



## **FISHERIES REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FRAC)**

### **13<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

### **17 and 18 March 2005 – Townsville**

## **SUMMARY DOCUMENT**

The 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the FRAC was held in Townsville on 17 and 18 March 2005. A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

### **ENHANCING THE RECREATIONAL FISHING EXPERIENCE IN THE GBRMP**

The Committee considered several presentations prior to an in-depth discussion of how the Federal government's election commitment (to enhance the recreational fishing experience) might occur in the Marine Park. Options for 'enhancement' included:

- Developing regional mapping products to show shoal grounds and land-based markers for green zone boundaries;
- Developing additional land-based facilities (e.g., fish-cleaning stations, boat ramps, signage);
- Providing better access to information of relevance to fishers (e.g., updating products and education programs to integrate information on zoning issues, fisheries management arrangements and the connectivity between the Reef Water Quality Action Plan, the work programs for the Natural Resource Management groups and the effect these will have on fish habitats and stocks); and
- Consideration of applications to install artificial reefs.

In discussion, members noted:

- That the implementation of many of the options rested with other agencies or required a collaborative approach.
- That the \$15 million funding committed in the election was for grants Australia-wide and would be available to community groups, with a maximum limit of \$100,000 per year.
- That enhancing the fishing experience was not the same as enhancing the ability to catch fish. Members agreed that the GBRMPA's role is not to promote where best to fish, rather it is to provide protection of the ecosystems and services that sustain fisheries and the mechanisms to minimise the impacts of fishing.

With regard to artificial reefs, members:

- Queried the need for artificial reefs in the Marine Park given thousands of kilometres of natural reef are available on the GBR, and the importance of considering world heritage values;
- Strongly supported the GBRMPA's work on developing guidelines for the establishment and management of artificial reefs, and requested that the GBRMPA refer applications for artificial reefs to the FRAC for advice; and
- Noted that a review being undertaken by the CRC Reef indicated that artificial reefs may act more to aggregate fish from other areas rather than promote the formation of a new

stock, and that artificial reefs should be managed in the context of existing fishery management arrangements.

### **DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE (DEH) – UPDATE**

Members were brought up-to-date on recent changes within the DEH. The new Marine Division comprises three branches – National Oceans Office (NOO); Marine Conservation Branch (containing Marine Protected Areas development, structural adjustment policy, Oceans Policy Coordination, and Marine Protected Areas implementation); and Marine Environment Branch (including sustainable fisheries and protected marine and migratory species).

Members were advised that the assessment of fisheries management arrangements under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act was progressing well. It was noted that these assessments highlight the improvements needed before each fishery can be considered to be ecologically sustainable and the recommendations were the 'goal posts' by which each fishery would be judged when they were reassessed for the next round of Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) permits.

### **PERMITS FOR COMMERCIAL MESH NETTING IN THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE BAY (PCB) SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS (SMAs)**

Members were briefed on the successful implementation of the permit system for mesh netting in the PCB SMAs. It was noted that the adequacy of these arrangements (from both a conservation and socio-economic point of view) would be monitored over the next two years.

### **DIVE-BASED FISHERIES – UPDATE**

#### *Commercial Coral Collection*

Members were briefed on the progress in finalising the new management arrangements for commercial coral collection in the Marine Park. It was noted that because the proposed changes to the fishery were fairly substantial, a period of monitoring followed by a review was required and, consequently, export approval was likely to be some way off.

#### *Sea Cucumber*

Members were briefed on the progress with the management arrangements for the sea cucumber fishery in the Marine Park. It was noted that key elements of the industry-developed Memorandum of Understanding discussed at the previous FRAC meeting have now been incorporated into the GBRMPA permit conditions.

It was noted that use of the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) for compliance purposes appeared to be working very well, and was supported by industry.

*East Coast Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery (ECTRLF)*

Members were advised that there had been no progress in the removal of latent effort in the ECTRLF. It was noted that this issue must be addressed before the start of the next season beginning in February 2006.

**SHARKS AND RAYS IN THE GBRMP**

Members were briefed on the National Plan of Action (NPOA) for the Conservation and Management of Sharks, the status of sharks globally and on the GBR, and the trends in the commercial take of sharks and rays on the east coast of Queensland. Against this background, consideration was given to the implications of various management and conservation options for managing sharks in the Marine Park.

