



Dazhou Island is a state-level nature reserve in Wanning, Hainan province, where small islands covered by rain forest and rocky terrain are home to cave-nesting swifts. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Island province gears up efforts to build a beautiful environment with advanced ecological civilization

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Ecological preservation has been pushed to the forefront of China's development, as the country transitions to an ever-greener development model.

Hainan, the country's only tropical province — well-known for its seascapes, ecosystems and holiday resorts — is among the pacesetters of these efforts.

The second plenary session of the seventh CPC Hainan Provincial Committee in Haikou, the provincial capital, recently made a key decision.

It put forward a series of comprehensive rules and regulations to mobilize people from all walks of life in order to improve ecological protection awareness and build Hainan into a national demonstration area for ecological civilization construction.

The decision said Hainan will reduce and gradually cancel its traditional appraisals of GDP, industrial production values and investment in fixed assets.

Instead, it will adopt a "Green GDP Index" to evaluate local officials' performances and economic growth. The traditional method of GDP calculation in two-thirds of the island's regions will be replaced in the near future, and then finally across the whole province. By 2020, all the major ecological problems will be properly settled, with the quality of the province's ecological environment ranking among the top in the country, and a green model for local development and people's daily lives established, according to the decision.

Rich natural resources

Located at roughly the same latitude as Hawaii and encircled by charming coastlines, Hainan is home to rich and precious ecological resources: tropical forests, wetlands and geothermal resources and marine resources.

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Liu Cigui, Party chief of Hainan, said the province will uphold the strategy of building a sound environment to carry through President Xi's important instructions.

"The environmental quality must only improve, instead of worsening. Any projects that will pollute or cause harm to the local ecosystems will not be tolerated," Liu said.

Liu added Hainan will carefully protect its ecological resources, which he called the province's "best capital" for green and prosperous economic and social development, to better realize its blueprint for becoming a pleasant home for its residents, a four-season garden and a holiday paradise for Chinese and overseas tourists.

The central part of the island, including the counties of Qiongzong, Baisha, Wuzhishan and Baoting — considered the ecological core areas of Hainan — abolished the traditional GDP assessment system in 2014. Instead, they made ecological protection their priority in local

social and economic development.

Shen Xiaoming, governor of Hainan, praised the Baisha Li autonomous county for its ecological improvement during a recent research investigation. Baisha has suspended commercial real estate projects and saw its GDP decline as a result.

"Baisha has a special place in Hainan's ecological civilization construction. Its biggest advantage is its ecological resources and its greatest task is to protect them well. We would rather develop a little slowly and yet take good care of the beautiful ecological resources.

"The ecological environment is Hainan's livelihood and lifeline. Any development should take good care of the environment as a precondition and an ecological bottom line," said Shen.

The provincial government has established a mechanism for ecological protection compensation. To date, a subsidy of 500 million yuan (\$75.9 million) has been allocated across the province's counties, and the amount

will be increased every year, according to local officials.

Deng Xiaogang, director of Hainan's department of ecology and environmental protection, said the recent decision was a milestone because, for the first time, the provincial government said officials will be held liable for damage to the environment throughout their lives.

"Local government officials play an essential role in ecology and environmental protection while making policies to promote economic growth," Deng said.

Hainan has 62 percent forest coverage and is often crowned with such titles as a "natural oxygen bar", "ecological garden" and "longevity island". It has adopted a veto power over major projects that would harm the environment. More than 500 projects have been rejected in the past three years.

"We want to attract the best investments with our best resources," said Liu, the Party chief.



Wild deer forage for food in the Datian National Reserve Area in Hainan province. SU XIAOJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Bay chiefs on duty to protect marine resources

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Hainan, an island province with a 1,823 kilometer-long coastline, is appointing bay chiefs and establishing a bay management and protection responsibility system, to better safeguard its marine ecology, according to the provincial government.

The decision is considered an important step in implementing the central government's new development concept and requirements for ecological civilization construction. It highlights the strengthened management of sea area usage and the protection of Hainan's coastlines.

The bay chief system is a three-level governance system, with top officials serving as general bay chiefs.

The bay chiefs' responsibilities include pollution prevention and control, marine ecological restoration and environmental monitoring.

The reclamation of sea areas is now strictly forbidden if the activity does not restore marine ecological systems. Some key State or provincial infrastructure projects meeting environmental standards are allowed.

