

Consultation with local fishers on the Hong Kong artificial reefs initiative

Abstract

As part of an ongoing effort to rehabilitate depleted local fish stocks, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) has undertaken to deploy artificial reefs (ARs) to enhance fisheries resources and conserve the marine environment. A two-stage consultation programme aimed at soliciting input from fishers and minimizing potential conflicts with existing fishing operations was conducted, using local fora and information materials, prior to the second phase of artificial reef deployment outside of Marine Parks. Key findings of the consultation included recognition of the need for management and enforcement to improve fisheries resources, differences in support for artificial reefs between trawlers and small-scale fishers, and demands for compensation to offset short-term losses in income. The consultation programme provides a model for future community involvement initiatives, and has highlighted both the strengths of the artificial reef programme in Hong Kong and the outstanding issues that must be addressed to ensure future success.