The Committee agreed that as a basis for management it was important to understand the various life histories of the sharks and rays that occur in the Marine Park, including natural mortality rates. It was recognised that there are significant knowledge gaps. Members noted that not all species exhibited the same life history characteristics. Members also agreed that non-government sectors including commercial and recreational fishers and Indigenous and environment representatives must be involved in any further development and in implementation of the NPOA for Sharks.

The Committee supported the proposals developed by the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries' (QDPI&F) Inshore Finfish Management Advisory Committee, including the implementation of a limited entry fishery for sharks, noting that consultation was required with the fishing industry before the limited-entry criteria were finalised. The Committee also noted the need to establish triggers to indicate when additional management measures may need to be introduced.

**EAST COAST TRAWL FISHERY (ECTF) – UPDATE**

Members were briefed on recent developments within the ECTF.

*General Effort Review*

A survey on the status of the fishery was conducted by the QDPI&F late last year. While responses from the industry indicated there were no stock concerns, the scientific assessment clearly showed that some of the key species were fished at or above their maximum sustainable yield.

Whilst there had been a major effort reduction in the fishery since the introduction of the revised Trawl Plan, there was still considerable latency of unused effort units. The fishery appears to have contracted spatially with a decrease in the number of trawl licences.

*GBR World Heritage Area (WHA) Effort Cap*

It was noted that management agencies had agreed that a GBRWHA Effort Cap would be maintained.

**QUEENSLAND FISHERIES IN THE GBRMP**

Members were updated on issues being addressed by the QDPI&F in relation to fisheries in the Marine Park. It was noted that the Queensland Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries had declared 2005 a year of consolidation for Queensland fisheries. The implication of this declaration was that new initiatives were unlikely to proceed. This raised concerns about the implementation of the recommendations agreed between DEH and QDPI&F in relation to the declaration of WTO permits for the export of product from several Queensland fisheries. The WTO permits are issued on the basis that the recommendations developed by DEH are

implemented within agreed timeframes. It was noted that the QDPI&F policy giving effect to the new commercial coral collecting arrangements (the subject of extensive negotiations) has not been caught up in the "year of consolidation" and was likely to be released for comment shortly. [The draft QDPI&F coral policy was released on 28 March 2005.]

**GBR SEABED BIODIVERSITY PROJECT – UPDATE**

Members were updated on the progress of the project, including the difficulties and delays experienced in undertaking the field sampling. The Committee supported the researchers' proposal to seek an amendment to their current permit to access the most critical sampling sites that were now zoned "green" following the recent rezoning of the GBRMP, given the scale and significance of the project, the efforts made by the research team to find alternative sampling sites and the value of the project in providing information for the management of the trawl fishery in the Marine Park.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Members considered the media release from Senator Campbell, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, in which several initiatives were announced to improve community involvement in decision-making along the GBR coast. In terms of the proposed establishment of regional offices by the GBRMPA, members noted that staff located in regional offices would need to be well-connected with the entire GBRMPA work program and be capable of networking, coordinating, and facilitating.

Members were also given a brief outline of the outcomes of the Futureye report that was commissioned by the GBRMPA to evaluate consultation processes during the Representative Areas Program (RAP). The Committee unanimously agreed that the consultative processes undertaken by the GBRMPA for the RAP were comprehensive for all involved, and believed that most of the dissatisfaction came from individuals or organisations who were not involved, either by choice or through lack of awareness of the initiative.

Members were asked to discuss the issue of community engagement with their organisations and constituents, with a view to having an in-depth discussion during FRAC 14 on how the GBRMPA could improve communication with their particular sector.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is proposed for 20 and 21 June 2005.

<b>CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE</b>	
Mr David Bateman .....	Recreational Fishing
tba .....	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 Bob Grimley .....	Qld Boating and Fisheries Patrol
Mr Ray Joyce .....	Charter Fishing
tba .....	Conservation
Mr John Olsen .....	Commercial Fishing
Mr Chris Roberts .....	Indigenous Community
Mr Lyle Squire .....	Commercial Dive-based Fishing
Ms Diane Tarte .....	Independent Chairperson
Dr David Williams .....	Scientific Community