



WATER QUALITY AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

5th Meeting

2 and 3 August 2001 – Townsville

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

A summary document is prepared after each meeting of the Reef Advisory Committee to inform other advisory committees serving the Authority, and persons generally (including the public) of business of the RAC. The document forms part of the records of the meeting and so its content is limited to matters raised in the meeting, and, where necessary, background details given to the meeting. Any inquiries should be referred to the Authority's Secretariat, or to the appropriate Member.

APPOINTMENTS

The Committee congratulated Sheriden Morris on her appointment as Director, Water Quality and Coastal Development (WQ&CD). New members were welcomed to the meeting.

MINISTERIAL COUNCIL DECISION REGARDING WATER QUALITY ACTION PLAN

The Committee was provided with a brief background to the decision regarding the Water Quality Action Plan. Based on advice provided by the GBRMPA the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Council agreed at the meeting held on 8 June 2001, that water quality was an issue and that land-based activities in catchments do influence inshore marine environments. Senator Hill has directed the GBRMPA to identify a set of targets for each catchment adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP). The Action Plan was to be completed by mid August 2001. A Scientific Working Group consisting of experts in the field of water quality had participated in setting the targets. During discussion members raised the following issues:

- Members felt the initiative should be supported by an integrated communication and involvement plan to develop ownership by stakeholders.
- A costing/resourcing component should be attached to any documents that are put forward – the GBRMPA needs to ensure that the real costs of the program are built in at the beginning.
- The draft targets should be available for a period of public consultation.

WATER QUALITY STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Business Plan

The Committee was briefed on the Strategic Work Plan (SWP) and were advised that the Plan had been changed so that it aligns with the direction contained in the Water Quality Strategy. It has incorporated changes based on the comments of the Water Quality Reef Advisory Committee (WRAC) on the SWP 2000/01. One of the primary issues addressed was communication and, as a result, a communication plan is being developed, there is a commitment to the publication and dissemination of water quality information and the WQ&CD Group's Liaison Officer position has been re-established. Members provided the following comments on the Strategic Work Program:

- Pleased to see that the GBRMPA has responded to the Committee's comments on past plans.

- There are concerns that the resources are not sufficient to achieve the objectives and the plan will not succeed if it is not adequately resourced.
- In the absence of sufficient funding, the GBRMPA needs to make the hard decisions on priorities and what is achievable.
- There is a need for an outcome based document as well as a strategic document.
- Timeframes for each objective would be useful.

Members agreed that they would provide more detailed comments out of session and the Chairperson will draft a summary document based on detailed comments received from Committee members. The Committee was advised that the report *Great Barrier Reef Water Quality: Current Issues* is available, and that it provides an overview of issues and information concerning water quality in the GBRWHA. While the document could be further updated, it provides a good starting point. The WQ&CD Group is seeking comments from the WRAC on the report, particularly on the legislative areas. These will be provided in September.

REVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS FROM STRATEGIC WORK PROGRAM 2000/01

Members were briefed on the achievements from the Strategic Work Program 2000/01.

ISSUES TO BE PROGRESSED

Regional and Catchment Planning

The Committee was provided with an update on the progress of the proposal to establish the Burdekin catchment as a Major National Research Facility (MNRf). The Committee also heard that the Herbert River Integration Study is halfway through and that a workshop outlining the results of the integration will be held on 6 and 9 September 2001.

Client Communication and Involvement Plan

The GBRMPA's Director of Communication and Education advised the Committee that the Communication and Education Group was trying to implement a number of strategies to raise the profile of the GBRMPA and the state of the Great Barrier Reef, including:

- A three-year 'umbrella' position has been developed along with the slogan 'Let's Keep It Great'.
- Developing a campaign focussing on raising awareness that the Reef is at risk. The campaign will include television advertising and community awareness raising programs encouraging a 'call to action'.

- The launch of a new and user-friendly website.

During discussion, members provided the following comments:

- It would be helpful to highlight the users who are doing the right thing and let them be the ones to encourage better management practices.
- The GBRMPA could infiltrate other marketing campaigns.
- The new WQ&CD Liaison Officer position can find existing mechanisms and messages that can be used.

It was noted that the new Liaison Officer position would be responsible for developing the communication plan and will be seeking input from the WRAC.

