

News digest

The big environmental stories in the Chinese media (9 - 15 April)

China protests Fukushima wastewater decision

Japan's recent decision to discharge wastewater from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station into the ocean has triggered opposition in China.

On 9 April, People's Daily [broke the news](#) that the Japanese government had "basically decided" on the disposal of more than 1 million tons of contaminated water from the damaged nuclear plant. It highlighted protests in Japan by the national fishing industry and environmental groups such as Citizens' Commission on Nuclear Energy, which claimed that Fukushima has sufficient land to store or treat the contaminated water.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued [a public objection](#) on Tuesday, expressing concern that the tritium-polluted water would affect the marine environment and public health in neighbouring countries. The statement criticises Japan's decision to unilaterally dispose of the water without exhausting treatment options. "The disposal of the contaminated water is not Japan's domestic problem," it says. "Japan must not start the discharge before a consensus is reached with stakeholder countries and the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency]."

The issue has become a hot topic on Chinese social media in the past few days. One [trending hashtag](#) says "Fukushima wastewater will pollute half the Pacific Ocean in 57 days", based on modelling results from a German research team.

In [an opinion piece](#) on Guangming Daily, environmental historians Chen Xiang and Mei Xueqin referenced Japan's poor record in managing environmental disasters such as the Minamata mercury pollution case. They suggest China

should consider working with the world's environmental groups, fishing groups and other stakeholders to investigate the impact of the possible discharge, and "prepare for suing the Japanese government and Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) in the international court of justice."

Read China Dialogue's [earlier article](#) on the challenges posed by the Fukushima clean-up.