

Urbanization and Pearl River Delta's Changing Aquatic Environment

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Abstract

The Pearl River Delta (PRD) is known for its unique aquatic landscape, the dike-pond system, which used to constitute an eco-cum-production system and a concrete example of sustainable development long before the term was first coined. After the launching of the economic reform in 1979, the PRD has been the fastest growing region of China. Today, an almost continuous strip of urban development dominates the landscape from Hong Kong to Guangzhou and Foshan in the northwest and then through Shunde down to Zhuhai and Macau in the southwest. The term Pearl Riversville has been used to describe the emerging mega urban region. Such rapid economic and urban growth of course has exerted tremendous pressure on the region's environment. Miraculously, though, to a significant extent the dike-pond landscape still prevails in core districts of the Delta. But this has been achieved at the expense of long-term ecological sustainability of the system. Also the quality of the aquatic environment of the PRD as a whole has experienced rapid deterioration.