



CONSERVATION, HERITAGE AND INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CRAC) 17th Meeting 26 and 27 July 2005 – Brisbane SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The 17th CRAC meeting was held on 26 and 27 July 2005 in Brisbane. Following is a summary of the main items discussed at the meeting.

TRADITIONAL USE OF MARINE RESOURCES AGREEMENTS (TUMRA) UPDATE

Activities and achievements in the TUMRA program since the last CRAC meeting include:

- As part of the GBRMPA's recent reorganisation, an *Indigenous Issues Senior Management Forum (IISMF)* was set up in June. The forum meets approximately every 4-6 weeks and is designed to coordinate and monitor Indigenous programs and associated management issues across the agency, discuss new policy proposals and report through the GBRMPA Executive to the Board of the Marine Park Authority and relevant Canberra agencies.
- The GBRMPA has recently approved a new position of *Indigenous Communities Compliance Liaison Officer*. The new position will be advertised soon, and will be positioned in the Day-to-Day Management Coordination Unit in Townsville.
- The public comment period on the draft report on '*Sustainable and legal Indigenous harvest of Marine Turtles and Dugongs in Australia - A national approach*' has closed.

Members acknowledged the raising of the profile of Indigenous issues within the GBRMPA and commended the appointment of the IISMF and the new position of Indigenous Communities Compliance Liaison Officer. The CRAC also noted the need to ensure that the TUMRA process and the development of Indigenous Local Government Authorities are well integrated so that TUMRAs are part of the latter process. The CRAC supports the ideal of 'self management' of sea country, recognising the limitations of such an ideal because of external uses and threats.

SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

At the last CRAC meeting the concept of sustainability outside highly protected areas was debated. As a result, a background paper was developed incorporating members' comments, and listing a number of tasks that the CRAC might undertake over the next few meetings to address their concerns with the issue of sustainability and resilience.

After discussion, the CRAC agreed to undertake the following tasks in relation to this subject:

1. Evaluate the degree to which the GBRMPA has achieved the objectives and principles of the National Strategy on Ecologically Sustainable Development.

2. Evaluate the degree to which the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) Strategic Plan has been implemented by the GBRMPA, after consideration of the Kennedy review and the GBRMPA review of implementation of the GBRWHA Strategic Plan, when available.
3. To brainstorm the issue of unsustainable uses and impacts at its next meeting, set in the context of climate change. In doing so the Conservation RAC would seek to identify direct and indirect uses of, or impacts on, the Great Barrier Reef that -
 - i. could become unsustainable over time (10-20 years) in the absence of any control measures being introduced, and
 - ii. could become unsustainable over time (10-20 years) if existing control measures are maintained.
4. To evaluate those species and taxa likely to be vulnerable to impacts from exploitation and natural events over the next 10-20 years, despite the protection afforded by increased green zones. In doing so, the CRAC would -
 - consider the question in the context of Species Prioritisation methodology of Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS),
 - use species groups identified in Lucas et al publication and the diagram in the Kenchington book as a basis for evaluation of vulnerability,
 - invite a speaker to the Committee on the subject of 'resilience', and
 - circulate a paper by a James Cook University (JCU) PhD student about spatial risk assessment when available, and invite her to make a presentation to the Committee.
5. To explore the issue of community values and attitudes that most support sustainable use and conservation resources (and vice versa). Initially this would involve seeking further information to inform the debate about meaningful community participation. In particular, the Conservation RAC would -
 - a) invite the appropriate GBRMPA staff to address the Conservation RAC on this subject, and
 - b) request a researcher from JCU to provide a synthesis of his work on recreational fishers and of a JCU PhD student's work on social resilience.
6. To develop members' initial perceptions of 'sustainability' generated at its 16th meeting, into a short paper, highlighting key points and then circulate the papers to members for comment.

