

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 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.

CONSERVATION, BIODIVERSITY AND WORLD HERITAGE REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CRAC)

13th Meeting

18 and 19 March 2004 – Townsville

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

REPRESENTATIVE AREAS PROGRAM (RAP) UPDATE

The Committee received a comprehensive update from the Acting Director Communication and Education, on a communication program planned to come into effect for the new zoning plan. Members were advised:

- A successful implementation program will depend on the level of stakeholder input and products that are easily relevant and easily accessed.
- Mechanisms to engage the community include: Local Marine Advisory Committees; regional focus groups and community meetings; reef retailers; community access points; reef updates; related Government agencies; visitor information centres and boat/regional shows.
- There will be both generic and specific products.
- Once the implementation date is announced, a major media program will commence, to ensure people know what the date is and what products are available.

Members agreed to assist with the testing of draft materials before release, and to provide contacts, if required for the focus groups. Members also suggested:

- As there is an increase in the use of the internet for reef-based tourism bookings, the GBRMPA are urged to work with the tourism industry to provide internet URL links from tourism websites to sites that provide information on the RAP.
- It is important that the maps are available to commercial fishers from day one.
- It may be necessary to develop some specific communication tools to engage the Indigenous community.
- Ensure messages to the broader public about the connection between Indigenous people and the reef are included in any products.
- Develop products that are specifically targeted at researchers from overseas.

SPECIES CONSERVATION ISSUES UPDATE

Members noted the update on activities of the Species Conservation Program and agreed that they would

provide advice on the proposed guidelines for managing human interaction with protected species from the GBRMP.

IRRAWADDY AND HUMPBACKED DOLPHINS: CHALLENGES FOR THEIR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

A researcher from James Cook University provided a presentation which discussed some initial research on the distribution and density of Indo-Pacific hump-backed and Irrawaddy dolphins of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA), based on field studies in Cleveland Bay, the Hinchinbrook Channel and Princess Charlotte Bay.

The CRAC was advised that:

- These species are expected to be declared shortly as endemic to Australia and therefore their importance for management will increase.
- Little is known about their biology or population dynamics, but they seem to share much of the same habitat as dugongs; could be subject to the same human use pressures, but could also receive some protection through management measures such as Dugong Protected Areas and controls on inshore net fishing.

Members advised:

- This is a real problem for gill netters as these species inhabit areas close to the river mouths.
- Complementary zoning will be important for conservation.
- These species may be a lot rarer than dugong.
- Aerial surveys are not an effective way to estimate numbers.
- The Queensland Department of Primary Industries' shark netting records have not been analysed for records of dolphin take. Analysis of these data may give some indication of trends in the dolphin populations.
- Utilising acoustic methods to aid line transects could assist in surveying these animals, however these methods are expensive and labour intensive.
- The actual risk needs to be identified.
- A map of dolphin distribution is required.

- It would be useful to develop a risk assessment approach, looking at gill netting distribution and the new RAP Zoning Plan and to identify hot spots for the dolphins.

Because of this lack of knowledge and their expected change in status, the CRAC recommended that the GBRMPA undertake the following research in relation to Irrawaddy and Indo-Pacific hump-backed dolphins in the GBRWHA:

- a. Desk-top study based on existing data and information to better understand likely population distribution;
- b. A risk analysis to determine the threats and threatening processes to the dolphins; and
- c. Ground truth the results of a. and b. with targeted field research.

INDIGENOUS ISSUES UPDATE

The Committee was briefed on the activities and achievements on Indigenous issues since the last CRAC meeting in December 2003 including:

- Regulations providing for the development and accreditation of Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (TUMRA) have been prepared for the Zoning Plan.
- The GBRMPA envisages that cooperation among the 70 tribal groups along the GBR coast will result in the development of approximately 27 TUMRA management areas over the next five years.
- Traditional Owner groups from 20 of the 27 areas have expressed support for the TUMRA process through the recent RAP consultation process.
- Currently, ten Traditional Owner management areas have developed and implemented their own forms of traditional hunting management regimes for their sea country, and some of these arrangements are being assessed for accreditation as TUMRAs.

The CRAC discussed the recent federal government Dugong and Marine Turtle Management Project being funded from the Natural Heritage Trust program, and noted the potential benefits that would flow from close coordination of that project with the GBRMPA TUMRA initiative.

The Committee also:

- Noted that a substantial proportion of the funding was earmarked for administration.
- Expressed a view that to make a difference, funds should be spent in the communities.
- Noted that the Department of the Environment and Heritage reference group being established for the project will include the GBRMPA.

The CRAC recommended that the GBRMPA put in place a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the TUMRAs as they are being implemented.

EFFECTIVENESS OF APPLICATION OF BIOPHYSICAL OPERATING PRINCIPLES IN THE FINAL ZONING PLAN – MARINE TURTLES

Members were presented with an analysis of the effects of the RAP/rezoning on marine turtle conservation.

Members noted:

- The protection of marine turtle nesting sites was largely achieved through Queensland Government initiatives, particularly the establishment and management of island national parks.
- All management initiatives need to be looked at (e.g., existing and proposed zoning and fisheries controls) and available research to get a complete picture of the relative importance of expanded no-take zones for protection of marine turtles.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) FOR EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS OF RAP

The CRAC resumed its consideration of the development of KPIs for measuring the effectiveness of the RAP/rezoning and:

- Agreed to concentrate on the effectiveness of RAP but within the context of the implementation of all management arrangements for the GBRMP.
- Endorsed the principles for developing KPIs.
- Noted a framework for the development of KPIs and monitoring.
- Noted that KPIs for evaluating effectiveness of RAP/rezoning need to be set within the higher level KPIs developed by the GBRMPA for reporting to Federal Parliament.

The CRAC agreed, at the next meeting, to:

- Consider the KPI/monitoring framework further.
- Resume consideration of the effectiveness of RAP.
- Prepare specific worked examples of the development of objectives, outcomes and KPIs for discussion.
- Consider a report to be prepared on all current monitoring being done or planned.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is proposed for August 2004.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Doug Baird	Tourism and Recreation
Ms Kate Davey	Non-government organisation, Conservation
Mr Jon Day	GBRMPA
Dr Pat Hutchings	Non-government organisation, Ecologist
Mr Bruce Leaver	Dept of the Environment and Heritage
Prof Helene Marsh	Scientific Community
Ms Melissa Nursey-Bray	Non-government organisation, Conservation
Mr Peter Ogilvie	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
Assoc Prof Stephan Schnierer	Indigenous Issues
Mr Tim Smith	Water Quality, Coastal Issues
Mr Duncan Souter	Queensland Seafood Industry Association
Mr Peter Valentine	World Heritage, Protected Area Management
Mr Simon Woodley	Independent Chair
Ms Imogen Zethoven	Non-government organisation, Conservation