

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.



GREAT BARRIER REEF
MARINE PARK AUTHORITY

WATER QUALITY AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (WRAC) 10th Meeting 22 May 2003 – Rockhampton SUMMARY DOCUMENT

BRIEFINGS ON PROGRESS

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

Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA)

- Meetings with stakeholders are occurring to assess FBA's draft Central Queensland Information Paper which is the basis for the region's NRM Plan.
- The Information Paper outlines each catchment resource condition and proposes a number of targets to achieve improvement in sustainable use of the resources.

Burnett/Mary NRM Board

- A new Executive Officer is being recruited.
- Refinement of Priority Action Proposals is being undertaken to obtain funding.

Mackay/Whitsunday NRM Group

- The Healthy Waterways Program is progressing.
- A Water Quality Improvement Plan is being prepared.
- Improving the engagement of the Indigenous community.

Burdekin Dry Tropics Board

- Developing an information paper to build on existing catchment condition reports as a basis for developing its NRM plan.
- Progressing an implementation program for its approved Priority Action Proposals.

Interim Working Group Wet Tropics NRM Board

- Progressing the appointment of a new Board.
- Progressing the development of a Wet Tropics NRM Plan.
- Undertaking preliminary work identifying Priority Action Proposals for when the Natural Heritage Trust 2 (NHT2) is signed off.

State Perspective of Progress on Regional NRM Process

- Developing its Regional Coordination Groups including regional workshops for government agency staff.
- Reviewing its advisory groups; e.g., Landcare and Catchment Management Council (LCMC).
- Vegetation clearing moratorium is in place.
- NHT2 Bilateral is still being negotiated.

During discussion members advised:

- There is a perception that targets were being set without community involvement. Without community involvement there will be no ownership and a real understanding of the funds and technical resource support to meet these.
- There is a belief from some industries that they are ahead of the government in addressing the issue.

- Members would like to see the regional processes progressed and fully supported by the government and other stakeholder groups.
- Concern was raised about the sugar industry's reluctance to be involved in addressing water quality issues.
- Encouraging Indigenous input and cooperation will ensure positive outcomes.
- Achievable targets must be set to ensure success.
- Conservation groups have suggested to the Minister that a special NRM meeting be convened later in the year to discuss progress.

DRAFT REEF WATER QUALITY PROTECTION PLAN

A copy of the Draft Reef Water Quality Protection Plan was circulated to members and they were advised that the document was not the final version. The final document can be accessed on the web at www.thepremier.qld.gov.au/reefwater/

While it was recognised that members had not had the opportunity to have a serious look at the draft Plan, in discussion the following comments were noted:

- There should be clarification/distinction between codes of practice; which is the base level duty of care and Best Management Practices, which are a higher level, in developing resource management plans and property management plans.
- The Queensland and Federal Governments were commended for coming together on this issue.
- The sugar industry reforms and actions to improve water quality should be linked to the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan.
- It is not clear what some of the links are in the Plan to other processes.
- The Plan does not affect tenure or title and, as such, Native Title should not be affected.
- To achieve the ten-year timeframe good indicators would have to be in place.
- Inner reef decline is linked to outer reef health; a healthy system can bounce back whereas an unhealthy one cannot.

In conclusion, members were advised that there would be targeted consultation with stakeholders up and down the coast. Submissions on the Plan are due by 14 July 2003, and then this information would be used by the steering committee to finalise the Plan as soon as possible after the closure date. This is an opportunity to give thought to alternative wording of the Plan.

WATER QUALITY RESEARCH – GBRMPA PRIORITIES, GAPS, FUNDING AND OPPORTUNITIES

Members were advised that the Reef Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) and Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Scheme are the main research providers to the GBRMPA for Water Quality research, and the role of the GBRMPA is to synthesise the information supplied, recommend and sometimes implement changes. The GBRMPA has an important role in coordinating the whole of the GBR and its catchment-monitoring program, and has to report on the progress of implementation of the plan to the GBR Ministerial Council.

Members provided the following comments:

- Regional people need to be included.
- Understanding and ownership must be developed.
- Achievable targets should be set to ensure success.
- Indigenous communities need to be engaged more effectively.
- Decisions should be made carefully to avoid duplication.
- Under the reef plan the GBRMPA has taken on the role of coordinating monitoring in the GBR and the mouths of rivers; and Queensland has the role within the catchments.
- Work with the Coastal CRC to review water quality targets coordinated with regional NRM catchment extension programs.
- Dissemination of information is critical.
- Environment Australia (EA) funded a National Land and Water Audit (NLWA) project that looks into the economic, social and institutional function in the GBR catchment with the report due to EA by the end of May 2003.

WETLAND ISSUES

Members were briefed on wetland initiatives in Queensland. During discussion, members' comments included:

- Firstly the focus should be on protecting remaining wetlands.
- Queensland does not have specific legislation to protect wetlands; this is important to get public support.
- Wetlands are being identified through an improved mapping methodology run by Queensland with which the GBRMPA has been assisting.
- The Reef Protection Plan offers significant weight for improved wetland protection.
- A linkage to relevant legislative mechanisms in mapping is important to achieve the desired outcomes.
- The Environmental Protection Agency Wetlands Group has been working on mapping for 20 years refining the satellite imagery process to use as a broad landscape assessment tool; this can also be used for vegetation planning.

AQUACULTURE UPDATE

Members were advised that due to the inconsistencies in the different legislative and management regimes up and down the coast, the GBRMPA were having problems in achieving a unified approach to the management of aquaculture in the GBRMP. Working closely with Queensland, the GBRMPA has developed assessment guidelines for coastal aquaculture developments. There are still some outstanding issues such as disease management, escapees, latency and consistency. The GBRMPA is intending to work very closely with Queensland to get the accreditation process in the GBR Aquaculture regulations finalised.

- The GBRMPA is seeking to accredit the State Government aquaculture assessment and approval process to regulate

aquaculture; however, certain developments will still require approval under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.

- The processes of developing a policy statement regarding aquaculture activities within the GBRMP and the development of a Queensland Marine Aquaculture Management Plan are linked.

REPRESENTATIVE AREAS PROGRAM

The Committee was advised that the Draft Zoning Plan (DZP) for the Representative Areas Program (RAP) will be released on 2 June 2003. The DZP provides legal and detailed information about proposed zoning changes in the GBRMP. The Community Information Phase 2 occurs between 10 June and 27 June 2003. Targeted consultation with stakeholders will be ongoing. Submissions close on 4 August 2003.

HEALTHY COUNTRY

Members were briefed on the "Healthy Country" program which is part of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) National Research Flagships initiative that brings together science and industry to deal with key challenges in areas such as preventative healthcare, light metals, water, food, oceans and energy. Members were also advised:

- The Healthy Country Flagship is aiming for a tenfold increase in the social, economic and environmental benefits from water use by 2025.
- The program proposes to be working on five nodes; South Australia, GBR catchment, Murray Basin, Tropics Rivers and South Melbourne metropolitan focus.
- To ensure success of Healthy Country it has been proposed that Land and Water Australia manage it on behalf of CSIRO.
- A proposal is being developed to go to the CSIRO board in the first week of June 2003.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 26 and Thursday 27 November 2003.

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
Mr Russell Watkinson	Wet Tropics Joint Working Group
Ms Barbara Wildin	Fitzroy Basin Association
Ms Imogen Zethoven	Conservation