

Q5

What is the Evaluation of Scholarly and Conservation Groups about the Relocation to Henoko?

Several national and international academic societies and nature conservation groups have made recommendations and called for additional surveys and environmental conservation measures to protect the Henoko area, which the Japanese government is promoting as the relocation site.

The joint communiqué (*1) issued by 19 academic societies including the Ecological Society of Japan mentions that there are records of 5,334 species in the Henoko waters and 11 new species registered. The communiqué states that this sea area is “one of the few areas in Japan that has a very high level of biodiversity.” Regarding to the Japanese government’s response, the communiqué is critical: “Not only have recent discoveries not been recorded or mentioned in the environmental impact assessment, but a proper assessment has not been performed to evaluate the peculiarities of this sea area.”

In addition, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) has issued four recommendations about this sea area to the Japanese government, but the Japanese government has failed to address them sufficiently and abstained from adopting any recommendation that calls for measures to prevent the infiltration of alien species through the medium of the sand and earth to be used as fill for the land reclamation.

In the United States as well, in August 2017, the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco overturned a decision by the district court dismissing the “Okinawa Dugong Lawsuit,” which was filed by environmental groups from the United States and Japan in 2003, and remanded the case back to the district court for further proceedings.

(August 21, 2017 Dugong lawsuit petition) <http://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinions/2017/08/21/15-15695.pdf>

Despite repeated calls from academic societies, nature conservation groups and others for additional investigations and environmental conservation measures, the Japanese government has disregarded these and moved the construction forward. If the project is carried out as currently planned, the precious natural environment of Henoko’s Oura Bay will be lost forever.

*1. “Joint Communiqué of 19 Academic Societies Calling for Conservation of the Environment of Okinawa Prefecture’s Oura Bay Which Possesses a Remarkably High Biodiversity” (November 11, 2014)

Reference: Recommendations issued by IUCN related to the natural environment of Henoko and Oura Bay:

IUCN Recommendation 2.72 “Conservation of Dugong, Okinawa Woodpecker, and Okinawa Rail on and around Okinawa Island,” World Conservation Congress, Amman, Jordan, October 2000 http://www.nacsj.or.jp/katsudo/contents_img/okinawa/okinawa-010706-seimei-e.html

IUCN Recommendation 3.114 “Conservation of Dugong, Okinawa Woodpecker, and Okinawa Rail in Japan,” World Conservation Congress, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2004 <http://sea-dugong.org/english/main/IUCNrecommendation.pdf>

IUCN Recommendation 4.022 “Promotion of Dugong during the UN 2010 International Year for Biodiversity,” World Conservation Congress, Barcelona, Spain, October 2008 https://www.iucn.org/congress_08/assembly/policy/

IUCN Recommendation 6.020 “Strengthening Pathway Management of Alien Species in Island Ecosystems,” World Conservation Congress, Honolulu, Hawaii, September 2016 <http://www.nacsj.or.jp/archive/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/IUCNmotion201708e.pdf>

Fill Material Used for Land Reclamation in Construction of New Base at Henoko

The equivalent of 2 million 10-ton dump truck loads (approx. 21,000,000 m³) of earth and sand will be used for land reclamation. The majority of this is set to be delivered from mainland Japan.

Although concerns expressed by environment conservation groups have pointed out that this will lead to the invasion and spread of alien species, the Japanese government has failed to sufficiently address these concerns.

At the IUCN’s September 2016 World Conservation Congress, a recommendation was issued calling for measures to address the infiltration of alien species from such reclamation fill material, but the Japanese government abstained from adopting this recommendation.



Courtesy of Ministry of the Environment



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There is a risk that the Argentine ant (above) and Red-back spider (below) may invade by becoming mixed in with the earth, sand and other fill material.