

Date: Fri, 11 Feb 2005 13:21:56 +0800
To: stforum@sph.com.sg
From: Leong Kwok Peng
Subject: Singapore Waters

Dear Sir

Ref: "Hantu coral life dying out fast" ST 4 Feb 05 & "Save our seas - for drinking" ST 11 Feb 05 by Radha Basu.

I would like to reiterate that our marine life in Singapore Waters is under threat. The threats as rightly pointed out are the relentless dredging and uncontained reclamation activities causing heavy sedimentation that is detrimental to marine life.

It would seem that no single government agency is in charge of marine life. MPA manages the shipping lanes and ship-based pollution - in essence the surface of the sea. NEA, Nparks and Sentosa Development Corporation stop short at the coast.

Coral can only be removed if permission is given by the Singapore Land Authority - in essence coral is merely part of a piece of land. Only the Police Coast Guard intervenes when there is unlicensed coral removal.

More than 10 years ago, The Singapore Green Plan, 1992 by then Ministry of Environment has mentioned 4 marine nature areas in the plan. They are:

1. Pulau Hantu and its adjacent western patch reefs: Terumbu Pempang Laut, Tengah and Darat.

This is an area most frequented by our local divers and boaters. Known for its relatively calm and shallow water and rich marine life.

2. Pulau Semakau and its adjacent western patch reefs: Beting Bemban Besar and Terumbu Raya.

A highly diverse area with mangroves, seagrass beds and coral reefs.

3. St. John's group of islands including Lazarus, Seringat and Sisters islands. Consisting of mainly fringing reef. Some of the reefs have been reclaimed. Not frequented by divers due to strong current sweeping between the islands.

4. Pulau Sudong group of islands which include Salu, Pawai, Senang and Biola.

Live Firing Areas - Out of bounds to the public. Known to have some of their natural coastlines still intact.

However this 4 marine nature areas are not mentioned again in the new Singapore Green Plan, 2002. Only Sisters' Islands was identified as the only marine nature area in the MasterPlan by URA. There are no marine parks or marine reserves gazetted in Singapore so far.

We have published a coffee table book "Singapore Waters - Unveiling Our Seas" in Oct 03 to showcase what we have left and surviving in the busy waters of Singapore. Whatever remains is reason to celebrate that life still exists despite the odds. We strongly urge that there should be protected marine nature areas.

Attached are 2 maps from the book showing how much of our natural coastline have changed. You have our permission to use them in ST.

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