

EPD successfully combats illegal land filling works and waste disposal at ecologically important sites in New Territories (with photos)

A person-in-charge of works was convicted and fined a total of \$16,000 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (May 26) for contravening the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO) and the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO) as a result of carrying out land filling works and disposing of construction waste illegally at Lut Chau, Yuen Long. Moreover, during investigations from February to June last year, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) successfully detected four cases of illegal disposal of construction waste at the above-mentioned location. The persons-in-charge of works and dump truck drivers involved were convicted and fined a total of \$29,500 by the court for contravening the WDO earlier and today.

A spokesman for the EPD said that the department received a report from a member of the public in February last year about illegal land filling works being carried out to build the embankment of a fish pond on a plot of government land in Lut Chau, Yuen Long and its adjacent areas. The EPD then conducted numerous blitz inspections of the areas and successfully detected that construction waste was deposited next to fish ponds from several dump trucks, while land filling works were carried out at fish ponds by dredgers operated by workers.

After an investigation, the EPD confirmed that the area concerned is a Site of Special Scientific Interest as designated in the Mai Po and Fairview Park Outline Zoning Plan. The ecology of the area and the fish ponds therein are protected under the EIAO. In addition, the works were carried out without an environmental permit. After collecting evidence, the EPD prosecuted the persons-in-charge of works and dump truck drivers involved under the EIAO and the WDO. Recently, EPD officers conducted follow-up inspections of Lut Chau as well as its adjacent areas and noticed that there were no land filling works arising from the illegal disposal of construction waste. The EPD believes that the series of actions taken by the department has produced a deterrent effect.

The spokesman stressed that the EPD has been striving to combat illegal land filling works at ecologically sensitive sites in the New Territories through various channels, including reports from members of the public, proactive blitz operations, aerial photographs and photographs taken by drones.

Anyone carrying out works at Sites of Special Scientific Interest is in contravention of the EIAO unless they obtain environmental permits from the EPD beforehand. Offenders may be liable to a maximum fine of \$2,000,000 and six months' imprisonment on a first conviction. A maximum fine of \$5,000,000

and two years' imprisonment may be imposed on a subsequent conviction. In addition, anyone disposing of waste in public places commits an offence. According to the WDO, offenders may be liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment on a first conviction. A maximum fine of \$500,000 and six months' imprisonment may be imposed on a subsequent conviction.