Hainan's long coastline is regarded as one of the most important ecological circles and the province's most beautiful asset, with ecological functions and resource value beyond comparison. But, it needs better protection. Over 800 cases of illegal bay area usage were identified in an inspection in 2015.

Comprehensive restoration work



Picturesque view of Bawangling in the Changjiang Li autonomous county in Hainan, where the forest coverage is 98 percent. SU XIAOJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

will be conducted to help keep the bays blue, while pollution from local ports and ships will be strictly controlled, according to the new rules, which encourage the use of sea areas in a legal, ecological, scientific and efficient way.

Haikou, the provincial capital, will be the first to introduce chiefs to take care of its bay resources.

The city is among China's first batch of five pilot cities to practice the new system, which will be performed in close coordination with the country's river chief strategy. The latter system has been effective for several years and has a strong team

of 200,000 designated river chiefs responsible for dealing with water pollution, according to the State Oceanic Administration.

The other four areas on the pilot list are Qinhuangdao in Hebei province, Jiaozhouwan in Shandong province, Lianyungang of Jiangsu province and Zhejiang province as a whole.

As a pilot city, Haikou has implemented the system to strengthen its conservation efforts, improving the city's marine environment, maintaining ecological security and boosting sustainable development of its bay resources.

The coast city governs many islands and bays, including Haikou Bay, Jinsha Bay and Puqian Bay, with their water areas covering 830 square kilometers and a coastline stretching 136.2 kilometers.

Haikou aims to establish a green and recyclable low-carbon marine industry structure by 2019. By then, the quality of the city's marine environment will be further improved and the service function of the marine ecology upgraded.

The city will also brighten its coastal landscape and upgrade its capacity to prevent marine disasters.

Statistics show that Haikou's marine GDP reached 29.8 billion yuan (\$4.58 billion) last year, accounting for 26 percent of the total marine output of the province, and ranking No 1 among Hainan's 18 cities and counties.

The province's marine GDP was 116.3 billion yuan in 2016, 28.2 percent of its total GDP.

Although a major driver of the city's economic growth, the marine environment remains fragile, according to an official from Haikou marine and fishery department.

In response to the situation, Haikou is setting up a joint prevention and control mechanism to protect its river and marine environments, according to the city strategy.

"Marine pollution is not an isolated problem. Resolving river pollution is the first step in protecting the marine environment, and the bay chief system is an adaptation of the river chief system," the marine official said.

High-tech helps position ecological 'red line' zones

By YUAN SHENGGAO

A 5-month-long inspection is under way in the tropical island province of Hainan, aiming to identify and define its ecological "red line" zones using high-tech methods, including drones, location mapping and satellite positioning.

The inspection was launched by the provincial government in June. The goal is to draw a whole picture and establish an accurate archive for the situation of ecological red line zones in Hainan.

The red-line zone strategy provides regulatory environmental protection for the security of ecological systems and their sustainable development in certain regions.

Providing specific guidance on the proper handling of regions with suspected illegal construction was a fundamental concern of the activity, according to the plan created by the Hainan Provincial Planning Commission. Set up in June, it is the only department of its kind in the country to promote comprehensive and integrated planning for local development.

Hainan's ecological "red lines" have been identified by various provincial departments, including the ecology and environmental protection department,

the forestry bureau, the oceanic and fishery department, the water resources bureau and land resources bureau.

"The red line is the bottom line. Any action against the bottom line must be detected and punished at an early stage," said Ding Shijiang, director of the provincial planning commission. Changjiang Li autonomous county is located in southwest Hainan and boasts tropical forests, mountains, caves, and rivers that very few people have set foot in.

The county is using popular drones to define areas that should be included on the ecological "red line" zone list.

Location mapping and global positioning systems are being used in Baisha Li autonomous county in central Hainan, a core ecological resources area, to precisely position sites of suspected illegal activity.

Last year, Hainan introduced regulations on the protection of ecological red line zones, the first province in the country to do so.

About 11,535 square kilometers of land, accounting for 33.5 percent of the island's total, and 35.1 percent or 8,317 square kilometers of its offshore area, have been defined as ecological red line zones, according to official statistics.



A worker from Sansha city observes a tortoise. SONG GUOQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY