



# China Coastal Wetlands Conservation

Quarterly News Bulletin

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## National Policies and Initiatives

### China's First Wetland Protection Law

Chinese lawmakers approved the *Wetland Protection Law* on 24th December, 2021, which will come into effect on 1st June, 2022. As China's first law dedicated to protecting fragile wetland ecosystems, the *Wetland Protection Law* improves the scientific definition of wetland, reflecting its natural properties and meeting the demands of domestic management and international compliance. With a comprehensive and systematic design, the law has unified regulations on wetland protection and restoration, and strengthened penalties for those who damage the ecological value of wetland ecosystems.



### Ecological Protection and Restoration Supporting System

On 15th December 2021, China's National Development and Reform Commission, along with eight other government departments, issued the *Construction Plan for Major Projects of Ecological Protection and Restoration Supporting System (2021-2035)*. The Plan calls for significant progress in scientific and technological innovation for environmental protection and restoration in key areas and regions by 2025. The Plan also emphasizes that China will continue to promote the protection and restoration techniques of marine ecosystems such as mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass beds, saltmarsh wetlands and sandy shorelines, expand research on ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction, and carry out special biodiversity monitoring on migratory birds, coastal wetlands as well as effecting assessments and regulatory technology research of major restoration projects.

### White Paper on Biodiversity Conservation

On 8th October 2021, three days before COP 15 Phase I, China published its first white paper on biodiversity conservation, presenting China's ideas, plans and actions on biodiversity conservation, and sharing its progress with the international community. The white paper states that China has elevated biodiversity conservation to a national strategy and incorporated it into the mid- and long-term plans of all regions and disciplines. Facing the global challenge of biodiversity loss, China has committed to multilateralism and actively carried out international cooperation on biodiversity conservation, contributing solutions to global biodiversity conservation and working with the international community to build a shared future for humanity and nature.

### Injunction in Eco-environmental Infringement Cases

Several Provisions of the Supreme People's Court on the *Application of Injunction Preservation Measures in Ecological Environment Infringement Cases* were adopted on 29th November, 2021, and came into force on 1st January, 2022. The provisions are applicable to cases of environment pollution and ecosystem destruction which may cause irreparable damage to the legitimate rights of the applicant of the injunction, or the ecological environment, if the actions had not been stopped in time. The application of injunctions aims to expand the relief methods of environmental civil litigation and further strengthen the function of environmental justice in preventing ecological environment damage.



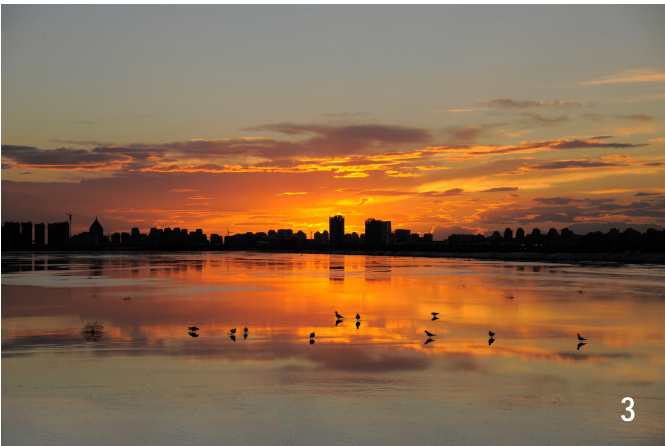
## One Bay One Policy for In-depth Fighting against Pollution

The Uphill Battles for Integrated Bohai Bay Management during the "13th Five-Year Plan" period has achieved significant results, and based on this, the *Opinions of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and The State Council on Deepening the Battle against Pollution*, issued on 2nd November 2021, proposed to consolidate and deepen the achievements of Bohai Bay management, spread the 'battle' to the Yangtze Estuary-Hangzhou Bay and Pearl River Estuary areas progressing from "resolutely fighting" to "in-depth fighting", and adopt unique local policies to implement the integrated management of key bays.

### Regional Actions

#### The First Victory for Bohai Bay Comprehensive Management

After three years, the tough battle for the better management of Bohai Bay has made great progress. Tianjin, at the forefront and main 'battle field', has significantly improved its coastal sea water quality and ecological environment. During the last three years, Tianjin has implemented the "Blue Bay" renovation and restoration plan, restoring a total area of 531.87 hectares of coastal wetlands and 4.78 kilometers of shorelines. At the same time, due to strictly adhering to the ecological red line for marine protection, Tianjin has reduced its total marine fishing output by 25 percent, compared with 2015, and released nearly 7.2 billion fish larvae.



## The Construction of Zhanjiang Mangrove City

On 30th December 2021, the *Conference of Constructing a Mangrove City* was held in Zhanjiang, calling for coordinated efforts to promote the systematic protection and centralized restoration of mangrove forests, so as to create a "new paradigm" for ecological construction in Guangdong province. Additionally, the conference also emphasized that it is necessary to fully exploit the economic, scientific and cultural advantages of mangroves, build them into a "green engine" of high-quality development and a high-level scientific research and publicity brand, and refine their spiritual core, thus setting off a boom of building a "Mangrove City" in Zhanjiang.



