

Hon Me Proposed Marine Protected Area

Alternative site name(s)

Hon Me archipelago

Province(s)

Thanh Hoa

Status

Proposed

Management board established

No

Latitude

19°19' - 19°23'N

Longitude

105°51' - 105°57'E

Bio-unit

05c - North Annam



Conservation status

Hon Me was included on a list of 16 proposed marine protected areas compiled on behalf of MOSTE (Nguyen Chu Hoi *et al.* eds. 1998). The proposed area given in this proposal was approximately 5,600 ha. This proposal has yet to be approved by the government of Vietnam (ADB 1999).

The proposal to establish a marine protected area at Hon Me was reiterated by the Asian Development Bank (ADB 1999) in their marine and coastal protected areas systems plan for Vietnam. In the ADB proposal, the area of the site (referred to as Hon Me archipelago) is given as 6,700 ha, comprising a marine sector of 6,200 ha and a terrestrial sector of 500 ha. In this proposal, the proposed marine protected area includes Hon Me Nature Reserve, which was decreed by the government of Vietnam in 1986 (see Hon Me site card).

Topography and hydrology

Hon Me proposed marine protected area consists of Hon Me archipelago and the surrounding marine areas. The archipelago consists of nine sizeable islands and several small islets, of which the largest, at 420 ha, is Hon Me island. The highest point in the proposed marine protected area is 256 m on Hon Me island

while the deepest point is 28 m below sea level in the marine sector. The average depth of the marine sector is 13 m.

Biodiversity value

Hon Me proposed marine protected area supports a high diversity of terrestrial and marine habitats. There are a wide variety of marine habitats distributed around the islands, including coral reefs, submerged banks, rocky beds, sandy substrates and gravel grounds. Coral reefs are distributed over a large area of the site but coral cover is low, averaging less than 30%. This indicates that the reefs are being seriously degraded by human activities (ADB 1999).

A survey of the proposed marine protected area was carried out in October 1998 by Hai Phong Institute of Oceanography. This survey, which focused on marine organisms, recorded 141 zoobenthic species, 133 phytoplankton species, 56 coral species (mostly scleractinians), 55 coral reef fish species (including 11 species new for Vietnam), and 46 zooplankton species (Nguyen Chu Hoi *et al.* eds. 1998, ADB 1999).

Conservation issues

The main threats to the biological integrity of the marine components of the site come from over-exploitation of marine resources and unsuitable fishing

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methods. Fishing with poison, dynamite, or fine-mesh nets is contributing to a decline in aquatic resources. Zoobenthic species are abundant at the proposed site but are being depleted by over-exploitation. This is especially true of crabs, lobsters, other shellfish and sea cucumbers (ADB 1999).

During the rainy season, sediment loads of streams and rivers flowing into the site from the mainland are high. The consequent siltation of reefs is leading to their slow decline. Additionally, the high density of suspended particles in the water reduces light penetration and affects primary productivity, which has consequences for the rest of the food chain.

Other documented values

The Hon Me archipelago is an important fishing ground in the Gulf of Tonkin, and supports the livelihoods of communities in Tinh Gia district, Thanh Hoa province, as well as commercial fishing enterprises. A number of fish of high economic value occur in the area, such as members of the Pomacanthidae and Holocentridae (ADB 1999).

Related projects

ADB are currently supporting a regional technical assistance called *Coastal and Marine Environment Management in the South China Sea (East Sea)*, partly supported by a grant from the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency. This project aims to promote improved management of coastal and marine resources in the region, and is being implemented by MOSTE. Under this project, a draft coastal and marine protected area systems plan for Vietnam has been compiled, which reviews a number of candidate sites for inclusion within a revised national system of 30 marine and coastal protected areas. Hon Me archipelago is included in this plan.

Literature sources

ADB (1999) Draft coastal and marine protected areas plan. Hanoi: Asian Development Bank.

Nguyen Chu Hoi, Nguyen Huy Yet and Dang Ngoc Thanh eds. (1998) [Scientific basis for marine

protected areas planning]. Hai Phong: Hai Phong Institute of Oceanography. In Vietnamese.

Thanh Hoa Provincial FPD (2000) [FPD questionnaire]. Thanh Hoa: Thanh Hoa Provincial Forest Protection Department. In Vietnamese.