

A summary document is prepared after each meeting of the Reef Advisory Committee (RAC) 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 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Secretariat, or to the appropriate Member.



WATER QUALITY AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (WRAC)

11th Meeting
26 and 27 November 2003 – Townsville

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

BRIEFINGS ON PROGRESS

The Chairpersons of Natural Resource Management (NRM) regional groups provided an update outlining their activities regarding plan development and priority action proposals. The Committee was advised:

National Action Plan (NAP)/Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) Progress

- Two plans were recently released for public consultation; the Queensland Murray-Darling Plan and the Fitzroy Plan.
- Queensland has yet to sign the NHT2 bilateral agreement with the Australian Government. \$16 million has been released to the regional bodies.
- The national Landcare program was recently released. From Queensland's perspective, there are two components: (1) an opportunity for each regional body to be given funding to employ a regional co-ordinator, or to use the allocation for projects that would meet the objectives of the national Landcare program; and (2) a grants program. It is understood that approximately \$4 million worth of funding will be available for Queensland, to be dispersed equally between the regional bodies during the first year. The Australian Government is keen to see the development of projects to run over a three-year period, at least.
- Queensland and Australian Governments have agreed to release NHT2 funds which included \$1.72 million for world heritage areas; \$890,000 for a state-wide component, and \$11.39 million for a regional component. The Governments requested the Regional Groups to submit a one-page indicative proposal in December 2003, with a firm proposal following a more consultative process by the end of February 2004. Regional bodies have also been allocated foundation funding for the development of regional plans.
- The Landcare and Catchment Management Council has effectively been dissolved and been replaced by the Queensland Water and Landcarers Group.

Burnett/Mary NRM Board

- The group's new executive is now in place. Two additional appointments (coastal management and Indigenous) will be made shortly.
- A board meeting is scheduled for December 2003.
- Landcare groups appear to have received considerable funding. Need to be sure that the groups work together.

Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA)

- The group hopes for a quick turnaround on their recently submitted plan, to secure funding so that the plan can be implemented as soon as possible.

- All targets are community-negotiated, and will be regularly reviewed.
- A big challenge is to overcome the current distrust of Government. Some feel that their input into the many consultation processes they had been asked to participate in has not been valued.
- The group attempted to ensure that all concerns were addressed; targets were valued and considered. The trust will build again with the continued negotiation and consultation over issues of concern, and suggested targets.
- In relation to monitoring and evaluation, the group acknowledged that they have to go back to the grassroots; that is, getting land-based owners involved in monitoring their own properties, to give them ownership of that activity.
- Local government is participating quite valuably in terms of assisting with business plans, etc. The group is very appreciative of their membership, acknowledging that it is imperative that local government is involved.

Mackay/Whitsunday NRM Group

- Currently, the group is looking to expanding the board.
- It is hoped to have a plan produced by June 2004.
- The group works very closely with local government and Landcare, as well as the local River Trust groups.
- The group has received foundation and regional coordination funding from the NHT2, in addition to some initial joint funding from Sunwater and the Department of Primary Industries.

Burdekin Dry Tropics Board

- The group hopes to have their plan completed by June 2004. One project is aimed at implementing land management on the rangelands, and a second involves a wetlands rehabilitation project.
- Co-ordinators are in place in sub-regions. There is a position earmarked for Palm Island, and it is hoped to fill this in early 2004.
- There is no executive officer and, at this stage, there are insufficient funds to re-advertise the position. All positions are to be reviewed in terms of redefining their roles.
- The annual general meeting is scheduled for December 2003, when it is hoped to appoint at least one Indigenous representative.
- The group would like to foster more local government participation; perhaps a joint program to involve both Townsville and Thuringowa Councils.
- It was important to acknowledge the valuable contribution of those within the community involved in such programs.

Wet Tropics NRM Board

- The group is set to meet the deadline for submission of their plan by June 2004. The regional targets developed by the group, and agreed to by the board, will be subject to a process of community consultation.
- Even though there are a vast number of volunteers involved in the group, there is concern that any cuts to funding may have an adverse affect on the group's ability to deliver regional natural resource management.
- There is concern that the Indigenous community is not sufficiently involved.
- In some areas of the community, there appears to be some resistance to change. The group hopes to work through these barriers to help people learn new and improved skills and techniques.
- The group hopes to be able to raise considerable funds from non-government sources and sponsorship to implement programs.

