

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) 12th Meeting 11 and 12 March 2004 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

RAINFOREST TO REEF PRESENTATION

The CRC Reef is in the process of preparing their rebid. Members were presented with an outline of the proposal and the linkage with the CSIRO Healthy Country Flagship and the Rainforest CRC. The proposal would concentrate on knowledge exchange, solutions and science to assist in the implementation of the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (RPP). The WRAC agreed to be an Advisory group, particularly in regard to Reef water quality and the implementation of the RPP. The Committee strongly supports the CRC Reef's integration with programs such as Healthy Country and Catchment to Reef.

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

- There are currently three programs: NAP; NHT and the National Landcare Program.
- The NHT bilateral agreement has not been signed.
- An officer from the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy is responsible for going through the Reef Protection Plan (RPP) and determining what is currently happening, what needs to happen and identifying any gaps.
- Applications for National Landcare Program money will be assessed through the steering committee.

Burnett/Mary NRM Board

- There is a better understanding of both the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) and the Board's responsibilities.
- The Burnett/Mary Corporate Governance went to the last meeting and was accepted.
- The community has been engaged in round table forums and the feedback was that communication needs improving.
- It is intended to have the plan before the JSC in June 2004.

Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA)

- The Coastal CRC was contracted to deliver the Fitzroy Basin paper.

- The FBA plan is receiving comments. After comments are received, an investment strategy will be developed in consultation with State and Commonwealth agents.
- The Calliope region has been left out of this process as it is outside the NAP region; however, the FBA has commissioned the Coastal CRC to undertake the development of an information paper for that region.

Mackay/Whitsunday NRM Group

- The Mackay/Whitsunday Group is in the process of compiling an accredited plan.
- Coordination of the Indigenous communities has been done by the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy.
- It is intended that a draft plan will be delivered by the end of July 2004.
- A business manager has been employed.

Burdekin Dry Tropics Board

- The group is presently recruiting a new Executive Officer.
- The regional planning processes are going well and are well placed to meet deadlines.
- The current focus is establishing effective mechanisms to engage the community.

Wet Tropics

- It is intended to publish the draft targets late April, early May 2004.
- Public meetings have been run in two stages and have allowed input into the draft targets. Stage one has just been completed and has been successful.
- The group is looking at the potential development of primary and secondary school programs for the region.
- Possible funding opportunities from other sources are being considered.
- Recognition that there is potential for this product to be developed internationally.

Further briefs were received on:

Great Barrier Reef Wetland Protection Program

- A joint Queensland and Australian Government Wetlands Taskforce has been established.
- The Taskforce is looking at the linkages between the GBR Wetlands Protection Program and the RPP; what the government arrangements will be, including NRM governance.
- Progress is being made with the Decisions Support System.

- At the last meeting of the Taskforce, the group was keen to conduct mapping of wetlands and develop an inventory.
- A Communication Working Group has been established and its first task is to identify all stakeholders and identify any gaps in existing strategies.
- The Environmental Protection Agency has been working with developing a technique using vegetation mapping.
- It is important that, in terms of wetland protection, wetlands are built into the Vegetation Act.

Reef Water Quality Protection Plan

- The RPP was released in December 2003.
- In February 2004, there was a meeting in Canberra with NRM groups regarding the implementation of plans.
- The RPP module is being developed and will be circulated as soon as possible.
- A paper discussing what the governance arrangements are and where they fit in the structure outlined in the plan is being developed.

Members provided the following comments:

- Government agencies need to accept that they are dealing with a shifting paradox and that NRM plans are living documents.
- Structural and economical blockages need to be identified.
- There is concern about the money that becomes available outside planned arrangements and the pressure this puts on regional groups.
- The Committee agreed that it would like to progress seeking possible funding opportunities both locally and internationally in a cooperative way.

BRIEFING ON WATER QUALITY CONFERENCE

The Chairperson attended the Catchment to Reef Conference held 9-11 March 2004 in Townsville and advised that many of the knowledge gaps have been filled, in terms of the reef and river mouth – sediment source and transport; the impacts on the estuaries and reef; and future priorities to fill these gaps were all covered well. There will be two products from the conference: the conference papers will be published through the *Marine Pollution Bulletin*; and there will also be a conference proceedings publication in plain English.

A guest speaker discussed the role of science in programs, advising that a lot of people approach science in a traditional way, and that science providers are looking at ways to improve this. The Committee was further advised:

- There needs to be alternative information products that capture the imagination of people;
- Extension and education plays a major role in the translation of science; and
- Thorough integration is required to have the information accessible.

Members provided feedback on what the needs of the decision makers and regional bodies regarding science were:

- The process of determining what the problem is and what research is required to solve the problem needs engagement from stakeholders.
- Many approaches may be applicable; therefore, the strategy should be distributed to NRM groups for comment.
- There needs to be a clear definition of what the definition of research is and what the blockages are.

- The science has to set a credible and transparent process for prioritisation.

Members discussed suitable mechanisms of presenting science, particularly after the conference, and agreed that there were two favourable options in taking science to the community:

- Circulate a questionnaire asking people how they would like to see the science; and
- Consider the option of having a road show, with a panel of scientists travelling to each of the regions to which people can meet with and ask questions.

WATER QUALITY MONITORING ON THE REEF AND CATCHMENTS

Members were briefed through a series of presentations on:

- Community Involvement in Water Quality Monitoring – Lessons from *Waterwatch* FNQ.
- Integrated Area Water Management in the Fitzroy.
- Progress in the Development of Statewide Arrangements for Water Quality Monitoring.
- Consortium for Institutional Research Management.

The Committee also heard an update on the Coastal CRC's activities:

- The coast is seen as a complex area, environmentally, economically and socially, and there is only one agency to look after the coast as a whole.
- The Coastal CRC will maintain strategic projects; e.g., incentives project for the Great Barrier Reef and also the Department of the Environment and Heritage project looking at coastal and estuarine indicators.
- The Coastal CRC is trying to establish links by liaising with everybody.
- In terms of the new CRC, there are three research areas: understanding ecosystem resilience; better decision making processes; and knowledge exchange.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held late July 2004.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Tony Allingham	Grazing Industry
Cr Mike Berwick	Wet Tropics NRM Board
Ms Veronica Blazely	Dept Environment and Heritage
Mr Harry Bonanno	Sugarcane Industry
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	CSIRO
Mr Tim O'Shane	Indigenous
Mr Chris Pattearson	Environmental Protection Agency
Dr Tony Pressland	Qld Dept Natural Resources and Mines
Cr Clive Rogers	Mackay/Whitsunday NRM Group
Dr Nick Schofield	Catchment Management
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
Mr Hugh Yorkston	GBRMPA