

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 (WRAC) 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting 7 March 2003 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

## NATIONAL ACTION PLAN (NAP) AND NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST (NHT)

Briefings were heard from each of the Chairpersons of Natural Resource Management (NRM) regional bodies that sit on the Committee.

The following points were raised during the briefings:

- Landcare are heading in their own direction and it is a challenge to get them on board in some locations;
- The issue of what to do when profitability and sustainability do not go hand in hand;
- The regional bodies need to clearly understand what the role of the GBRMPA is, regarding the protection of the values of the Reef and World Heritage Area (WHA);
- There is an opportunity for all GBRMPA programs to use the regional bodies as a mechanism for consultation and to act as a mediator;
- The catchment/regional performance targets need to be set at an achievable level, in order to gain acceptance; and
- Science needs to be communicated in different ways depending on locations and the industry.

## REEF WATER QUALITY PROTECTION PLAN

Members were updated on the status of the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (the Plan).

Members provided the following comments on the draft Plan:

- The management arrangement for the Plan needs to be clearly identified;
- All parties need to work under the same banner in the implementation of the Plan with the responsibilities for each participating group clearly identified;
- Building trust will be beneficial in implementing the Plan;
- Compensation should be considered as a viable strategy where sustainable land use or sustainable practice and economic viability do not match up;
- Need to build the acceptance of the GBRMPA taking the high ground in terms of protecting/maintaining values of the WHA;
- The initial targets need to be set at a level that regions can implement;
- The industry bodies have a major role in the implementation of the Plan;
- The July timelines to complete the Plan and the Regional planning associated with it are unrealistic;
- The quantum of funding needed and funding sources for the implementation of the Plan strategies needs to be outlined;
- Need clear cross reference between Sugar rural adjustment package and the Plan;
- Implementation should include involvement of Industry Guidance Group and Regional Guidance Groups being established through the Sugar review package as the peak industry representative group;

- The reporting of monitoring and auditing of progress needs secure ongoing resourcing in terms of management and funding; and
- Monitoring and auditing will be important to establish quantifiable outputs and report achievements.

The Committee wanted to reinforce previous comments that emphasised that Rural Reconstruction/Adjustment was a major tool particularly where incentives will not work and properties sizes or debt mean that units are not viable. They also wanted a total NRM approach to funding so that funds such as River Improvement Trust monies focus on priority actions in the NRM plans.

The Chairperson will draft a letter to the Chairperson of the GBRMPA outlining suggestions to improve the draft Plan based on these comments so that these can be forwarded to the Plan's Steering Committee.

### Wetlands Drainage

Feedback was sought from the Committee regarding wetlands drainage. Members were advised that there were two activities regarding wetlands that did not seem to be picked up by legislation: 1) digging drains; and 2) the building of levy banks and pondage banks up to seven metres.

Members advised that it was important to identify a clear definition of a wetland. They further stated that it is important to consider the following:

- There are two sets of issues to consider when discussing wetlands: 1) the wetland itself; and 2) the hydrological activity;
- It would be beneficial to consolidate all information collated over the last 15 years in order to determine where the gaps are – this will help to determine the definition of a wetland;
- Important that you do not modify the catchment so that it accelerates the water flow;
- There is a need for a clear, whole of government policy and definition of wetlands and first order streams (mapping, definition, values, impacts of users and eco-dependency);
- It is the role of the Water Quality Strategic Investment Proposals (SIPS) to address the definition of wetlands, and to develop an agreed set of criteria; and

- Some of these definition issues can be sorted through utilising the funding of the GBR Catchment Wetlands Protection Plan Program.

### WATER QUALITY AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT GROUP WORK PROGRAM 2003-2004

The Committee was advised of the structural changes that have occurred over the past three to six months. Within the new structure, the aim has been to try to restructure the roles of the staff within the Group so that they can effectively work towards the structures in place in the field. The aim at present is for each manager to have a regional responsibility with a Project Manager acting as a proxy.

### NEXT MEETING

The Committee agreed that the 10<sup>th</sup> WRAC meeting would be held on Thursday 22 and Friday 23 May 2003 to coincide with the release of the draft Reef Plan.

The meeting will also review the findings of the Science Report in terms of the GBRMPA's research and development priorities and research arrangements.

#### CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Tony Allingham .....	Grazing Industry
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 Sheriden Morris .....	GBRMPA
Mr Chris Pattearson .....	Environmental Protection Agency
Dr Christian Roth .....	CSIRO
Ms Alison Russell-French .....	Environment Australia
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