IMPLEMENTATION OF REEF WATER QUALITY PROTECTION PLAN

Members were advised that, in producing the final Plan, feedback from the recent consultation process was taken into consideration (e.g., concern at the lack of extension; water quality improvement plans; and mention from a number of organisations and agencies who felt that they had had a significant role to play but were not specifically acknowledged). Associated with the implementation of the Plan, has been a bid by the Department of the Environment and Heritage for an additional \$18.5 million towards implementation of the Reef Plan through programs such as water quality improvement plans, as well as the prospect of a further \$8 million to the GBRMPA over four years towards a marine water quality monitoring program. This bid represents a serious commitment on behalf of the Department, and it will be the GBRMPA's challenge to ensure that the commitment is met.

WATER QUALITY MONITORING AND RESEARCH – FRAMEWORK, OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIES

Members were advised that it was a priority action for the GBRMPA to develop and manage a reef-wide monitoring program. Incorporated in the program will be river and estuary water quality monitoring, reef water quality monitoring and marine biological monitoring. Consideration will also be given to socio-economic monitoring in terms of tourism, industry, community and environmental perceptions. In discussion, members made the following comments:

- A fairly comprehensive scan of the seabed is currently underway as part of a CRC Reef project to locate deep seagrass beds, important for migratory species.
- Monitoring should embrace the whole process; that is, from the catchments, to the mouth, and through to the GBR, and be related back to activities on the land.
- For long-term outcomes, it is important for land managers to be fully trained in whatever monitoring system is put in place, so that they are fully aware that what they do on their land has consequences for the GBR.
- It is important to have a mix of community-based monitoring to complement a network. It is also important that the lead agency provides some guidance and leadership, to ensure that systems are compatible.

- The Reef Water Quality Protection Plan taskforce will take a leadership role in the process. A clear commitment has been made to monitor the marine environment.

WETLAND PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

- Members were briefed through a series of presentations on:
- Wetlands of the GBR catchment, including wetland values, changes and protection needs, and wetland rehabilitation activities;
 - Research being undertaken on wetland changes in the GBR catchment and impacts on wetlands in the future;
 - The potential use of remote sensing and GIS analysis to determine wetland location, function and condition; and
 - The Australian Government's program to protect and restore wetlands of significance to the water quality of the GBR catchment.

REPRESENTATIVE AREAS PROGRAM (RAP)

Members were given the latest RAP update that included information on the conduct of and response to the second community consultation phase, prior to the amended Zoning Plan being submitted to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage for consideration by the Australian Parliament. The level of response during the consultation process showed that there is a real desire by the communities in regional areas to be involved, and to have input into the management of their region. In discussion, members identified the following issues:

- It was suggested that the RAP process may also provide the ideal opportunity for the Australian Government to consider improvements in the protection of river mouths past the existing netting exclusions.
- In terms of dugong protection areas, concern was expressed that there were no yellow zones in the southern area of the GBR.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 11 and Friday 12 March 2004.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Tony Allingham	Grazing Industry
Cr Mike Berwick	Wet Tropics NRM Board
Ms Veronica Blazely	Dept of the Environment and Heritage
Mr Harry Bonanno	Sugarcane Industry
Cr Greg Breckell	Local Government
Mr Martin Breen	Aquaculture
Mr Noel Dawson (Chairperson)	Water Quality
Mr James Epong	Indigenous
Mr Tony Fontes	Tourism Industry
Dr Miles Furnas	AIMS/CRC Water Quality
Mr Nick Heath	Qld Seafood Industry Association
Ms Sheriden Morris	GBRMPA
Mr Chris Patearson	Environmental Protection Agency
Dr Tony Pressland	Qld Dept Natural Resources and Mines
Cr Clive Rogers	Mackay/Whitsunday NRM Group
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 Vern Veitch	Recreational Fishing
Ms Barbara Wildin	Fitzroy Basin Association
Ms Imogen Zethoven	Conservation