

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) 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting 22 and 23 July 2004 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

## BRIEFINGS ON PROGRESS

### *National Action Plan (NAP)/Natural Heritage Trust (NHT)*

#### *Progress*

- All groups are very active in developing their plans.
- The Federal Minister will announce regional competitive bids.
- A document on how the reef actions of the Reef Plan are embedded into the regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) plans has been released for comment.
- The Joint Steering Committee (JSC) is meeting twice a year with the Regional Group Collective and the project implementation board(s).
- The NHT Bilateral has been signed off.

### *Burnett/Mary NRM Board*

- The Chair has been reappointed for a further two years.
- The draft Burnett/Mary Regional NRM Plan is with the JSC seeking sign off for public comment.
- The group is in process of developing an Investment Plan.
- The Board still does not have an Indigenous representative on the ground.

### *Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA)*

- The Fitzroy Basin Plan has gone to the Minister for signing and accreditation.
- The Investment Strategy is being developed.
- The Executive Officer position will be advertised in the near future.

### *Mackay/Whitsunday NRM Group (MWNRM)*

- The draft Regional Plan is with the Regional Coordination Group for final perusal and will then be sent to the JSC for approval for release for public consultation.
- The regional Investment Strategy is being developed at the same time.
- Sector agreements have been negotiated with all critical sectors.
- The MWNRM group has a leadership role in a number of cross regional projects.
- The MWNRM Group has developed the Healthy Waterways Program.

### *Burdekin Dry Tropics Board*

- The regional plan is due to go to the JSC at the end of August 2004.
- A new Chief Executive Officer has been appointed.

### *Wet Tropics*

- The plan is close to being submitted to the JSC for approval for public release.
- There has been commitment from farmers, industry and local government; however, there has been a poor response from the marine side of the tourism industry.
- There is concern about the definition of Best Management Practice (BMP) across the region.

### *Reef Water Quality Protection Plan*

- With regard to monitoring programs, the GBRMPA is developing the Marine Park component and looking at a coordinated process for the Reef Plan.

- There will be reporting requirements and an audit process.
- There have been a number of funding announcements in recent times including \$6.063 million for the monitoring program over three years. The funding comes from the national NHT funding area.
- The Minister for the Environment and Heritage recently announced further funding for the implementation of the Reef Plan.

## REEF WATER QUALITY PROTECTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Members were advised that the GBRMPA will have a role to play in the implementation of the Reef Plan and will take the lead role in:

- Developing a monitoring program;
  - Developing reporting processes;
  - Providing information about industry and marine values; and
  - Building in socio-economic values into the monitoring program.
- Members provided the following comments:
- Until incentives are developed, practices will not be adopted.
  - The WRAC should focus on implementation of the critical elements of the Plan, particularly the improvement of incentives and BMP.
  - The peak industry groups have the absolute role in the development and delivery of best management practices.
  - The issue of monitoring the results of the incentive program needs to be included in the GBRMPA implementation plan for the Reef Plan, so the WRAC can review it.
  - As all the actions in the Reef Plan have a lead agency, it would be useful to have a contact name and phone number for each of these agencies.

## SOLUTIONS CONFERENCE – FOLLOW-UP ON THE MARCH 2004 GBR WATER QUALITY CONFERENCE

The Committee was advised that the Healthy Country, Healthy Reef Conference will be held in Cairns on 23-25 November 2004. At the Catchment to Reef Conference held in March 2004, it was acknowledged that something more solution based was required. As a result, the Reef CRC has been invited to participate in the Rainforest CRC annual conference in November.

Members suggested the following ideas for workshops at the conference:

- Douglas area outcomes and the relationship between water quality and best management practices.
- Invite an industry leader from each of the major sectors to describe what they see as best management practice (i.e., practising cane grower, banana grower, horticulturist, grazier).
- Incentives – what is out there, what can be delivered, how?
- Local government planning and how it can be done sustainably.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.rainforest-crc.jcu.edu/events/Catchment%20to%20Reef%20Conf.htm>

## **INTEGRATED MONITORING PROGRAM PROPOSAL AND THE ROLE OF THE WRAC**

At the last meeting, the role of the WRAC was discussed and it was felt the WRAC was a relevant group to act as a forum for the Regional Chairs and other interest bodies to monitor progress on the Reef Plan and other relevant inter-regional issues involving the GBRMPA. As a result, it was agreed to further explore the WRAC's role in terms of the GBR Catchments Water Quality Coordination Group (WQCG).

