

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 Authority's Secretariat, or to the appropriate Member.

FISHERIES REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

6th Meeting

11 and 12 July 2002 – Townsville

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

STRATEGIC POLICY FOR FISHING WITHIN THE GBR WORLD HERITAGE AREA

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP) was established in 1975, and the Great Barrier Reef area was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981. A strategic policy for managing the effects of fishing within the GBR World Heritage Area (WHA) was drafted in 1998, taking into account issues raised in the 25 Year Strategic Plan. To update the policy, the Fisheries Issues Group is now reviewing the document, taking into account input from the FRAC and the Commonwealth Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries. It was suggested that the strategic policy document will be useful for all stakeholders because it will clearly state the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA's) position on fishing in the GBRMP and WHA.

In light of the discussions on non-fishing impacts, such as water quality and tourism, it was agreed that the following recommendation be put to the GBRMPA: *"That the GBRMPA, in consultation with the Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee (GBRCC) and all RACs, develop position/policy statements, similar to the fisheries strategic policy statement, for all major activities and issues relevant to meeting the GBRMP and the GBRWHA objectives and obligations"*.

An amended strategic policy paper will be developed and put to the FRAC members for further comment at the next meeting.

INDIGENOUS FISHING ISSUES

Members were briefed on Indigenous marine management issues within the GBRMPA. It was noted that there has been a lot of work done by the GBRMPA with traditional interests in mind. Traditional owners will try to work closely with management agencies to develop management systems to sustain fisheries. Indigenous communities are hoping that within the next year, some guidelines will be developed to assist with the management of the take of dugong and turtle.

One of the co-founders of Balkanu (an Indigenous organisation on the Cape York peninsula), briefed

members on issues affecting Cape York Indigenous communities. It was suggested that the GBRMPA needs to change the way it does business in relation to Indigenous issues. The Indigenous community's interests are broad; they are not divided into groups like commercial, recreational, conservationists, etc; they are not just an interest group, they are owners. Traditional owners and representative groups cannot be left out of the consultation process, as they are the ones who can traverse the plethora of Indigenous clan estates and language groups, etc. Nor can Indigenous communities be marginalised; they have a proven track record in terms of negotiation with governments, stakeholders and project proponents, bringing sensible solutions and ideas to the table for discussion. Indigenous people need to be treated with respect; this will ensure better outcomes.

Indigenous communities want to get involved in a commercial capacity; they want to get a fleet on the water so that they can be a part of the economy. They need finance, and they need access and support from people who know the process; they do not want to be sitting on the sidelines, classed as subsistence fishers. The solutions are best achieved on the ground, rather than from government offices in Brisbane or Canberra.

COMMERCIAL CORAL COLLECTING

A report on future management of commercial coral collecting in the GBRMP was prepared by an independent panel for the Chairperson of the GBRMPA. The report was distributed to FRAC members. The following points were noted:

- The current figures for coral take include both coral and coral rubble.
- The recommendations in the report will be considered by a special working group established by the Harvest Management Advisory Committee (MAC).
- Management has not kept pace with changes in the industry.
- Industry has been demanding effective management; there has been a tardiness to address the issue for a variety of reasons. It was suggested that, as time was of the essence, the process should be pursued through regulation (rather than a management plan).

- Given the significance of the report and the involvement of the FRAC in providing previous advice on this matter, it was agreed to make the following recommendation to the GBRMPA: *“That the FRAC welcomes the report, endorses its recommendations, and recognises the urgent need to establish an effective management regime to ensure public confidence in commercial coral collecting in the GBRWHA. This course of action should provide the industry with long overdue certainty.”*

REPRESENTATIVE AREAS PROGRAM (RAP)

The purpose of the RAP is to ensure examples of all bioregions are protected within the GBR. Existing green zones will be used as a basis. No draft plans will be drawn up until all the submissions arising from the community participation phase have been assessed. As the State government is also required to review its Marine Park zoning, both the GBRMPA and State processes are being co-ordinated.

Since the number of brochures and information packs being distributed is unprecedented in the history of the GBRMPA, a fair amount of time will be needed to go through all of the information received. The deadline for submissions is 7 August 2002.

The following points were noted:

- A Regulatory Impact Statement will be prepared with the draft zoning plan.
- Commercial fishers would be greatly concerned if the RAP developed into something other than basically rezoning to increase the number of green zones. If the process were to involve changing other zones, then that would impinge on fishery allocation processes.
- Further consultation (seeking comment from key stakeholders as well as “testing” of submissions) will be carried out prior to a draft zoning plan being released for public comment. In drawing up the draft plan, assistance will be sought from a variety of key stakeholder committees and individuals, seeking their comments on the options under consideration.
- In considering the submissions, it will be necessary to consider all of the information received, and to look at the impacts associated with any proposed changes. As a result of this process, it is hoped that the rezoning of the Marine Park will have minimal impact on users.
- It was suggested that the process is raising expectations within some areas of the public; people are becoming aware that access to or activities within an area may change as a result of the process. Although some 80% of any changes made are not likely to impact on most users of the Marine Park, it is the other 20% that may cause problems in terms of the reaction of users.
- The Queensland Fisheries Service’s (QFS) reef line plan is being developed in the knowledge that the RAP rezoning process will be set in place.
- It was pointed out that we need to proceed with caution and recognise that there are two processes happening at

the same time. Both processes will impact on the fishery. There needs to be a great deal of thought put into making sure the two processes are successfully co-ordinated.

There were concerns that green zones will not allow free right of passage for fishers, particularly trawl fishers, en route to fishing sites. All fishers can pass through green zones as long as the fishing gear is stowed and secure. The definition of stowed and secure as it relates to trawlers was discussed. The potential for gear sensors to eliminate the need for vessels to have gear stowed and secure was raised.

QUEENSLAND FISHERIES SERVICES

The following comments were noted:

- The QFS was seen as a priority area in the Queensland Department of Primary Industries’ (QDPI) 2002-03 budget.
- The QFS is boosting staff numbers allocated to the preparation of submissions to Environment Australia for accreditation of fisheries.
- The reef line plan would most likely be released during the first quarter of 2003. Cabinet has considered submissions from the QFS and made comment on the reef line fishery and other fisheries management arrangements.
- Regulatory Impact Statements for public comment on the reef line fishery and other fisheries management arrangements are to be released shortly.
- There is currently a lot of activity regarding revision of the Fisheries Act. An update is to be provided to the next FRAC meeting.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is proposed for October/November 2002.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr David Bateman	Recreational Fishing
Dr Phil Cadwallader	GBRMPA
Mr Colin Creighton	Water Quality and Coastal Issues
Mr Mark Flanigan	Environment Australia
Mr James Gillespie	Queensland Fisheries Service
Mr Cliff Greenhalgh	Commercial Fishing
Mr Ray Joyce	Charter Boats
Ms Rosemary Lea	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
Mr John Olsen	Commercial Fishing
Mr Chris Roberts	Indigenous Community
Ms Kirsti Sampson	Conservation
Mr Lyle Squire	Commercial Harvest Fishing
Mr Rod Supple	Fisheries Enforcement and Compliance
Ms Diane Tarte (Chairperson)	Environment
Dr David Williams	Scientific Community