



FISHERIES REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FRAC)

12th Meeting

4 and 5 November 2004 – Townsville

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The 12th meeting of the FRAC was held in Townsville on 4 and 5 November 2004. A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

WATER QUALITY PROTECTION PLAN AND FISHERIES RESOURCES IN THE GBRMPA

Members were briefed on water quality issues, including the implementation of the Reef Plan and the development and implementation of a water quality and ecosystem health long term monitoring program in the Great Barrier Reef.

The focus was primarily on the connectivity between catchments and the reef and fisheries resources, with a view to developing the content for some communication products. Members suggested that the project should be progressed collaboratively between State and Federal government agencies, with input from Indigenous communities, to address not only connectivity but also the implications for future fishery management.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER (TRL) FISHERY

Members were briefed on recent developments in this fishery and their advice was sought on the long-standing issue of latent effort. Serious concerns were raised about the potential for effort to shift from Torres Strait to the East Coast.

The following points were noted from the discussions:

- The Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (QDPI&F) had previously agreed to consider reducing latent effort in the TRL fishery. A policy on TRL is currently being drafted and it is expected that this will include a mechanism to deal with the problem, should effort increase significantly in the next six months, and that, in any event, latent effort will be addressed within 18 months.
- There remained concern regarding the potential for a “fish down” next season if effort shifts from Torres Strait to the East Coast. It was acknowledged that the QDPI&F was progressing the issue collaboratively with the GBRMPA.

SEA CUCUMBER

Members were briefed on recent developments in this fishery, including an update on the voluntary Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) developed by industry (to provide an immediate means of addressing localised and serial depletion).

The Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) has accepted the industry MOU as a critical part of the management arrangements that were assessed as part of the Australian government's decision to approve the fishery for export.

The terms of the MOU were seen to offer an innovative and effective way forward for this fishery and the Committee agreed that the MOU process should be retained and the MOU should be reflected in the GBRMPA permit conditions.

COMMERCIAL CORAL COLLECTION MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Members were briefed on the finalisation of the new management arrangements for commercial coral collection and noted that the QDPI&F's Fisheries Group Executive recently had approved the policy basis for the new arrangements.

It was further noted that extensive collaboration between the managing agencies (GBRMPA, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and QDPI&F) and industry had underpinned the development of the policy.

PERMITS TO UNDERTAKE COMMERCIAL NETTING IN PRINCESS CHARLOTTE BAY (PCB) SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA (SMA)

Members were briefed on the PCB SMA and the management proposals for netting. Members noted that the situation was complex but that the expected key outcomes were the conservation of dugong and the retention of a viable net fishery.

Permit conditions for this area are being developed collaboratively by the managing agencies and industry, and the GBRMPA intends to issue permits to coincide with the start of the next barramundi season on 1 February 2005.

TRADITIONAL USE OF MARINE RESOURCES AGREEMENTS (TUMRAS) – UPDATE

Members were briefed on the progress towards the development of TUMRAs. Clarification was given regarding the links between native title rights and “country”; activities undertaken and “tradition”; and the fact that Indigenous communities have rights under Section 211 of the *Native Title Act* in their own “country”.

It was noted that a TUMRA was developed by and on behalf of the community and that Indigenous communities saw TUMRAs as a means of providing them with some recognised management of their “country”.

It was noted that the GBRMPA has set a goal of five years, from 1 July 2004, for the implementation of TUMRAs.

The Committee acknowledged that the value to all parties lay in achieving good conservation outcomes with respect to sustainable Indigenous harvesting. A TUMRA would provide a means of recording “take” as well as a compliance mechanism for situations that are currently complex.

QUEENSLAND FISHERIES IN THE GBRMP

Members were briefed on issues being addressed by the QDPI&F in relation to fisheries in the Marine Park, including the Coral Reef Finfish Fishery; inshore fisheries; dive-based harvest fisheries; and trawl issues. In addition, it was noted that in regard to a developmental fishery for prawn trapping, two applications for GBRMPA permits were being assessed.