## **GBRMPA WATER QUALITY AND ECOSYSTEM HEALTH MONITORING AND MODELLING**

The Committee heard a presentation on the Reef Plan Marine and Estuarine Water Quality and Ecosystem health Monitoring Program. Members advised it is important to look at the social and economic aspects in the beginning of the process, and reiterated that monitoring is a management tool and is essential to benchmark performance of change in practices and land use.

## **WQCG – WATER QUALITY MONITORING COORDINATION IN THE REEF CATCHMENT**

### ***Project Rationale/Background***

Members were advised that this framework will coordinate and facilitate data sharing across all regional bodies. The objective of the group's discussion at this meeting is to provide outcomes to move the project forward. The following comments were noted:

- The keys to the proposal are the social interaction, ensuring that barriers are broken down, the information is available and actions are implemented.
- Consideration needs to be given to what processes are going to be developed to warehouse and manage the information collected.
- There are a number of regions that are already running monitoring programs and collecting data, interim arrangements need to be considered so this data is not missed because the system is not in place.
- It is important to identify what is already there and who is working on it and then come up with a process that coordinates all of that information.

## **ROLES OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT GROUPS**

Members discussed the composition and/or roles of the following groups of the Integrated Reef Catchment Water Quality Monitoring Project (IM Project):

- Water Quality Coordination Group (WQCG);
- Far North Queensland NRM (FNQNRM);
- Project Coordinator;
- Water Quality Technical Group (WQTG); and
- Support Groups – government agencies, Water Quality Implementation Group.

## **WATER QUALITY MONITORING, MODELLING AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT – EXISTING FRAMEWORK**

### ***State Water Quality Monitoring System***

A presentation titled "Queensland Government Initiatives for Integrated GBR Catchment Monitoring" was delivered to members. After hearing the presentation, members advised:

- It is anticipated that the IM Project will not only guide the regional bodies, but the State as to where investments are targeted.
- The process of developing a system that generates actions and targets, which are then monitored by the WQCG, needs to happen quickly.
- The broad idea is to have a group of representatives from all NRM bodies and agencies meet and come up with an approach.
- You have to be clear about what you want and in what timeframe and at what level of accuracy.

### ***Monitoring And Modelling – How Do They Relate***

Members heard a presentation on the 'Great Barrier Reef catchment Rivers – Monitoring, Modelling and Water Quality Targets', advising:

- The agreed management actions in the regional plans can be taken and quantified in respect to what effect they are going to have on sediments, nutrients, etc, and thus resource condition then quantify that.
- If trends are expected to be detected through monitoring alone, a trend will not be able to be detected by 2010 – monitoring alone will not be able to detect trends.
- Modelling will have to be used as well as monitoring.
- Targets can be set through modelling and then the approach towards achieving the target can be monitored.
- Monitoring will be needed to improve calibration of the modelling itself.

## **TARGET SETTING DISCUSSION**

Members were given a brief overview of the process undertaken to set targets in the Fitzroy Basin, including:

- The FBA believes that in a catchment as complex as the Fitzroy, there is insufficient information to set meaningful targets.
- It is important to develop targets that are meaningful.
- The process being utilised in the Fitzroy is a multi-layered one and it has the benefit of the Environmental Management Support Systems (EMSS) modelling team in the catchment.
- The catchments in the Fitzroy can be ranked according to their propensity to deliver sediment; however, that does not take into account land management practices.
- In 'Neighbourhood catchments' targets will be set for that particular catchment by working out what improvements can be gained.
- The GBRMPA has been involved in the process the whole time and assisting with shared monitoring activities.
- In these catchments there is a requirement for the management actions in the plan to have a socio-economic assessment.
- The targets reflect where we are actually going; within 12 months we will have targets set, and in three years they will be reviewed with an aim that in five years we will be able to put in something a bit more rigorous.

The Committee also heard a presentation on a proposal for target setting in the GBR Catchment. The Department of the Environment and Heritage is looking at the issue of target setting at the moment and have been working with a number of agencies to develop a process between the Commonwealth and State agencies to try and develop a common approach to set target developments.

## **NEXT MEETING**

It was proposed that the next meeting be held in September 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
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
Mr Tim Wrigley .....	Canegrowers
Mr Hugh Yorkston .....	GBRMPA