

In the wake of the Miaoli County Government's forced seizure of farmland in Jhunan Township's (竹南鎮) Dapu Borough (大埔鄉), residents of Taipei County's Gongliao Township (貢寮鄉) are worried about the possible ecological impact of a plan to take over wetlands in Tianliaoyang Village (田寮洋村) and turn the area into a housing complex.

According to a plan initiated by the Council for Economic Planning and Development (CEPD) in March, a total of 688.5 hectares of land in Gongliao would be expropriated to sell to major corporations to build hotels or housing complexes.

The plan states that the entire development project would be completed in 2013.

As the area covers farmland, wetlands and the habitats of rare bird species, locals are worried that it could lead to ecological destruction.

A woman surnamed Lin (林), a native of Gongliao and a member of the local bird-watching organization, said she is worried about the project because Tianliaoyang is an important wetland in Taipei County and a stopover location for migrating birds flying north and south.

### IRONIC

She said the government plans are ironic since it had asked local farmers to temporarily stop farming activities in 2003 when a rare red-crowned crane was spotted in the area.

Another resident, also surnamed Lin (林), said the majority of locals do not know that most flat farmland is to be expropriated and turned into hotels, housing complexes or commercial zones.

Other Gongliao residents pointed out that Tianliaoyang has become wetland because it is in an area that lies lower than the village. As a result, Tianliaoyang helps to adjust water levels in the rainy season and prevents Gongliao from being flooded.

The villagers worry that construction in Tianliaoyang may affect the natural balance of the water level and cause flooding in Gongliao.

Northeast and Yilan Coast National Scenic Area Management Office official Lee Chia-pin (李齊彬) said that, though the urban planning project has been publicized, the details are still being finalized.

He suggested that the Ministry of the Interior's Construction and Planning Agency conduct further research before making a decision on the plan.

### HEARINGS

## Land seizure comes under fire

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Acting Gongliao Township mayor Chang Pen-hsien (張本顯) agreed, calling on relevant government agencies to hold public hearings to provide local residents with more information about the plan.

Contradicting Lee's comments, Deputy Minister of the Interior Lin Tsy-ling (林錫山) said that nothing has been finalized to date.

"We're only reviewing the urban planning project and nothing has been settled yet. Before we make any decision on it, there cannot possibly be any land expropriations," Lin Tsy-ling said.

"In fact, the intention behind the project is to lift the ban on construction because the area has been designated as a natural reserve," she said.

"With the ban, locals are not allowed to even repair their houses, which has caused many problems," Lin Tsy-ling said.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2010/07/25](#)