

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.



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

CONSERVATION, HERITAGE AND INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CRAC) 18th Meeting 13 and 14 December 2005 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The 18th CRAC meeting was held on 13 and 14 December 2005 in Townsville. Following is a summary of the main items discussed at the meeting.

INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAMS – UPDATE

The first TUMRA (Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement) was accredited in December 2005. The Girringun TUMRA was accredited by both the Board of the Marine Park Authority (MPA) and the delegate of the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency and is for a three-year term. This TUMRA is the first legal document in relation to the use of traditional resources in Queensland and the first accredited under GBRMP legislation. The main provisions of the TUMRA accreditation are:

- An annual take of only 10 turtles, from any source (this is judged to be the maximum sustainable level of take in the area).
- No take of dugongs.
- The establishment of a steering committee for administration and implementation of the TUMRA.
- Compliance activities.
- A framework for monitoring and reporting mortality of dugongs and marine turtles in the region.

Traditional Owners want management agencies to enforce compliance and illegal hunting in the area.

The steering committee will meet four times a year to administer the TUMRA. The relationship with the Traditional Owners through the steering committee is important to ensure the successful management of the TUMRA provisions.

Seven traditional owners were invited to the MPA meeting and spoke about the TUMRA. One spoke of the pride he felt about the achievement of the TUMRA, that he felt his ancestors were looking down and feeling good about the accreditation and the significance of the day.

The CRAC congratulated the GBRMPA and the Girringun people on the achievement of the TUMRA, and acknowledged its significance at both a State and national level.

SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

The Chairman reviewed previous discussions by the CRAC and its decision at the last meeting to consider the concept of sustainability and resilience in the context of climate change.

The members were provided with a presentation on climate change; the main points that arose were:

- There is broad scientific consensus that climate change is a real, serious and long-term threat.
- In Australia there will be significant impacts on a number of ecosystems, including the Great Barrier Reef, Australia's alpine regions and tropical rainforests.
- Impacts on the GBR are likely to be on circulation, rainfall, chemistry and sea surface temperatures leading to increased cyclonic activity and bleaching, particularly for corals. The main concern will be that the rate of change of climate change will exceed the rate of adaptation of species to the changes.
- Important social and economic values are also at risk.
- Recovery from coral bleaching can take years. The incidence of coral disease increases during bleaching years.
- Potential vulnerability assessment areas are quite broad regarding taxa, assemblages and processes. These assessments will help to identify management actions and knowledge gaps.

A researcher from James Cook University supplied two papers that indicate current views of marine ecologists into ecological resilience and the capacity of user groups and communities to respond and adapt to big changes. The issues raised in the Hughes *et al* paper are being addressed by the GBRMPA.

CRAC members made various comments, including:

- Whilst the whole zoning spectrum is about conservation, green zones are primarily about conservation whilst most other zones are about use;
- It would be a valuable exercise to seek input from stakeholder groups regarding the potential lack of resilience and future requirements; and
- The GBRMPA has moved to involve the wider community in a consistent way on environmental and socio-economic issues.

The CRAC also noted that the GBRMPA has adapted its management strategies over the past 10 years or so to deal with the need for social-ecological resilience; namely:

- Ensuring that the history of human use is an important basis for assessing current stresses on the Reef;
- Adapting governance structures to deal with emerging issues; and
- Recognising the linkages between people and the condition of the Reef.

Also, whilst recognising the achievements of the GBRMPA in adapting its management strategies to changing environments, the CRAC recommended the GBRMPA:

- 1) Further strengthen its relationships with communities;
- 2) Continue to pursue the development of long-term monitoring programs;
- 3) Ensure that cumulative impacts are addressed; and
- 4) Pursue initiatives to reduce impacts on the GBRMP that originate from outside the GBRMP.

