



**CONSERVATION, BIODIVERSITY AND WORLD HERITAGE  
REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
5<sup>th</sup> Meeting  
Combined with  
SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL STEERING COMMITTEE  
13 and 14 February 2001 – Townsville  
SUMMARY DOCUMENT**

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 documents form 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.

The Conservation Reef Advisory Committee (CRAC) and the Social, Economic and Cultural Steering Committee (SECSC) have agreed to conduct joint meetings as required, as they can be beneficial in covering RAP related issues efficiently.

**Session 1 – CRAC Only Meeting**

**SPECIES CONSERVATION RECENT PUBLICATIONS**

The following reports were presented:

- Flora and Fauna of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) – a compendium of information and basis for the species conservation program of the GBRWHA; and
  - Marine Turtles in the GBRWHA – a compendium of information and basis for the development of policies and strategies for the conservation of marine turtles.
- Both of these publications will be available on the Authority's website in the near future.

The Committee was advised that the conservation overview of the marine invertebrates commissioned by Environment Australia (page 11 *Fauna and Flora of the GBRWHA*) has been prepared and is awaiting review comments. The document will be made available once completed and copies can be obtained from Environment Australia.

Members noted the two publications and commended the Species Conservation team on their interaction with the Committee and on the quality of the finished products.

**UPDATE ON OTHER SPECIES CONSERVATION ISSUES**

The Committee heard updates on various species conservation issues or items which have been in the public's attention or have been raised at previous CRAC meetings. These were:

- The brochure *Wildlife Friendly boating on the Great Barrier Reef* has been developed to inform boaties and other users of the Marine Park, about wildlife-friendly boating practices that will reduce the risk of vessel strikes on marine turtles, dugongs and cetaceans. Copies of the brochure will be distributed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and

Marine Parks staff, through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and Reef and Island National Parks outlets.

- The report *Dugongs, boats, dolphins and turtles in the Townsville-Cardwell region and recommendations for a boat traffic management plan for the Hinchinbrook Dugong Protection Area* by Dr Tony Preen will be available on the GBRMPA website soon.
- Ministerial Council has supported funds for obtaining and investigating dugong carcasses. QPWS maintain a database and have produced an annual report on dugong, turtle and cetacean carcasses for the previous year.
- QPWS have conducted a 10-year study on the population dynamics of the hawksbill turtle. Copies of this report can be obtained through Dr Col Limpus at QPWS in Brisbane.

The Committee has agreed that a major policy issue for the GBRMPA is long-term conservation strategies particularly for marine turtles. The Committee will discuss this issue including the impacts that affect the turtle populations in the GBRWHA at the next meeting of the CRAC.

**CRC BIODIVERSITY MAPPING PROJECT**

The Committee was provided with background information of the CRC project 'Seabed Biodiversity on the Continental Shelf of the GBRWHA'. GBRMPA staff advised that the GBRMPA recognised the importance of this task and the information it will provide, especially to the Representative Areas Program (RAP); however there are concerns with the proposed methodology.

The Committee noted the importance of gaining information on the biodiversity of the GBRWHA and the potential for public concern over this research project.

The Committee also reiterated the importance of having clear research policy of the GBRMPA to guide the conduct of research in the GBRWHA.

The Committee recommended that the GBRMPA write to the proponent seeking clarification of the research design, advice of feasible and prudent alternatives, arrangements for retaining and properly curating type specimens collected and that the researcher be made

aware of the Australian Science, Technology and Engineering Council (ASTEC) report on ethics of manipulative research in the WHA.

### **Session 2 – Combined Meeting**

#### **STAKEHOLDER TECHNICAL WORKSHOP**

The Committees were advised that the proposed stakeholder technical workshop was planned to generate a common level of understanding amongst stakeholders about the technical aspects of the RAP and had been postponed until May 2001 due to new analytical issues that needed to be resolved.

#### **SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES**

The Committees were advised that the social, economic, cultural and biophysical principles that were approved by the CRAC/SEC Committees at the last meeting had been endorsed by the GBRMPA's Senior Management Team. These principles are now completed and will be used in the selection of Candidate Areas for the RAP.

#### **OUTCOMES OF COMMUNICATIONS PHASE 2 AND 3**

GBRMPA staff reported on the preliminary series of workshops that have been held with the Local Marine Advisory Committees (LMACs) to discuss the Representative Areas Program. Overall these workshops have been successful in raising community awareness about the RAP and in encouraging people to be involved in management practices.

The Committees provided the following comments:

- There needs to be consistency in the messages from the GBRMPA when engaging with the community;
- There needs to be a commitment from the GBRMPA to provide feedback to those groups which have provided information to assist in the understanding as to why planning decisions have been made;
- The GBRMPA needs to communicate early in the Public Participation Phase (PPP) the relationship with other management plans; and
- The GBRMPA needs to be transparent that planning processes cannot meet all expectations of all stakeholder groups at all times.

GBRMPA staff presented an outline of methods used to capture individual spatial representation of usage in the GBRMP. Data were being collected from the public using two methods:

- a) Usage information marked on maps; and
- b) Completed questionnaires.

Ninety-five percent of the information collected on the maps has been digitised and the information received through the questionnaires has been input into a linked database.

Members discussed the process and provided the following feedback:

- The GBRMPA should take maps back to community groups for their comments; and
- A map for each different use would be useful.

#### **GBR-WIDE AWARENESS RAISING COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT**

The Committees were advised that the GBRMPA Communication and Education Group (C&E Group) is embarking on a Great Barrier Reef Communications

project in order to deal with the issue of negativity towards the GBRMPA in the community and raise public awareness of biodiversity issues related to the RAP process.

#### **1<sup>ST</sup> FORMAL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PHASE – PRODUCTS**

The RAP Group sought the Committee's advice on the Public Participation Phase products expressing that their input was important before finalising the content of the products. The products are:

- Brochure – this product is not just an awareness raising tool but a 'call to action' to make submissions and is aimed at the wider community; and
- Information Booklet – the aim of this product is to provide people who have a real interest in the RAP with more information to assist them in making submissions to the GBRMPA in a suitable format.

#### **1<sup>ST</sup> FORMAL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PHASE – PROCESS**

The Committee were advised the GBRMPA has been seeking the knowledge contained in the LMACs to assist with the PPP and have asked the LMAC members to identify what other community networks they are involved with and to also identify any that they are not directly involved with.

The Committees also heard that a broad range of techniques including, the web, the media and face-to-face meetings with the community, will be utilised to get information on the RAP out in the public arena.

#### Highly Protected Areas

Committee members discussed the concept of highly protected areas (HPAs) and agreed that a more precise definition was needed. Members suggested that an evaluation of the effectiveness of current 'green zones' in protecting biodiversity be undertaken by the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) and expert panels, followed by further discussion by the CRAC. Other RACs may also need to examine the implication of HPAs.

#### **FEEDBACK SESSION**

The Committees were divided into four working groups and asked to provide constructive criticism on aspects of the PPP1. The workshop was undertaken in two parts:

##### Part A

- a) The objectives of the 1<sup>st</sup> PPP; and
- b) The main audience groups identified.

Once feedback was received on these items and reported back to the group, further input was sought on the following:

##### Part B

- c) The content and format of the proposed brochure – how well does it help us achieve the PPP objectives;
- d) The content and format of the proposed information booklet – how well does it help us achieve the PPP objectives; and
- e) The mode and timing of delivery of these products – how well do the proposed mode and timing of product delivery achieve the PPP objectives.

The RAP group noted the comments received from the members and discussed options of how to continue to engage SECSC/CRAC members in further consultation on these communication tools.