

Dao Cat Ba Proposed Marine Protected Area

Alternative site name(s)

Cat Ba archipelago, Cat Ba-Ha Long

Province(s)

Hai Phong

Area

10,900 ha

Coordinates

20°41' - 22°14'N, 106°58' - 107°14'E

Agro-ecological zone

Red River Delta

Decreed by government

No

Management board established

No

Investment plan prepared

No

VCF eligibility criteria met

None

Social screening criteria met

None

Conservation needs assessment prepared

No

Operational management plan prepared

No

Tracking tool completed

No

Map available

Yes

Management history

The establishment of Cat Ba National Park was decreed on 31 March 1986, following Decision No. 79/CT of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers (MARD 1997). The total area of the national park given in this decision was 15,200 ha, comprising a terrestrial component of 9,800 ha and a marine component of 5,400 ha (see Cat Ba National Park site card). Management responsibility for both components currently lies with Cat Ba National Park Management Board, under the management of MARD.

In 1995, the Hai Phong Institute of Oceanography proposed establishing a marine protected area called Cat Ba-Ha Long, which included the marine component of Cat Ba National Park (Nguyen Huy Yet and Vo Si Tuan 1995). Dao Cat Ba was subsequently included on a list of 16 proposed marine protected areas compiled on behalf of the former MOSTE in 1998, with an area of approximately 10,500 ha (Nguyen Chu Hoi *et al.* 1998). This area comprised the marine component of Cat Ba National Park together with an additional 5,100 ha of marine waters and small islands.

In 1999, the proposal to establish a marine protected area at Dao Cat Ba 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 was given as 20,700 ha, comprising a marine component of

10,900 ha and a terrestrial component of 9,800 ha. Because there is, as yet, no formal legal framework for establishing marine protected areas (ADB 1999), it is not clear whether, in the future, Dao Cat Ba will be established as a separate protected area, or managed by Cat Ba National Park Management Board, with an expanded remit for protecting the marine ecosystem.

As the terrestrial component is currently under the management of Cat Ba National Park Management Board, this site card only reviews the marine component of Dao Cat Ba proposed marine protected area as proposed by ADB (1999).

In 2002, Hai Phong Provincial People's Committee nominated the Cat Ba archipelago as a biosphere reserve (Vietnam News 2002, 2003). On 10 July 2003, the Cat Ba archipelago was recognised as Vietnam's third biosphere reserve by the Standing Committee of the Man and the Biosphere Programme of UNESCO.

Topography and hydrology

Dao Cat Ba proposed marine protected area is located in Cat Hai district, Hai Phong city. The proposed marine protected area is centred on the Cat Ba archipelago, which consists of one large island and 366 smaller islands located approximately 30 km east of Hai Phong city and immediately to the west of Ha Long bay. Dao Cat Ba proposed marine protected area covers the marine waters and small islands to the east of Cat Ba island. The islands in the proposed marine

Dao Cat Ba Proposed Marine Protected Area

protected area have similar topography to the islands in Ha Long bay, being composed of limestone karst and rising abruptly from the sea. The surrounding marine waters are relatively shallow, with an average depth of around 13 m.

Biodiversity values

Dao Cat Ba proposed marine protected area supports a wide range of natural habitat types, including coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves and, on the islands, limestone forest. The known marine biodiversity of Dao Cat Ba is high relative to other proposed marine protected areas in northern Vietnam, although this might reflect higher levels of survey effort rather than any difference in actual levels of biodiversity. To date, 199 phytoplankton species, 89 zooplankton species, 75 seaweed species, 160 coral species, 4,765 zoobenthic species and three seagrass species have been recorded at Dao Cat Ba (ADB 1999).

Conservation issues

ADB (1999) identified several major threats to biodiversity at Dao Cat Ba proposed marine protected area. Firstly, the coral reefs at the site are being threatened by siltation, dynamite fishing and excavation. Secondly, fish stocks are being depleted by unsustainable fishing practices. Thirdly, the marine environment is being polluted by marine traffic and effluent from ports, industry and agricultural land in the Hai Phong area. Furthermore, ADB (1999) recognises low levels of awareness of environmental issues among local people and the lack of a system of boundary markers as obstacles to marine conservation.

Another major conservation issue at Dao Cat Ba proposed marine protected area is aquaculture. Overseas companies are investing in pearl farming within the proposed marine protected area, while businessmen from Hai Phong city and military personnel are investing in fish farming. As well as adding to levels of disturbance at the site, these activities are a potential source of organic pollution and disease.

Pressures on the marine ecosystem are gradually increasing as a result of rapid population growth and

economic development on Cat Ba island, including migration of nomadic fishers into the area.

Other documented values

Dao Cat Ba proposed marine protected area harbours rich fisheries resources, including many species of economic importance. The area is an important fishing ground for both local people and people from other coastal areas of Vietnam (ADB 1999).

Dao Cat Ba proposed marine protected area borders Ha Long Bay World Heritage Site, and is part of the resource base for an expanding tourism industry. Tourism now makes a significant contribution to the local economy, and many visitors to Cat Ba island visit the proposed marine protected area by boat. Well managed eco-tourism has the potential to reduce existing pressures on the natural resources of the area as well as to boost the local economy (ADB 1999). However, there are risks that unsustainable tourism development could place increased pressures on the marine ecosystem.

Related projects

With support from the Goethe Institute, the national NGO, Centre for Rural Progress, is currently implementing a project to develop a community-managed fisheries zone on Cat Hai island, adjacent to Dao Cat Ba proposed marine protected area.

With funding from British Petroleum, AusAid and the British Environment Fund, the Fauna & Flora International Vietnam Programme are currently implementing the *Cat Ba/Ha Long Bay Coastal Zone Management Project*. To date, however, project activities have concentrated on Ha Long bay, not Dao Cat Ba proposed marine protected area.

Cat Ba National Park is the focus of several conservation projects (see Cat Ba National Park site card). However, none of these are focussed specifically on the marine ecosystem.

Conservation needs assessment

A conservation needs assessment has not been conducted for the site.

Dao Cat Ba Proposed Marine Protected Area

Operational management plan

An operational management plan has not been prepared for the site.

Eligibility against VCF criteria

The site is ineligible for VCF support because it is not a Special-use Forest.

Criterion	Eligibility
A _I	
A _{II}	
B _I	
B _{II}	
B _{III}	
C _I	
C _{II}	

Social screening requirements

A social screening report has not been prepared for the site.

Criterion	Eligibility
A	
B	
C	
D	

Literature sources

ADB (1998) Coastal and marine environmental management in the South China Sea (East Sea): phase 2, inception report. Hanoi: Asian Development Bank.

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

Cheung, C.P.S. (1992) Report on a visit to the coasts of Vietnam. Unpublished report to WWF Asian Region.

EVS (1996) Coastal and marine environmental management for Ha Long bay, Socialist Republic of Vietnam: final report. Vancouver: EVS Environmental Consultants.

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.

Nguyen Huy Yet and Vo Si Tuan (1995) [Information on proposed marine protected areas on the coast of Vietnam]. Hai Phong: Hai Phong Institute of Oceanography. In Vietnamese.

Scott, D. A. (1989) A directory of Asian wetlands. Gland: IUCN.

Vietnam News (2002) Cat Ba National Park to be Viet Nam's third biosphere. Vietnam News 1 June 2002.

Vietnam News (2003) Cat Ba islands to get UNESCO nod. Vietnam News 21 May 2003.