



FISHERIES REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FRAC)

11th Meeting

10 and 11 August 2004 – Townsville

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The 11th meeting of the FRAC was held in Townsville on 10 and 11 August 2004. A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

NEW ZONING FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK (GBRMP)

Members were briefed on the progress of the implementation of the new Zoning Plan; the availability of updated electronic navigational products and associated software; and the proposed compliance program.

In discussion, the following comments were noted:

- The structural adjustment package is being managed by the Department of the Environment and Heritage, and delivered through the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority (QRAA). Applicants for structural adjustment would be required to meet certain qualifying criteria, details of which are provided in the QRAA's information package for the scheme.
- It was suggested that commercial fishermen would find it relatively simple to navigate the new Zoning Plan restrictions; however, amateur fishers could run into problems without a GPS.

All information relating to the new Zoning Plan is available on the GBRMPA's website, at http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/index.html

A series of activities are underway to protectively manage the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and related estuarine and wetland environments. Examples include:

- Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Protection Plan;
- Coastal Wetlands Package;
- Rezoning the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, incorporating the Representative Areas Program; and
- Fisheries management plans and improved management arrangements for fisheries within the Marine Park.

A co-ordinated and strategic monitoring program linked to investment decisions and reporting progress is essential to ensure the outcomes from these various initiatives are maximised for the protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, including outcomes for sustainable fisheries and tourism use.

The FRAC recommended that the GBRMPA facilitate the development of an integrated monitoring and reporting program with the following key features:

- Demonstrating returns on various investments and management initiatives;
- Ecosystem-based in concept, recognising the interrelated nature of fisheries, habitat and water quality;
- Focussed on fisheries outcomes and as an input to targeting further investment in fisheries-related activities;
- User-friendly, readily available and up-to-date information products which are part of the ongoing feedback to users of the Marine Park, reinforcing their involvement in data collection and continuously improving practices towards sustainable reef use; and
- Readily accessible as data sets, as input to a range of scientific and other investigative initiatives.

COMMERCIAL DIVE-BASED FISHERIES

Members were briefed on proposed management arrangements for the sea cucumber fishery in the Marine Park. It was hoped that these new arrangements would provide a satisfactory outcome to the problem of overcoming serial depletion in this fishery, which is worth about \$4 million per year.

Members were also briefed on management of the commercial coral collection fishery in the Marine Park. It was noted that the logbooks for the fishery required upgrading as the current level of reporting did not provide sufficient information to monitor the catch adequately. It was noted that in addition to improved logbooks, a period of detailed monitoring would be required to provide a baseline after the new management arrangements were implemented. This would provide a proxy for a stock assessment, as there are no resources for fishery independent monitoring. It was important for the management agencies to share information to ensure that the fishery was managed efficiently.

CORAL TRANSPLANTATION

Members were advised that although there were concerns about the transplantation of corals, this was a permissible activity for tourist operators involved in presenting the GBRMP to visitors. It was noted that there were limits on the extent of transplanting; and guidelines were being developed.

In discussion, the following comments were noted:

- Some members argued that it may be preferable to alter the route of a submersible/glass bottom vessel, or relocate a pontoon rather than transplant coral, and queried what would be the next step if the coral did not survive the transplantation.
- There were certainly ecological advantages in focusing tourism activities in certain areas, and it was positive to have guidelines to assist operators to maintain the presentation value of their sites.

Members agreed that the causes of coral damage needed to be understood, and that the Commonwealth and State agencies should have a common policy.

ASSESSMENT OF THE EAST COAST TRAWL FISHERY: UPDATE

Members were advised that Queensland-managed fisheries within the GBRMP are assessed by the Commonwealth Environment Portfolio (CEP). The CEP assessments are conducted by staff from the Sustainable Fisheries Section at the Department of the Environment and Heritage and the GBRMPA's Fisheries Issues Group. The assessments are carried out under Parts 13 and 13A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*. The CEP conducts the assessment against the Commonwealth *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries*.

After a period of negotiation between officers of the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (QDPI&F) and the CEP, the assessment of the East Coast Trawl Fishery is now nearing completion. A set of draft recommendations has been agreed for a Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) approval under the EPBC Act.

QUEENSLAND DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND FISHERIES: UPDATE

Members were briefed on issues being addressed by the QDPI&F in relation to fisheries in the Marine Park, including the following:

Reef Line Fishery

- In June, the Queensland Cabinet approved a range of amendments to the reef line and Spanish mackerel management arrangements including filleting requirements, minimum quota holdings and various quota monitoring requirements.
- Quota monitoring commenced in July 2004, based on the Automated Interactive Voice Response system. Information packages were distributed to fishers, and a telephone help desk operated for 24 hours every day during July.

Trawl Fishery

- The report and discussion paper on the General Effort Review should be released shortly for public comment.
- QDPI&F may seek to change formal turtle excluder device requirements in the next combined Regulatory Impact Statement, provisionally planned for October/November 2004.
- QDPI&F continues to investigate new bycatch reduction device designs and has conducted two at sea trials with the "V flag" design achieving 16% reduction and the "pop eye" design achieving 29% reduction.

Inshore Fishery

- A policy on removal of latent effort has been approved and is in place. It is being applied as licences come up for renewal over the next 12 months; the expected outcome is that net endorsements drop from around 800 to approximately 450.
- The Minister has approved the development of a management plan; a Strategic Directions document, which outlines the strategy for developing the Plan, will be circulated to key stakeholders shortly.

TRADITIONAL USE OF MARINE RESOURCES AGREEMENTS (TUMRAs): UPDATE

Members heard that the GBRMPA was making substantial progress towards the development of Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements with three Traditional Owner groups. Other Indigenous groups were approaching the GBRMPA with a view to becoming involved.

FISH SPAWNING AGGREGATION MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Members were briefed on the management of fish spawning aggregation sites within the Marine Park. While there are many spawning issues on a global scale, little research was being done and, although awareness was increasing, change was slow. Management strategies need to be put in place to protect fish spawning aggregations.

An issue was raised regarding the legal size for Spanish mackerel, and the protection of Spanish mackerel spawning aggregations which are targeted by fishers in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. While part of the major spawning aggregation site was included in a green zone, the key spawning ground was open to fishing; this meant that for the most part the spawning aggregation was not protected. It was noted that the Spanish mackerel fishery has a specific set of regulations. A minimum size limit is set at below the size at maturity. However, this is a complex issue because of the high mortality of released fish.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for November 2004.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr David Bateman	Recreational Fishing
Mr David Briggs	Qld Environmental Protection Agency
Dr Phil Cadwallader	GBRMPA
Mr Kevin Chard	Spearfishing
Mr Colin Creighton	CSIRO Water for a Healthy Country
Mr Ian Cresswell	Dept of the Environment and Heritage
Mr James Gillespie	Qld Dept Primary Industries and Fisheries
Mr Cliff Greenhalgh	Commercial Fishing
Mr Ray Joyce	Charter Fishing
Ms Margaret Moore	Conservation
Mr John Olsen	Commercial Fishing
Mr Chris Roberts	Indigenous Community
Mr Lyle Squire	Commercial Dive-based Fishing
Mr Rod Supple	Qld Boating and Fisheries Patrol
Ms Diane Tarte (Chairperson)	Environment
Dr David Williams	Scientific Community