A report on the current activities of the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol (QB&FP) was provided to the Committee. It was noted that reasonable levels of compliance were seen for the first

of the three nine-day spawning closures in the Coral Reef Finfish Fishery, despite some uncertainty about the exact starting time for the closures. Members agreed it would be useful to have a QB&FP update at each meeting.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE – UPDATE

Members were briefed on the current activities within the DEH, including:

- A Marine Division has been created within the DEH, which includes the National Oceans Office (NOO).
- The deadline for the audit of fisheries is 1 December 2004 for fisheries with an export component. 68 audits have been carried out. The Minister agreed to extend 34 fisheries until 1 December 2005, and a further three fisheries have been granted only 6-month wildlife trade operations (WTOs) while the current management arrangements are reviewed. The decision process can lead to three different outcomes, viz. exempt, and receive a 5-year export permit; a recommended 3-year WTO, and export permit; or prohibition of export. In the audits undertaken so far, there have been no prohibitions.

Members received an update of the outcomes of the Conference of the Parties (CoP) for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) held recently in Bangkok. Of relevance to the RAC was the successful listing on Appendix II of the great white shark and the Maori wrasse, both of which are protected species in Queensland. The CITES listing means that all trade or movement across country borders will be regulated and must satisfy CITES non-detriment requirements in the country of origin.

GBRMP STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PACKAGE (SAP)

Members were briefed on the SAP being offered by the Australian Government to assist those who were impacted as a result of the new Zoning Plan. An overview was provided of the tender process in relation to the buy back of licences. It was noted that targets (to determine which licences would be bought out) varied between fisheries and were not yet available. The deadline for decisions regarding buy-out or “business exit” was 17 December 2004; it was anticipated that cheques would be issued by Christmas.

The second part of the SAP, the business-restructuring component, does not close until the end of 2005. To date, few applications have been received for business restructure, but once the business exit deadline has been reached, the DEH and the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority (QRAA) are expecting the focus will change.

Members provided the following comments:

- If quota is bought out to prevent displacement of fishing to other areas, then that quota should be deducted from the commercial total allowable catch (TAC).
- It would be beneficial if the targets for buy-out were publicly released sooner rather than later.
- Consideration should be given to the impact on skippers who are affected, but remain in the industry.

REPRESENTATIVE AREAS PROGRAM AND MONITORING

Members were briefed on the mapping products already developed to support the new Zoning Plan. In addition, a number of detailed map products are being developed at a local level.

An overview of the proposed monitoring program for the new Zoning Plan was given; members noted that care needed to be taken in determining the types of things to be monitored and how the monitoring should be done.

QUEENSLAND’S ZONING FOR STATE WATERS

Members were updated on Queensland’s Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park, which came into effect on 5 November 2004.

During discussion the Committee highlighted the ongoing concerns about the management of displaced effort and structural adjustment in relation to the State Zoning Plans. Particular attention was drawn to the potential compliance issues raised by different approaches to managing crabbing in yellow zones, and to the lack of boundary markers for rivers/estuaries and areas with large foreshore flats.

It was further noted that complementary zoning appeared to be causing problems for some Indigenous communities in the far north, where displaced effort (commercial and recreational) is making it difficult for local Indigenous communities to maintain subsistence from traditional fishing areas.

PROTECTED SPECIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Members were updated on the development of the Protected Species Policy, and were advised that it was proposed to release the draft policy for public consultation in early 2005, with a view to finalising the policy by June 2005.

Members indicated that the current conservation status and legal status of species covered by this policy should be clarified. It was further recommended that decisions to allow the take of protected species should include consideration of both use of the product (e.g., broodstock collection and education), and World Heritage Area values.

CORAL TRANSPLANTATION AT TOURISM SITES

Members were updated on the review of all coral use in the GBRMP, including coral transplantation and the GBRMPA’s coral transplantation guidelines (now available on the GBRMPA website). It was noted that members of the public are encouraged to provide comment on the guidelines via the email address on the website.

FORWARD WORK PROGRAM

Members were updated on the on-going activities of the Fisheries Issues Group (FIG), noting that the work of the FIG is integrated across the whole of the GBRMPA, particularly with other critical issues groups, program delivery and the day-to-day management units. In essence, the task of the FIG is to reduce the impact of fishing on the fisheries resources in the GBRMP. It was reiterated that the role of the FRAC is to advise how this might be best achieved.

Members recommended that planning for future meetings should ensure the Committee considered some major issues in depth.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is proposed for March 2005.

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	Independent Chairperson
Dr David Williams	Scientific Community