

## Advisory Committee



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# SAVE International

## (Spoonbill Action Voluntary Echo)

A Project of Earth Island Institute

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August 15, 2016

Mr. YOO Jeong-bok, Mayor, Incheon Metropolitan City  
29, Jeonggak-ro  
Namdong-gu, Incheon 21554

Dear Mayor Yoo:

We are writing to ask you to protect Namdong Reservoir and the endangered Black-faced Spoonbills that have chosen to build their nests on the artificial island there. Protecting the reservoir would involve immediately disapproving the proposed "Plan 3" for Incheon's sewage treatment plant. As mayor, you can lead Incheon toward true environmental responsibility and set a good example for other cities in Korea.

I write on behalf of SAVE International (SAVE), which has been working since 1997 for the preservation of the endangered Black-faced Spoonbill (*Platalea minor*), a bird that migrates along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, from its breeding grounds in Korea to its wintering sites as far as several thousand kilometers south. SAVE is a group of environmental planners and scholars who advocate ecological democracy based on sound science and planning.

SAVE has read a briefing about the options for Incheon's wastewater treatment, indicating the positive and negative features of each option, and we support rebuilding the plant on the same land with better technology. Advances in wastewater treatment should allow you to reduce odors and the resulting complaints from neighbors, which seem to be the main drawback to this plan.

We would advise against choosing any plan based solely on cost, because it is very hard to account for "external costs", such as pollution or other forms of environmental damage. A plan that appears to be inexpensive to build or operate may hide a high cost to society at large or to an ecosystem, not to the people directly spending the money for the plan. Losing the benefits of the existing tidal flats was one of the external costs of Songdo City, for example. Our article in *Environment*, written in 2011 by three members of SAVE -- Yekang Ko (a professor at the University of Oregon), Randolph Hester (an emeritus professor at the University of California at Berkeley), and me -- quoted a few studies that estimated the economic benefits of tidal flats (in dollars per hectare per year), but those estimates varied widely.

Namdong Reservoir is one of the most internationally critical breeding habitats for Black-faced Spoonbills. The spoonbills that nested there last year represent roughly 9% of the world population, and 17% of Korea's breeding population: far higher numbers than the minimum required to qualify it for protection under the Ramsar Convention.

A core principle of conservation biology says that one should protect habitat if it already supports wildlife. Destroying or impairing their existing habitat would be a step backward. Allowing habitat in Korea to be destroyed would also undermine international efforts to conserve the species.

You can make decisions for Incheon City that help spoonbills, other wildlife, and current and future Incheon citizens. The people of Incheon want to protect the natural resources that remain and make this habitat a great asset for the city. There is a dedicated group of local birdwatchers and citizen scientists who want to protect the spoonbills and educate our future generations through this site. Listen to these people and encourage their efforts, with real actions. More birdwatchers and researchers from other parts of Korea and other nations would come to your city if they knew Incheon supported policies that were friendly to wildlife and to science.

If you have questions regarding this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me at the addresses above.

Respectfully,



Derek Schubert  
President, SAVE International

CC:  
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