



WATER QUALITY AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (WRAC) 15th Meeting 22 November 2004 – Cairns SUMMARY DOCUMENT

BRIEFINGS ON PROGRESS

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

- There have been a number of meetings within the State Government and with the Commonwealth on water quality issues of importance to the Reef.
- The State Departments are collating and tagging activities that they are undertaking which address the actions contained within the Reef Plan.
- A compendium of agency committees, which have a focus on water quality, has been developed by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNR&M), and the Reef is a component of this.
- The Burdekin, Cape York and Wet Tropics Plans are out for public discussion.
- The Fitzroy Basin Association Regional Investment Strategy has been recommended to Ministers for approval.
- The Joint Steering Committee (JSC) will hold meetings on 1-3 December and in the week commencing 13 December 2004.
- The regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) bodies have submitted their six-monthly reports, which are due to be reviewed by the JSC on 25 November.
- Timing of performance and financial reports submitted by regional bodies will change to June and December 2005.
- Applications for \$100,000 in community Natural Resource Awareness Grants provided through the DNR&M close on 17 December. The theme of this year's grants is "Bridging our communities – water for life". For more information, contact the **grants coordinator** on 07 3239 3860.
- Publication of "Social Innovations in Natural Resource Management: A Handbook of Social Research Management in Queensland".
- The bilateral agreement has been extended from 30 June 2007 to 30 June 2008.
- The DNR&M have made resources available to encourage landholders to take on best practices. The resources will come out of NAP funding.

Burnett/Mary NRM Board

- The draft NRM Plan will be submitted to the JSC on 23 November 2004 before going out to public consultation.
- Two of the NAP Priority Action Plans (PAPs) are now complete: Providing Social and Economic Data to underpin catchment planning for NRM; and What Landholders and Natural Resource Managers need to know and how they can best access it. Others are progressing well.
- NHT2 Interim Funding Agreement 2 (IFA) Priority Actions: (a) Towards the integrated management of terrestrial and aquatic weeds of national, state and regional significance (implemented by the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) weeds) – planning officer appointed; and steering committee

formed; and (b) Science and practice to improve biodiversity – steering committee formed.

- Several Water Quality (WQ) Strategic Investment Proposals (SIPs) are being piloted in the region.
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has now commenced their Environmental Values/Water Quality Objectives Program for the Mary/Burnett and Great Sandy Straits. Closing date for community feedback is 17 December; project results expected June 2005.

Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA)

- The Regional Plan has been accredited and the Regional Investment Strategy (RIS) has been recommended to Ministers for approval.
- The initial stages of catchment prioritisation process will be undertaken in the next couple of weeks. The water quality position has been advertised.

Burdekin Dry Tropics Board

- The Burdekin/Dry Tropics Regional Plan is out for public review and work has started on developing the RIS.

Wet Tropics

- The Far North Queensland NRM regional plan went out for public comment. Thirty-six submissions have been received and whilst there has been good engagement of the primary industries and the Indigenous community, there was a poor response from tourism, local government and the fishing industry.
- The first annual general meeting was held in November 2004.
- A copy of the annual report is now available.

GBR Wetlands Program

- The Department of the Environment and Heritage is progressing a number of actions under Reef Plan. A tender to select an organisation to assist with the review of incentives (C2) and recommendations for new changes to incentives (C3), was advertised and closed last week.
- The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority's review of Diuron is progressing. A copy of the scope document can be found at their website (<http://www.apvma.gov.au>).
- The GBR Coastal Wetlands Protection Plan Pilot Program was put out for tender. The tender has closed and the evaluation process is being undertaken.
- The Coastal CRC is close to finalising the incentive report on wetlands.

Environmental Protection Agency

- During December, public consultation on the draft Queensland Water Quality Guidelines and the draft Environmental Values and Water Quality Objectives for the Douglas Shire and the Mary River will be undertaken throughout the GBR region. The public meetings will include a brief presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion and feedback.

- The Queensland Point Source Database has been developed by the EPA and will allow the submission of electronic data for licensed discharges from activities such as sewage treatment plants.
- The NAP WQSIP team has been talking with Regional Bodies and finalising sites, equipment and protocols for event monitoring.

