

Spoonbills Speak

echoes across the Pacific

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GRASSROOTS PROTEST SHUTS DOWN EIA MEETING



In the morning of April 26, environmental activists along with fishermen from the coastal villages in Chiku gathered in front of the headquarters of Taiwan's Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) in Taipei. Chanting "stop the Binnan review!" and attempting to block the entrance to the EPA office, the protesters were determined to stall what would be the last environmental impact assessment (EIA) review meeting on the Binnan petrochemical and steel complex.



With the victory of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in the recent presidential election, the environmentalists are hoping to see a reversal of the government's decision on the project. Citing the redress order issued by the Control Yuan, anti-dam activists from Meinung, environmentalists, and members of SAVE International eventually prevented the Binnan EIA review committee from reaching a final conclusion on the project's EIA.

DELEGATION TO TAIWAN INSPIRES HOPE FOR FUTURE

In March, a group of SAVE members and UC Berkeley students made another eventful trip to Taiwan. In addition to observing the black-faced spoonbills and meeting with local groups in coastal Tainan County, the delegation met with environmental groups in southern Taiwan to learn about their efforts in water resource protection and caught a glimpse of the how the new administration, under President-elect Chen Shui-bian, may have a positive impact on Taiwan's environment.

In Chiku, the delegation met with the Black-faced Spoonbill Protection Society to discuss a strategy for determining the size of the spoonbill preserve required by the Binnan Environmental Impact Assessment. The delegation also witnessed a promising new environmental education program that teaches elementary school children about the ecology of Chiku Lagoon. Finally, a tour of the Tsu Tsao Wetland Preserve in Tainan City evidenced the management issues facing the only wetland preserve in Tainan County.

Because water resource allocation is a major issue in the final approval of the Binnan EIA, the delegation met with groups in southern Taiwan working to stop the approval of the Meinung Dam, which would provide water for the operation of the Binnan Industrial Complex. The town of Meinung is a traditional Hakka village with many cultural and natural resources and a traditional way of life that would be threatened by this dam. The delegation toured the Meinung area and was impressed with its forests, creeks, rivers, wildlife, canals and agriculture.

In Taipei, members of SAVE met with legislators on the Sustainable Development Committee. Legislators Su and Fang are interested in the idea of introducing legislation to establish a National Park or Scenic Area on the Tainan County coast. This designation could have provisions that would strengthen the proposed protection area for the spoonbills and the development of ecotourism in coastal Tainan.

One of the most positive aspects of the trip was learning how recent political change in Taiwan could benefit the spoonbills and the people of coastal Tainan County. There is a chance under the new administration that Binnan could still be denied. President-elect Chen has already spoken out strongly against other environmentally destructive projects such as the Meinung Dam and Nuclear Power Plant No. 4.



U.C. BERKELEY STUDIO TACKLES TAIWAN'S ENVIRONMENT

This spring Randy Hester's environmental planning studio at U.C. Berkeley focused on the spoonbill and related environmental issues in Taiwan. The graduate students divided into three groups working on the protection of the spoonbill, allocation of water in Taiwan, and monitoring of the Binnan EIA review.

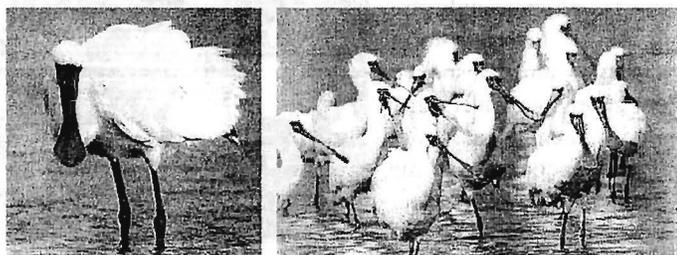
The core of the spoonbill protection proposal is to set aside the critical spoonbill roosting area at the Tsengwen Estuary by declaring it a national park or wildlife preserve. Realizing that this action is not enough to preserve the bird's habitat in Tainan County, the group proposes that the primary feeding habitat (mainly fish ponds within several miles of the estuary) be preserved through zoning designation or be included in the preserve. In the latter case, this would mean establishing a multiple-use wildlife preserve, similar to arrangements that have been

worked out at the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge and others here in the U.S., to allow fish farming and other economic activities that are beneficial to the birds within refuge lands.

Their proposal suggests that the fish farmers be compensated to leave a portion of their crop every year for the birds to forage upon. This would be paid for by either local sales tax revenue (if tourism becomes the leading industry in the region) or by a mitigation fund from the developers of the Binnan complex (if that facility is built). Finally, a second river estuary to the north of the Binnan site is proposed as an experiment in creating roosting habitat for the birds. If this were successful, it would reduce the birds' extreme dependency on the Tsengwen Estuary and thereby reduce the chance of a catastrophic environmental accident wiping out half of the world's spoonbills.

The water allocation group investigated water planning in Taiwan and California. They examined several case studies of successful water planning in the United States and applied lessons to various scenarios in Taiwan. In general, they found that water planning in Taiwan was myopic and biased towards building dams and against water conservation and environmental protection. The group presented its findings in Kaohsiung to a large group of NGOs and government officials and sparked a lively debate on water issues and the future of southern Taiwan.

The EIA monitoring group concentrated on a point by point response to the Binnan EIA and developed a strategy for future monitoring. All three groups presented their work in Taiwan, which set up an active exchange of information among the participants and resulted in a valuable learning experience.



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SAVE UPDATE

SAVE Receives Award

SAVE International will be recognized as an exceptional University-Community Partnership Project at an awards ceremony hosted by Chancellor Berdahl this summer. The Office of Community Relations stated that SAVE "expanded our definition of 'community' partnership to encompass our global community."

SAVE Recognizes Outstanding Volunteers

Recently, SAVE International honored the following volunteers for their exceptional work in the conservation of the black-faced spoonbill:

Scientific Contribution Award:	Dr. Huang Min-ching
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Sustainable Development Award:	Huang Ten-chien, Hunting Territory
Leadership Award:	Legislator Su Huan-Chi
Volunteer of the Year Award:	Jan Eiesland
Award for Innovation:	Hei-pei Studio 1997-99, Nat'l Taiwan University

HELLO FROM CHI-CHAO THE SPOONBILL

Hi guys! Well, me and my friends didn't get Hei-pei the spoonbill elected president, but I think we made our point. We're still waiting to see, but these new politicians may help us keep our home. Especially if you guys continue to fight for us and keep us in the spotlight.



I kind of miss Chi-ku, but fortunately my cute "friend" Junichi migrates to my summer spot in North Korea too. I can't believe I didn't notice him last year . . . I must have been blind. And the *best* news is, I think he might like me too! Looks like it'll be a great summer. Keep up the good work and I'll talk to you soon!

Love, Your Friend, Chi-chao.