



SOCIETY *of* WETLAND SCIENTISTS

Mayor CHEN, Chu
Mayor of Kaohsiung City Government
Taiwan

5 October, 2016

Dear Mayor Chen;

On behalf of the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS), we would like to express our concern about the recent plans for the construction of Road 1-4 through the Jiading Wetland area. The Society has a world-wide membership of more than 3,000 wetland professionals from 58 countries, whose mission is “to promote understanding, conservation, protection, restoration, science-based management, and sustainability of wetlands” (see www.sws.org). It has come to our attention that the Kaohsiung City government has decided to move ahead with plans to construct Road 1-4, which would reduce traveling time through the Jiading Wetland by only 90 seconds. The construction would dissect Jiading into two separate hydrologic units and endanger the natural functions and services of this wetland. We also understand that this is a deviation from the earlier established understanding that Jiading could be designated as a Taiwan Wetland of International Importance, using the Ramsar definition of designating wetlands of International Importance (see below) and be allowed to remain wholly intact. We hope to make you aware of the current services and benefits provided by the wetland to the people of the region and the potential impacts any change to the management/protection of this area might incur.

We wish to stress the importance of Jiading Wetland to the integrity of coastal wetland ecosystems of southeastern Taiwan and for the protection of overall diversity of plant and animal species, as well as other benefits the wetland provides. Jiading wetland qualifies as a Ramsar site by multiple criteria, and explicitly because of the numbers of Black-faced Spoonbill (*Platalea minor*), listed as “Endangered” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN Red List 2016), that now overwinter there. It is also important as a seasonal site for migratory birds along the East Asian Australasian Flyway, and for an unusual mixture of species specific to both coastal and inland habitats of Taiwan.

Taiwan has committed itself to the wise use and protection of all wetlands and, as such, should seek to avoid further loss and degradation of these important habitats. The Taiwan Government has recently enacted the Taiwan Wetland Conservation Act (2015) that was designed to support “biological diversity, conservation, and wise use of wetland resources” (Republic of China 2013, Su 2014). In recent years, Taiwan has gained international recognition for its efforts to protect and create new habitats for the Black-faced Spoonbill. As a result, spoonbill numbers are increasing, meaning that more protected habitat is required. To that

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end, Jiading wetland is an important connective core habitat. The 171-hectare wetland is home to over a hundred species of birds including 5.5 % of the global population and 9.5% of Taiwan's population of the internationally endangered Black-faced Spoonbill (McNally and Hester 2014). It is one of the most recent sites that the Black-faced Spoonbill inhabits in significant numbers. In 2016, the Taiwan Construction and Planning Agency and a number of other agencies signed the Taipei Declaration of International Wetlands Taiwan 2016 (TDIW) that contains the following: "We...[a]gree that...[10.] Any public construction nearby/in wetlands, should follow the Ramsar Convention. If there are 1% species identified in the wetlands, then the construction should avoid impacts to the wetland ecosystem or fragmentation" (TDIW 2016). Therefore, Jiading Wetland, while currently designated as a Taiwan Wetland of Local Importance, qualifies as a wetland of International Importance according to the 1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the TDIW, which can be bestowed upon a site that supports at least 1% of an endangered species (Ramsar Site Criteria 1971, TDIW 2016). The diversity of plants, butterflies, dragonflies and other animals in the wetland have been found to be particularly high, including many rare and endangered species. There are other benefits provided by the wetland, such as improvement of the quality of the water flowing into nearby ponds and the provision of feeding and spawning habitat for a number of shell and fin fish species.

The damage Road 1-4 would cause to this wetland would be an extremely unfortunate social, economic and ecological development. The original intention to restore and protect the wetland functions and services of the Jiading Wetland and its connection to other coastal wetland ecosystems, such as Young An Wetland located to the south, was a wise decision that should not be abandoned. We urge you to reconsider the construction of Road 1-4 across Jiading and revisit the proposed alternatives that have been offered by Technical Report 4.14 by SAVE International and the University of California at Berkley (McNally and Hester 2014) that have higher ecological, social, and economic value. We believe that the Jiading Wetland deserves to be elevated to a Taiwan Wetland of International Importance. Furthermore, we recommend restoring the connectivity of the Jiading Wetland to nearby wetland areas in order to explore opportunities to optimize the benefits that its biodiversity provides to the people of the Jiading region. For example: developing sustainable ecotourism that can be supported by a visitor center and good educational facilities, enhancing habitat value for birds and fish, offsetting carbon emissions through mangrove restoration and optimizing the ability of the wetland to clean water while recharging underground aquifers.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit this letter as a timely response to the situation at hand. While this letter presents a limited number of references to the published literature, we are planning to draft a "State of the Resource" report with an extensive review of the scientific literature on the ecosystem services of the Jiading Wetland. We intend to make this available to you by December 2016.

With our sincere respect and wishing you the wisdom to come to a viable social, economic, and ecologically sustainable decision,

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