#### Booming Marine Economy in Rongcheng

In recent years, Rongcheng city of Shandong Province has made breakthroughs in marine ecological restoration and breeding, forming a unique marine economic development mode. Artificial cultivation of seagrass is one of the characteristic development paths of Rongcheng. Through undersea cultivation, a seagrass bed of 3,000 acres has been planted in Rongcheng city's Sanggou Bay, creating a comprehensive and healthy form of aquaculture, with a three-dimensional multi-nutritive layer of algae, sea cucumber, shellfish and fish, which has greatly improved the carbon sink capacity of local marine ecology. Meanwhile, Rongcheng is also actively exploring the trading of marine algae as a carbon sink. Taking the long-term revenue rights of carbon reduction generated annually by kelp and other seafood as the pledge, Rongcheng launched the first "marine carbon sink loan" in Shandong Province, thus turning invisible and intangible "blue carbon" into real money.

## Spartina in Yellow River Estuary

Prevention of invasive species such as *Spartina alterniflora* has been explicitly written into the Provincial Committee's recommendations of Shandong's 14th Five-Year Plan. Up to 25th November 2021, 1312.09 hectares of *Spartina* had been completely removed from Qingdao's coast. In addition, Dongying city cleared 38,400 acres of *Spartina*. As a result, the abundance of birds and benthic organisms in the Yellow River Delta has significantly increased.



## Ecological Protection of Yellow River basin

### The High-Quality Development of Yellow River Basin

*The Ecological Protection of the Yellow River Basin* is one of China's five major national strategies. The *Opinions of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and The State Council on Deepening the Battle against Pollution*, issued in November 2021, proposed to build a green development highland and firmly promote the ecological protection and high-quality development of the Yellow River Basin. Subsequently, the State Council published the *Outline of the Yellow River Basin Ecological Protection and High-quality Development*, enhancing the implementation of water-saving and water-management actions, and advocating the strict control of industries that consume high amounts of water. Additionally, the Outline also highlighted the upstream maintenance of water conservation functions, strengthening the control of soil erosion in the mid-stream, and promoting downstream wetland protection and ecological management.

## The Yellow River Estuary National Park Officially Enters the Substantive Implementation Phase

The construction of the Yellow River Estuary National Park, thought to be China's first national park with sea-land coordination planning, has officially begun. With a planned area of 352,300 hectares, it integrates several existing protected areas in the Yellow River Estuary, including national nature reserves. The next step is to promulgate special laws and finalize the master plan. At the same time, in the process of construction, attempts will be made to build ecological coastlines with oyster reefs as the main body, and establish a high-quality shellfish breeding farm as well as comprehensive conservation areas for fish, shrimp and crab, while carrying out conservation of rare and endangered bird species.

## Updates on Waterbirds

### Sleepy Bird Hospital in Dongting Lake

Dongting Lake's migratory bird hospital is responsible for the treatment of migratory birds harmed by poachers, or other human activities. After the improvement of Dongting Lake's ecological environment and the implementation of the 10-year ban on fishing in key areas of the Yangtze River Basin, the number of "patients" in the migratory bird hospital is now significantly lower than before, while the "resident" population in Dongting Lake is increasing. Last winter, the waterbird investigation team found that there were about 288,000 wintering migratory birds of 53 species in the Dongting Lake area, an increase of about 41,000 over the same period of the previous year, and the number of wintering waterbirds had maintained a consistent increase for four years.





## Miscellaneous Items

### Destruction of Coral Reefs and Pearl Oyster on Haihua Island

At the end of 2021, the Danzhou municipal government in Hainan Province issued a written decision on

an administrative punishment, requiring the demolition of 39 illegal buildings on the Haihua artificial island within 10 days. By dividing the construction project into 36 smaller projects, the originators of this coastal reclamation project attempted to circumvent the law and approval had been granted, resulting in the permanent destruction of coral reefs and pearl oysters. This decision rescinded the approval and demanded demolition of the work completed so far.

### Photo Credits

Front cover: Oriental white stork at dawn (Wang Jianmin)  
 1 Water birds resting on wetland (Wang Jianmin)  
 2 Black-winged stilt (Wang Jianmin)  
 3 Nanwan wetland in Tianjin city (Wang Jianmin)  
 4 The scenery of Zhanjiang mangrove (www.shidicn.com)  
 5 Yellow River Estuary (Gan Xiaojing)  
 6 Patients at the Migratory Bird Hospital in Dongting Lake (<https://linye.rednet.cn/content/2021/12/14/10559677.html>)  
 7 Haihua island ([https://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowenn/202201/t0220107\\_162981.html](https://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowenn/202201/t0220107_162981.html))

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