Reef Protection Taskforce

The Committee heard an update of the status of the Queensland Reef Protection Plan and were advised that a report on the Action Plan will be released at the end of the year. The GBRMPA invited members to provide advice on what kind of approach they should be taking to the Queensland Taskforce meetings, to ensure that there is a successful partnership with Queensland. In response, members provided comments at the meeting. The Chairperson has since collated these and forwarded them to the GBRMPA's Executive for background at the first Taskforce meeting. The summary of comments includes:

- The taskforce needs to have access to the best technical information available and needs strong links to researchers in this field.
- The development of an integrated plan and priority actions should be the focus for the taskforce. It should evaluate those existing programs and strategies that are not working and develop a plan and strategies that cover actions from the catchment sources to the Reef edge.
- Consider enhanced statutory penalties and review activities of primary industries as "environmentally relevant activities" under the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Prohibitions of practices that impact on the values of riparian and wetland areas as important filter areas and resources.
- Remediation of significant wetlands and riparian areas.
- The plan should be developed by: communicating size of problem of protection of Reef to communities involved and identifying individual actions they can take; use science targets; develop ownership for targets and actions; identify nature of change to achieve solutions; spell out actions to achieve solutions; organise funding and responsibility arrangements to monitor the performance of the action plan with ongoing funding dependent on performing.
- Implement recommendations of the Sturgess Report.
- Clearly define the roles and activities of those who are responsible for protecting the Reef and develop performance agreements.
- Identify and understand the reason for resistance to change in implementing sustainable practices and develop strategies and actions to remove these.
- Focus plan on priority areas causing damage and not on "broad brush" approach.
- Ensure strategies such as education, communication, demonstration of practices and solutions and incentives are key elements of the plan.

INDUSTRY CODES OF PRACTICE – PROGRESS

The Chairperson proposed that the next WRAC meeting is held close to the *National Conference Sustaining Our Aquatic Environments – Implementing Solutions* in order to allow industry people presenting material at the conference

to attend the meeting and provide feedback on the Industry Codes of Practice and advise the timelines.

INFORMATION ITEMS

National Land and Water Resources Audit

The Committee was provided with an update on the National Land and Water Resources Audit Estuary Assessment 2000. A report will be finalised and released around October 2001.

Representative Areas Program

An update on the Representative Areas Program was provided by the GBRMPA's Director of Conservation, Biodiversity and World Heritage. Members agreed that it was important to keep the momentum going with the process and continually update stakeholders of the status.

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Report Card

The Committee was provided with background information on the WWF reports – "WWF Report Card" and "Protecting the Water Quality of the GBRWHA from Land-Based Pollution".

OTHER BUSINESS

Effect of Sediment on Coral Reefs

A researcher presented video footage demonstrating the effect of sediment on inshore reefs in the Wet Tropics and reefs in Princess Charlotte Bay. This presentation was a shorter version of the presentation delivered at the last Ministerial Council meeting. The Committee agreed that a video such as this, highlighting the effects of sediment on coral reefs, would be extremely beneficial in trying to get the message across to the community and stakeholders.

Conservation Reef Advisory Committee

Recommendation

The Conservation Reef Advisory Committee (CRAC) recommended that the WRAC place a high priority on the setting of statutory limits for pollutant discharges into the World Heritage Area for the conservation of the biodiversity and world heritage values of the area. The Committee agreed to provide feedback on the recommendation to the CRAC.

NEXT MEETING

It was proposed that the next meeting be held in November 2001.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Tony Allingham	Grazing Industry
Ms Claudia Baldwin	Department of Natural Resources
Mr Harry Bonanno	Sugarcane Industry
Cr Greg Breckell	Local Government
Mr Martin Breen	Aquaculture
Mr Noel Dawson (Chairperson)	Water Quality
Mr Tony Fontes	Tourism Industry
Dr Miles Furnas	AIMS/CRC Water Quality
Ms Margaret Moore	Conservation
Ms Sheriden Morris	GBRMPA
Mr Chris Pattearson	Environmental Protection Agency
Dr Christian Roth	CSIRO Tropical Land and Water Management
Dr Nick Schofield	Catchment Management
Dr Roger Shaw	Coastal CRC
Mr Kirk Smith	Catchment Management/Landcare
Mr Ian Sutton	Conservation
Mr Vern Veitch	Recreational Fishing
Ms Imogen Zethoven	Conservation