

FISHERIES REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2nd Meeting

8 June 2000 – 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.

REPRESENTATIVE AREAS PROGRAM (RAP) UPDATE

The Committee was updated on the current situation regarding the Representative Areas Program. The following issues were discussed:

- It is critical for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) to involve the community as much as possible in the process so that they take ownership of the process, and are more comfortable with it.
- The GBRMPA is very mindful of the need to ensure clear communication with users and communities.
- The GBRMPA encourages members to offer input regarding the data sets to be used in the process, perhaps even being present during "dummy" runs of the data processing.

TRAWL FISHERY UPDATE

The Committee was updated on the latest issues and events associated with the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery (ECTF), from the GBRMPA's perspective. The Minister has received correspondence from the Queensland Premier, detailing the outcomes of the Premier's stakeholder working group and a proposed structural adjustment package for the East Coast Trawl Fishery. The proposed structural adjustment scheme presently is being assessed by the GBRMPA. The following issues were discussed:

- The Committee considers that the fishery needs major reform;

- The Committee supports the proposed capping and reduction of effort;
- Given the poor economic state of the fishery, the Committee supports a structural adjustment scheme up-front;
- The Commonwealth should consider participating in the structural adjustment package;
- The Committee thinks there is a need for certainty to be introduced for the benefit of industry, as soon as possible; and
- The Committee supports the monitoring of days at sea using the VMS.

A PERSPECTIVE ON INDIGENOUS FISHERIES

The Committee was advised of the importance of sea country to Aboriginal people, and that consideration must be given to cultural issues. An Indigenous working party has been meeting with the CSIRO to put together ideas for fisheries management.

The point was made that it is critical to involve Aboriginal people in discussions on fisheries management, and to incorporate Aboriginal people into commercial fisheries groups. It was pointed out, however, that some difficulties would result from this, because commercial fisheries cross many clan borders.

There is a partnership plan on Cape York and the State Government has joined in to try and work through the issues. When considering zonal definitions, there is a need to differentiate between the impacts of activities such as netting and aquaculture.

It was suggested that clan estate boundaries should be considered as part of the

Representative Area Program. Also, it was advised that a Sea Forum had been established, representing traditional owners from areas between Cairns and the southern end of the GBR.

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND BIODIVERSITY (EPBC) ACT AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION (WP) ACT

Changes and their implications for Fisheries Management

The Committee was advised that changes to the Commonwealth legislation will come into effect on 16 July 2000. The following issues were discussed:

- Queensland Fisheries Management Authority (QFMA) and Environment Australia will work together closely.
- What happens if a Queensland Fishery for a particular species is managed well and NSW and Commonwealth Fisheries are not? Can the Queensland-caught fish be exported? The WPA relates to species; it allows for export of product from a well-managed fishery, but not from a poorer-managed fishery.
- The issue of ecological sustainability was raised. It was agreed it is an important subject; and it was pointed out that a study had recently been commissioned to look into this.

BLUE SWIMMER CRABS TAKEN BY TRAWL – DEVELOPING THE GBRMPA POSITION

The Committee was briefed on the GBRMPA's proposed position on blue swimmer crabs taken by trawl. The following issues were discussed:

- There is an existing, more environmentally-friendly method of taking blue swimmer crab, other than taking them by trawl.
- Is it reasonable to allow trawlers to retain blue swimmer crab?
- There are concerns about targeting.
- Is the sustainability of this particular species under threat?
- Should trawlers be prohibited from targeting crab?
- Should crab be deemed as legitimate bycatch by trawlers; with a limit imposed; and what should the limit be?
- The subject of trip limits needs to be looked into much more closely.

- As a general principle, pot fishing would seem a more benign, environmentally-friendly method of taking blue swimmer crab.

The Committee was advised that a regulatory impact statement on the take of blue swimmer crab by trawlers will be released within the next few months.

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS FOR QUEENSLAND EAST COAST TRAWL FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The GBRMPA/Environment Australia/Reef CRC Workshop on developing operational objectives and indicators for the GBRMPA to use in auditing the performance of the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery Management Plan was discussed. The broad objectives of the workshop included:

- Conservation and wise use of the GBRMP/World Heritage Area (WHA);
- Conservation of species/ecosystems in the GBRMP/WHA; and
- Conservation of species/ecosystems impacted by trawling.

Two ways of addressing the issue were noted; i.e., reducing the impact of trawling, and limiting trawling distribution.

REEF LINE FISHERY – OPTIONS FOR FUTURE MANAGEMENT

The Committee was updated on progress of the development of the management plan. Approximately 1,500 responses to the draft plan have been received by QFMA, and REEFMAC are examining these prior to re-examining the draft plan.

The Committee was also briefed on the timetable relating to the ELF (Effects of Line Fishing) Experiment, which was as follows:

1993	ELF project began
1996	QFMA log-book report
1999	Internal review; Draft MSE (Management Strategy Evaluation) tools
2000	MSE tools operational
2000-06	Refine tools

The next meeting is proposed for 5 and 6 September 2000.