GBRMPA

- The GBRMPA recently advertised its program for expression of interest for Monitoring and Reporting on water quality and ecosystem health as part of its responsibilities for the Reef Plan.
- The socio-economic expression of interest will be closing early 2005. The socio-economic component is an action in the Reef Plan that the GBRMPA is required to report on. The project will be looking to build on a number of reports that have been completed in the past and, in particular, looking at what is the value of the various industries on the GBR, how they change over time, what the social implications of change are, and what the perceptions of change are.

Canegrowers

- There is an emphasis on diversification within the industry.
- There is a push towards the use of ethanol. A policy is required to make ethanol a realistic mandate.
- A memorandum of understanding between Queensland Farmer's Association and the State government to support farm management systems is nearly finalised. AGRICON will manage the farm management system (FMS).
During discussion members provided the following comments:
- The multiplicity of systems used to describe good management on farms is an issue.
- Ensure there is an explicit link between AGRICON's project tasks and the Reef Plan's tasks.
- When working with FMS it is important to be outcome focussed rather than process focussed.
- There was general agreement that an accreditation process could work and, rather than try and force industry into one certification scheme, have a range of schemes by which an industry can be accredited.
- Incentives are important.

ROLES WITH REGARD TO REEF PLAN AND NRM AGFORCE

After hearing the presentation, members provided the following comments:

- Linking incentives to on-ground implementation and economic differences between the regions is needed.
- Incentives need to incorporate the industry point of view and ensure that you are not too process focussed. The focus should be kept on on-ground outcomes and addressing cultural changes.
- Incentives are needed for industry to respond to market signals.
- With satellite technology available, departments should be able to identify what is happening at a property level. Perhaps this is a future direction to assist Property Management Planning.
- Is there a need to develop a single system? There is a need for an accredited incentive scheme.
- Summary of incentives – legislation, green tick (e.g., the GBRMPA – although this should be cautioned in relating this to market improvements and cost savings).

Local Government

Members noted the information provided regarding the Local Government Association of Queensland's (LGAQ) NRM Capacity Building program that supports local government participation towards sustainable land-use and natural resource

management planning. A more detailed briefing will be provided at the next WRAC meeting.

Members provided the following comments:

- While there is good leadership from LGAQ, there is a problem in getting that kind of leadership out into the ranks of local government.
- This process is really important and should be supported.
- Engagement with local government has to happen at a regional level.
- The message is not getting from the Commonwealth and State that local government has to be involved in the NRM process.

PROGRESS ON MONITORING/MODELLING AND WATER QUALITY TARGETS

At the last WRAC meeting, members were briefed on 'the way forward proposal' which aims to progress the issue of monitoring modelling and target setting.

Members were briefed on the progress of this issue, noting that a meeting was held on 9 November 2004 to consider a proposal for addressing the short term needs of regions to meet the July 2005 milestone.

Members were advised:

- In the short term, enhancement of some existing models, in terms of nutrient and sediment, needs to be undertaken to make them a useful tool, and the baseline data needs to be improved.
- The Department of the Environment and Heritage is trying to align their activities with activities of the regional bodies relating to target setting, monitoring and modelling.
- This proposal is a work in progress and there is a lot of commitment from State and Commonwealth bodies in developing targets.

CONSORTIUM FOR INTEGRATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (CIRM) PROGRESS REPORT ON COORDINATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TO SUPPORT REEF PLAN OUTCOMES

The Committee heard a presentation on CIRM and its Reef Catchment's Working Group which was established to identify the key science needs and collaboration opportunities, both now and in the future, for effective implementation of the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan.

NEXT MEETING

It was proposed that the next meeting be held in April 2005.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Tony Allingham	Grazing Industry
Cr Mike Berwick	Wet Tropics NRM
Ms Veronica Blazely	Dept Environment and Heritage
Mr Harry Bonanno	Burnett/Mary NRM
Mr Martin Breen	Aquaculture
Mr Noel Dawson	Independent Chairman
Mr Tony Fontes	Tourism Industry
Dr Miles Furnas	AIMS/CRC Water Quality
Mr Richard Leck	Conservation
Ms Sheriden Morris	CSIRO
Dr Tony Pressland	Qld Dept Natural Resources and Mines
Mr Clive Rogers	Mackay/Whitsunday NRM
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
Dr Tim Wrigley	Canegrowers
Mr Hugh Yorkston	GBRMPA