MARINE AND TROPICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH FACILITY (MTRSF)

Members were briefed on MTRSF and were advised:

- Calls for expressions of interest will close Friday 16 December 2005. The GBRMPA's critical information needs were cross-referenced with MTRSF priorities.
- Many different provider organisations are compiling expressions of interest and some of these are organising into consortia.
- The next phase after 16 December 2005 will involve assessment of the expressions of interest by a national scientific panel and the development of the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) of a draft research investment strategy. This will be put to the interim MTRSF Board at the end of January who will, in turn, provide recommendations to the Minister to decide on the proposed strategy/annual research plans. DEH plans to commence the MTRSF in July 2006.
- Understanding the consequences of natural resource management decisions involving communities in managing the Reef is a key component.
- A lot of the most important questions have long timeframes and will not be answered in the four years. Research will need to continue long after the proposed four-year funding period.

During discussion, CRAC members raised the following:

- There needs to be some capacity to plan for research over at least a decade because data which is collected over a long period quite often gives quite a different outcome from that which is provided over three or four years.
- Strategies are needed to provide funding for research projects that continue beyond the life of the MTRSF.
- MTRSF needs a capacity for research into Indigenous issues. There is no mechanism for coordination of Indigenous research issues within MTRSF.
- Mapping potential users of answers to research questions and linking them to some usable outcome would be useful in building a community of research supporters and potential funding sources.

The CRAC appreciated the presentation and recommended that the GBRMPA:

- Consider the development of a separate research and monitoring strategy that provides for long-term data collection on critical issues;
- Consider making a submission to the Senate Inquiry into Protected Areas of Australia about the need for sustained funding of long-term monitoring that is essential to understanding the changes taking place on the GBR since European exploitation began;
- Raise at the MTRSF Interim Board level, the need for a mechanism to coordinate research into Indigenous issues; and
- Seek advice from the CRAC and other RACs on the draft Research Investment Strategy (RIS), if possible. Alternatively, seek advice on the final RIS and the detailed research plans that are developed from the RIS.

TRADITIONAL OWNER INFORMATION SYSTEM

Committee members were addressed regarding the Traditional Owner Information System (TOIS) and were advised:

- Compiling TOIS is a very resource-heavy task and will not be a quick exercise.
- Trust has been the big issue; the information has been used to shape policy.
- Partnerships with GBR Traditional Owners involve the development of protocols for giving informed consent. This means Indigenous people participating in how their information is used.
- Traditional Owners are interacting with sea country and other Marine Park users on a regular basis.
- There is a large amount of information in the public domain that needs to be synthesised and presented in a useful form and spatially referenced to other information.
- Cultural heritage values are mutable and not fixed in time; people change and reinterpret things. Cultural values are continually changing.
- Mutual outcomes are based on the building of relationships and repatriation of information. As this happens there is less demand for constant consultation and the system is developed to a point where people have confidence.
- A project is being undertaken through CRC Reef at Yarrabah. This will have significance in the establishment of dialogue and interaction with agencies in that it will build a model on how to work with Traditional Owners regarding undertaking the mapping of sea country.
- The goal is to build detail; building a hub that allows people to collect a lot of information about Indigenous issues. What underlies this is information agreements and the relationship with Traditional Owners.
- Public access will be available, especially through the basic bibliographic level.
- Within the GBRMPA's Library webpage under "Traditional Owner Resource Bibliography" is a preamble advising some requirements for using Traditional Owner information. It is still important to make people aware of the appropriate use of information in different contexts.

The Chairman said the Committee commends the initiative, strongly supports it and requests periodic updates.

NEXT MEETING

This was the final meeting of the current term of the RAC. Next meeting is proposed for mid May 2006.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Doug Baird	Tourism & Recreation
Ms Kate Davey	Non-government organisation
Mr Jon Day	GBRMPA
Dr Pat Hutchings	Non-government organisation, Ecology
Mr Bruce Leaver	Dept of the Environment and Heritage
Mr Richard Leck	Non-government organisation, Conservation
Prof Helene Marsh	Scientific Community
Mr Peter Ogilvie	Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service
Assoc Prof Stephan Schnierer	Indigenous Issues
Mr Tim Smith	Water Quality, Coastal Issues
Mr Andrew Tobin	Queensland Seafood Industry Association
Assoc Prof Peter Valentine	World Heritage, Protected Area Management
Mr Simon Woodley	Independent Chairman