

COASTAL SPATIAL PLANNING OF UNINHABITED ISLANDS IN KOREA

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It was not until the early 2000s when the Korean government enacted the Coastal Management Act in 1999 and formulated and implemented the National Integrated Coastal Management Plan in 2000 that uninhabited islands of Korea drew attention on the management perspective. The uninhabited islands are now regarded as a national land resource with economic potential for tourism and development, and strategic value for boundary delineation of territorial waters and exclusive economic zone as well as their unique ecological value.

Realization of the economic and ecological values has revealed management issues to deal with for sustainable use of the uninhabited islands of Korea: insufficient data with low reliability, lack of management policy directions, increase in ecosystem deterioration and perturbation by human activities, lack of policy measures for meeting utilization and development demands, weak management base with insufficient personnel and budget, and legal measures that do not take into account their unique ecological and socioeconomic characteristics.

To address the management issues, the Korean government enacted the 'Law on Conservation and Management of Uninhabited Islands' in August 2007 based on pilot surveys and advisory meetings among relevant agencies, local governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders. The law covers the terrestrial area of the uninhabited islands as well as surrounding coastal waters and submerged lands to 1 km from mean high water of the islands. Zoning mechanism has been applied as the core tool for achieving the goal of the law. A total of 2,700 uninhabited islands will be classified into four categories through comprehensive surveys and review processes by a management council: strict conservation, conservation, utilization with no physical modification, and development with stringent permit process.

The Korean government has already applied the zoning mechanism to a pilot area in the mid-western region of Korea using the results of a comprehensive survey of 2005-2006. The survey covered ecological features of terrestrial, aquatic, submerged areas of the islands, socio-economic activities, history, strategic potential for the delineation of sea boundary, etc. The zoning of the uninhabited islands will be completed by 2015, based on the survey results.

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