretary) |

Absent with Apologies

Prof Chan Chak-keung
Ms Emba Leung Wun-man

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 7.12.2007 were confirmed without amendments.

Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising

Para. 4 ECF Project 04/2002 – a terminated project

3. Ms Winifred Chan reported that the Secretariat eventually obtained an audited statement of account for the project from Mr. Suen Kai-yuen, the principal investigator (PI). Mr. Suen requested if his name and the Wildlife Conservation Foundation Limited could be removed from the blacklist.

4. In view that the project had been terminated before the PI provided all the required documents, Members opined that the PI should write to confirm no further counter-claim would be made against the ECF. After some deliberations, Members agreed that the names of the PI and his company would be removed from the blacklist after 6 months starting from the current date.

Para. 18 ECF Project 02/2007 Easy identification of dinoflagellates: Phase I – Rapid identification of dinoflagellates with protein/peptide mass fingerprints obtained using MALDI-TOF mass spectrometry

5. Ms Winifred Chan reported that subsequent to the circulation of the revised project proposal, the ECF Project 02/2007 was supported by a majority of the members of RPVSC with a grant of \$384,000. The recommendation would be forwarded to the ECF Committee for formal endorsement.

Para. 22-23 ECF Project 25/2004 Atmospheric Deposition of Mercury in Hong Kong

6. Ms Winifred Chan reported that the University Research Services of HKU had assisted to liaise with the PI to submit the completion report. According to the University Finance Office, the total expenditure involved for the project up to 29.1.2008 was \$94,865.62 which exceeded the initial payment of \$74,686 by \$20,179.62. The Secretariat had consulted RGC and understood that reimbursement of funds would be arranged for expenses involved up to the date when the PI left the institute. As Dr. Aydin left the university on 7.8.2007, the University Finance Office would clarify the expenses up to 7.8.2007 and send the financial report to the Secretariat as soon as possible.

7. After further discussion, Members decided to terminate the project and no further disbursement of fund would be arranged. Dr. Aydin would be blacklisted from applying for ECF.

Proposed variations to details of ECF funded project

[ECF Paper 42/2007-08]

8. Ms Winifred Chan reported that the PI of the ECF Project 03/2005 namely “Species identification ecology and biological control of apple snails in Hong Kong” requested to transfer \$20,000 from unspent balance on manpower cost to cover over-budget of the general expenses because the costs for conducting experiments had increased. The PI explained that upon change of the biocontrol agents from ducks to indigenous fish, the costs for experiments had increased. Field experiments were conducted in a pond at the Hong Kong Wetland Park and it involved high transportation fee (between Hong Kong Wetland Park and HKBU) and expensive experimental cages. Other general expenses included purchasing of fish, fish tanks and filters for laboratory determination of suitable fish species. The PI thus requested to transfer a sum of \$20,000 of unspent balance from the budget item of “Manpower” to cover the over-expenditure on “general and miscellaneous”. No additional fund would be required from ECF.

9. Ms Winifred Chan continued that, FoE, the PI of the ECF Project 13/2006 namely “Sustainable Energy: Survey on electricity consumption habits and energy saving perception of Hong Kong residential users”, requested to defer the project completion date from 12.2.2008 to 12.3.2008. The subcontractor for the survey work, the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, had delayed submission of the draft survey report to FoE which had to defer the overall project schedule. No additional fund was requested.

10. Members discussed and approved the variation of budget items for ECF Project 03/2005 and extension of project period for the Project 13/2006.

ECF Project 11/2006 Ecological sustainability of vegetated steep soil cut slopes

[ECF Paper 43/2007-08]

11. Prof Chau Kwai-cheong declared interest and left the meeting room.
12. Ms Winifred Chan reported that in response to Members' comments and requirement of no duplication with CEDD's work, the PI of the project had revised the study scope and project period of the proposal. The proposed project period would be extended from 24 to 30 months. The PI would absorb the additional manpower resources for the project period. CEDD had no further comment on the aspect of duplication of work.
13. Members discussed and agreed to support the revised proposal with a grant of \$788,600. The recommendation would be forwarded to the ECF Committee for formal endorsement.

Agenda Item 3: New Applications

ECF Project 07/2007 A study of the biodiversity of coral-associated polychaetes in Sharp Island

[ECF Paper 44/2007-08]

14. Mr. Joseph Lee declared interest as he is a member of the Court of the university that the PI came from. Dr. Alain Lam chaired this part of the meeting. Prof Jonathan Wong declared interest and left the meeting room. Prof Chau Kwai-cheong rejoined the meeting.
15. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the proposal and the assessments given by the AFCD and two external assessors as summarized in Paper 44/2007-08. The objectives of the proposal were to establish a collection of voucher specimens for coral-associated polychaetes which can allow retrospective examination; and provide detailed text description and line-drawings of the key features to each species. External assessor 1 supported the proposed research and stated that the knowledge obtained in this study can be useful information for marine environmental protection, reef check and biodiversity conservation. External assessor 2 opined that the project has scientific value in polychaetes taxonomic research, but establishment of an inventory of species biodiversity being a basic research should be more appropriately funded by the university. AFCD considered that there were some merits in this project but it shared assessor 2's view

that the study was a bit academic in nature.

16. Note

17. Note

18. After discussion, Members concluded that the proposal was supported in principle and the PI would be invited to revise the proposal with additional information for further discussion at the next meeting.

ECF Project 09/2007 Enhancement of integrated heat pumps for energy savings in hot water and air-conditioning at home

[ECF Paper 45/2007-08]

19. Prof Jonathan Wong rejoined the meeting. Ms Winifred Chan briefed Members on the proposal and the assessments given by EMSD as summarized in Paper 45/2007-08. The objectives of the proposal were to develop compact, energy-efficient integrated heat pumps for domestic hot water and air-conditioning. EMSD supported the project and considered the project carry some practical values. A representative of the project team was invited to present the proposal.

20. Note

21. After further discussion, the Chairman concluded that the proposal should be supported with a grant of \$150,000.

Agenda Item 4: Enhancements for vetting funding applications

[ECF Paper 46/2007-08]

22. Mr. Francis Wong briefed Members on the revised funding guidelines endorsed by the ECF Committee. The approving limit of the RPVSC would be revised from \$150,000 to \$500,000. A member suggested that the requirement for external assessment on research projects might be revised in view of the general funding level for research projects by the Research Grants Council and ECF.

Another member agreed that the requirement might be revised as larger scale and worthwhile projects would be considered in the future. Mr. Richard Chan pointed out that external expert assessment would provide an independent opinion to facilitate members of the subcommittee to vet proposals of different scale and study scopes. Another member opined that the RPVSC is authorized to vet proposals applying for funds up to \$500,000 and the requirement of external assessment could also be revised to \$500,000. After further discussion, the Chairman concluded that projects applying for more than \$250,000 would be subject to external assessment by two external expert assessors before its being vetted by the RPVSC. Similarly, projects receiving a grant over \$250,000 would be subject to an independent evaluation upon completion of the project.

23. Mr. Francis Wong supplemented that two briefing sessions would be held in March to explain to potential applicants the proposed revisions on the funding guidelines for various categories of ECF funded projects.

Agenda Item 5: Date of Next Meeting

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

25. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 4:25 pm.

Secretariat, ECF Research Projects Vetting Sub-committee

April 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.”