

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.

# **WATER QUALITY AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

## **8<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

### **24 and 25 October 2002 – Townsville**

## **SUMMARY DOCUMENT**

### **NATIONAL ACTION PLAN (NAP) FOR SALINITY AND WATER QUALITY AND THE NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST (NHT) MARK II**

Members were advised that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) had been involved to date with the NAP and NHT II programs through:

- Its position as a non-voting member of the Burdekin Dry Tropics Board, the Fitzroy Basin Association Management Committee and the Natural Resource Management Board (Wet Tropics) Inc;
- Representation to Technical Advisory Groups which are being established by the Boards; and
- Representation on the Regional Strategy Group in Mackay/Whitsunday region.

The Committee also heard a brief update on NHT II negotiations with the Commonwealth advising that the bilateral negotiations are at an impasse. A partnership has been established between the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, and a natural resource management taskforce has been established to focus on rolling out NHT II and NAP.

### **REEF WATER QUALITY PROTECTION PLAN AND STEERING COMMITTEE**

Members were advised that since the release of the Reef Protection Plan and the GBR Water Quality Action Plan, the Commonwealth and Queensland governments have agreed on a joint approach to protect the GBR World Heritage Area (WHA) from land based pollution. The Committee were further advised that:

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on developing practical actions to improve water quality impacts in the GBRWHA had been adopted between the Prime Minister and the Queensland Premier;

- A number of projects including the 'no regrets' package had been finalised; and
- The Productivity Commission is undertaking an economic and socio-economic research study to examine the importance of different industries in the GBR catchment and the cost/benefits of on-ground actions to address declining water quality entering the GBR.

### **GBRWHA WATER QUALITY MONITORING**

Members were given a presentation on integrated water quality monitoring for the GBRWHA and advised that the monitoring report is being peer reviewed. Once the report has been finalised it will be submitted to the GBRMPA.

### **PROPOSAL FOR DEVELOPING FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR WATER QUALITY AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT**

Members were given a presentation on developing future scenarios for water quality and coastal development and advised that this type of process is necessary in order to respond to a rapidly changing environment.

### **EXPLORING INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO PROTECTION OF THE GBRMP**

Members were briefed on a number of processes that could be undertaken in order to achieve environmental outcomes without crucifying land owners. The processes discussed were as follows:

- Stewardship payments/ecosystem services;
- Retirement of marginal land/new land uses;
- All export goods subject to Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) assessment;
- Riparian and wetlands protection and restoration;
- Organic farming;
- National environment levy;

- Environmental certification system;
- Leasehold land review; and
- Support for local rural communities – funding options.

The Committee also heard a presentation discussing grazing in the dry tropics.

**STRATEGIC APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT OF FUNDING FOR WATER QUALITY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R&D) PROGRAM**

The Committee was advised that the GBRMPA’s most preferred research provider is CRC Reef Research Centre, however, would like to encourage other research bodies to uptake research where there are gaps. In discussing research and development, the issue of Crown-of-thorns Starfish (COTS) was raised and it was stated that the seafood industry supported the tourism industry in encouraging the COTS issue to be recognised as a research priority.

**MEETING SUMMARY**

During the course of the meeting the following five core issues were identified:

- 1 Response to the Reef Protection Plan;
- 2 Strategic implications for the WRAC;
- 3 Research and development funding and mapping out R&D environment;
- 4 Innovative solutions; and
- 5 Water quality monitoring.

The summary of these issues is as follows:

*Response to the Reef Protection Plan*

- Property based resource plans are building blocks;
- The plans should be voluntary based and on a risk or priority basis;
- Use Water Act requirements as an example;
- Look at amending existing legislation rather than developing new legislation;
- Be party to reviews currently in place;
- Need adequate constraint mapping;
- When looking at engagement and extension there is a role for bottom/up processes as well as top/down processes;
- Look at financial institutions in these arrangements;
- Need to preserve existing ecosystems in addition to rehabilitation;
- Recognise that structural adjustment;
- Look at a whole range of incentive regimes;
- Be outcome based rather than process based;
- Need for urgency; and

- WRAC are very much party to the leasehold review and priority basis.

*Strategic implications for the WRAC*

- Engage in ongoing awareness raising within the community at large;
- Time to mature and develop message with no surprises;
- Have important role in monitoring;
- The GBRMPA to have a statutory auditing responsibility and role in reporting to government and stakeholders;
- Need better interaction with local government; and
- Philosophy – dual role and careful balance with limited resources.

*Research and development funding*

- At the next meeting, discuss how the GBRMPA does business and provides direction in the R&D world.

*Water Quality Monitoring*

- There is strong support for stewardship;
- Look at the possibility of grandfathering out properties;
- Acknowledge where there is a lifestyle;
- Look at the no net loss policy for wetlands;
- Redirect the river improvement trust money;
- Look at the drainage networks and understand how sub-catchments work; and
- Need to manage the environment to allow for sustainable farming.

**NEXT MEETING**

It was proposed that the next meeting be held in March 2003.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE	
Mr Tony Allingham .....	Grazing Industry
Ms Claudia Baldwin .....	Dept Natural Resources and Mines
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
Mr Nick Heath .....	Qld Seafood Industry Association
Ms Margaret Moore .....	Conservation
Ms Sheriden Morris .....	GBRMPA
Mr Chris Pattearson .....	Environmental Protection Agency
Dr Christian Roth .....	CSIRO
Dr Nick Schofield .....	Catchment Management
Dr Roger Shaw .....	Coastal CRC
Mr Kirk Smith .....	Catchment Management/ Landcare
Mr Ian Sutton .....	Conservation
Mr Mark Tucker .....	Environment Australia
Mr Vern Veitch .....	Recreational Fishing
Ms Imogen Zethoven .....	Conservation