MONITORING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Monitoring the Zoning Plan

The Committee was advised that there is a need to monitor the nature and degree of the effect of the Zoning Plan implemented on 1 July 2004, and the GBRMPA has just completed a comprehensive revision and restructuring of research needs for the protection and management of the GBRMP. The list of research needs is the tool that the GBRMPA uses to influence and guide the research investment in the GBRMP, and it is through this tool that funding will be directed to monitoring the Zoning Plan. Reefal, non-reefal and socio-economic aspects will be treated separately.

Community Monitoring

Representatives of the Moreton Bay Seagrass Watch Program provided a briefing on the establishment and conduct of the program.

After discussion of this subject, members listed the following key points for the development of successful community based monitoring programs:

- Ensure there are dedicated administrative and field staffs.
- Provide training programs for volunteers, including the provision of clear instructions and kits.
- Utilise effective data recording procedures.
- Implement procedures for verifying data collected by volunteers.
- Provide regular feedback to volunteers and recognise individual efforts.
- Facilitate the social interactions between volunteers.
- The role of champions should be stressed.
- Ongoing funding is required.

Members agreed to organise a workshop on this subject for the 19th CRAC meeting.

CURRENT RESEARCH IN THE QUEENSLAND SHARK SAFETY PROGRAM

Members were advised that recent research into the Queensland Shark Safety Program (QSSP) has focused on reducing the bycatch and improving the target species selectivity of fishing gear. Several projects have been initiated which have focused on the following areas:

- Tagging “non-threatening” shark species;
- Reducing bycatch on drumlines; and
- Changes in netting technology.

It was suggested that a representative from the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries attend a future meeting to discuss the shark safety program in more detail.

Members agreed that a presentation on this issue would be useful as further information is required on the subject of the Shark Safety Program to fully understand the implications for biodiversity protection in the GBRWHA.

ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

The Director-General, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), briefed members on the relationship between the EPA and the GBRMPA, each agency’s roles and responsibilities, and discussed the challenges that exist between the two jurisdictions.

The Director-General acknowledged the role of the CRAC and stressed the need to view the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area as an entire entity, managed in a contiguous and seamless fashion. He recognised the four key aspects of Day-to-day Management currently approved by the Board, and

acknowledged that overt compliance was necessary at this stage given the new zoning.

Members noted the briefing and advised that the relationship between the regional Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and the new GBRMPA Community Engagement staff needs to be clarified and perhaps integrated. The CRAC agreed to seek advice from the GBRMPA on the interactions planned between the GBRMPA regional offices and existing QPWS staff in regions.

RAINE ISLAND HATCHLING PRODUCTION – UPDATE

A researcher from the EPA provided a presentation on green turtle hatchling production at Raine Island, advising:

- Raine Island is an iconic island, known globally for its importance for green turtles with up to tens of thousands of turtles laying eggs nightly.
- In recent studies, comparing the current turtle nest depths with those previously recorded, there is an indication that the beach sand is slowly eroding away, and the depth of sand above the beach rock where the turtles lay their eggs, is diminishing. This results in the egg clutches flooding during heavy rains or high tides.
- Last season less than 5% of females successfully laid per night.
- Females are also depleting their energy resources trying to nest, which is resulting in follicle resorption and hence a reduced number of clutches laid.
- There has been negligible hatchling production at Raine Island for the last nine years.
- Guano (seabird dung) mining occurred at the island in the 1800s and alterations to the reef flat were made to allow access for vessels to transport the guano. It may be that these reef flat alterations are causing the sand loss from the reef flat to the sea floor.
- The Raine Island sand is not coral rubble but foraminifera skeletons; hence difficulties in replenishment from elsewhere.
- The northern GBR stock will be decimated in 30 years unless urgent action is taken to: 1) reduce regional Indigenous harvest to a sustainable level; and 2) rehabilitate the Raine Island nesting habitat. This is likely to have enormous implications for the northern GBR, Torres Strait and Papua-New Guinea, and any major loss in turtles will have a flow-on implication for dugong as an alternate food source.

NEXT MEETING

Next meeting proposed for Tuesday 29 and Wednesday 30 November 2005.

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 Chairperson