



FISHERIES REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FRAC)

22nd Meeting

26 and 27 March 2009 – Townsville

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The twenty-second meeting of the FRAC was held in Townsville on 26 and 27 March 2009. The Chairman paid respect to the Wulgurukaba and Bindal Traditional Owners and acknowledged their traditional land and sea country in the Townsville region.

A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

GREAT BARRIER REEF OUTLOOK REPORT

Members were updated on the progress made in preparing the 2009 Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report. An outlook forum was held in September 2008, brainstorming ideas of what the Great Barrier Reef may look like into the future. There were two very good days of mixed-group discussions with representatives from ports, fisheries, tourism, government, Traditional Owners and conservation.

The Minister will table the Outlook Report during the Parliament's sitting days, sometime between mid-August and mid-September 2009.

Members were reminded that the Report does not itself make recommendations or policy advice; rather, it provides an opportunity to look into the future identifying possible impacts on the health of the Great Barrier Reef, providing a good basis on which to look at the future of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The document is referenced with scientific material, and includes a lot of background and baseline information to set the scene for this first report. Subsequent reports will likely be smaller, as there will be no need to include the background information.

QUEENSLAND PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND FISHERIES AND QUEENSLAND BOATING AND FISHERIES PATROL

An update was provided to members on recent compliance and prosecution activities undertaken within the Marine Park by the QBFP.

In discussion, the following comments were noted:

- Do people know the rules exist? Do they know the rules? Even if they know the rules, do they choose not to comply with them?
- There will always be a certain percentage of the population who choose not to obey rules.

- Perhaps some of the rules need to be changed, to enhance the ability of people to understand and comply with them.

Members were also updated on current issues and activities of the QPI&F including spawning closures and the East Coast Inshore Finfish Fishery.

The Chairman suggested there were several useful items from this report that could tie in with the future direction of the RAC including climate change, regional management, and integration of management agencies' responsibilities.

EAST COAST INSHORE FINFISH FISHERY (ECIFF)

An update was provided to members on recent actions relating to the ECIFF and other current fisheries management issues within the GBRMP. It was noted that the Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) Declaration for the ECIFF will bring with it a whole range of new management systems. The changes will likely take some time to settle down, and industry will need time to adjust.

SPAWNING AGGREGATION PROTECTION

Members were updated on the current State and Commonwealth management arrangements for the fishery within the GBRMP, and were asked to provide advice on what management and research the GBRMPA should prioritise for fish spawning aggregation sites (FSAS) in the Marine Park.

Members agreed that the GBRMPA needs to work closely with the QPI&F and industry to ensure that the research on Elford and Scott Reefs is continued and expanded, to ensure good data is collected, and that this research be done during the spring spawning season months. Members also agreed that further FSAS should be identified for long-term monitoring in open and closed zones in relevant regional areas including north of Cooktown, Bowen, Mackay and Gladstone. After discussing a range of measures to protect FSAS, the Committee strongly endorsed the risk assessment process to quickly identify the range of management measures to protect FSAS.

ECOSYSTEM BASED MANAGEMENT IN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Members received a briefing on the concept of Ecosystem Based Management (EBM), and the need, following recent changes to the GBRMP Act, to be consistent with EBM and the principles of ecologically sustainable use when seeking to achieve the objects of the Act. Discussion took place on how the GBRMPA was seeking to demonstrate the degree to which current management practices were meeting the principle of EBM.

It was noted that the GBRMPA has a legal mandate for the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage; the GBRMPA must ensure the health of the GBRMP is adequately addressed and to do so needs to consider relevant issues outside the GBRMP. It is sometimes necessary for the GBRMPA to look at things within the catchment that affect the Great Barrier Reef. To this end, it would be useful to work to a common framework with other management agencies.

The Chairman felt that what is missing in the Great Barrier Reef is an understanding of the entire system and an understanding of the issues of cumulative impacts and resilience, as well as our society's demand to use all of this. We are still too simplistic in our approaches to understanding management requirements.

In concluding discussion, members agreed with the general proposal of developing a broader EBM strategy for the Great Barrier Reef, and were keen to be kept informed on the progress of this strategy; how it will be taken forward into influencing the work program and priorities of the GBRMPA's Ecosystem, Conservation and Sustainable Use Group, and how it will cross-reference with the GBRMPA's priorities.

SEA SNAKE CONSERVATION AND IUCN UPDATE

Members were provided a presentation on the research project "Quantifying and reducing the incidental catch and fishing mortality of sea snakes in the Queensland (Australia) trawl fishery" (Anthony J. Courtney et al), funded by the Australian Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and QPI&F.

Members were interested to hear that survival rates are looking better; collectively, the data is suggesting that as turtle exclusion devices (TEDs) and bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) have been introduced, they have had a positive effect on bycatch mortality.

REPORT ON SUCCESSES IN COMMERCIAL FISHING INDUSTRY

Members were provided a presentation on the efforts of the commercial fishing sector to minimise their impacts on protected species and ensure sustainability of their operations. It was noted that a lot of the work has been done by the fishers themselves.

Members generally agreed other mechanisms which can respond to the dynamics of the industry need to be considered, along with other things that will fit the capacity of the industry. The question is – how do you

reward those who are leading, and how do you encourage the others to get there?

OUTCOMES OF ECONOMICS PROJECT BY MARSDEN JACOBS

Members were presented a summary of the key findings of the outcomes of the economics project commissioned by the GBRMPA and undertaken by Marsden Jacob Associates. Members were then asked to prioritise the recommended research and information gathering projects for the GBRMP, from the FRAC's perspective, in terms of what is needed to ensure better confidence around management of the Great Barrier Reef.

In concluding discussion, it was evident that there is a strong need to understand what it is that the GBRMPA wants to manage. Members agreed to advise the GBRMPA of the list of priorities as identified by the FRAC, and to further consider these priorities at the next meeting, with a view to discussing the best way to progress the report.

FRAC TERM REVIEW

The Chairman asked members for assistance in preparing her report on the effectiveness of the Committee over the current term of membership, which is due to expire during 2009. Members were also asked to consider the following questions:

- a) What is the most valuable aspect for you for your participation in FRAC?
- b) What do you regard as the most important/ effective items of advice from the FRAC to the GBRMPA during this last term (2006-2009)?

Members were concerned that changes to the current membership of the FRAC would impact on the rapport built between the members, and the ability for those members to discuss issues frankly and openly.

NEXT MEETING

The following dates were set for FRAC meetings for the remainder of 2009:

- FRAC 23 – 16 and 17 July; and
- FRAC 24 – 8 and 9 October 2009.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr David Bateman AM	Recreational Fishing
Mr Craig Bohm	Conservation
Mr Wayne Butcher	Indigenous
Mr Kevin Chard	Spear fishing
Mr Jon Day	GBRMPA
Mr Bob Grimley	Qld Boating and Fisheries Patrol
Mr Nick Heath	Conservation
Mr Stephen Jeston.....	Fishing Guide
Mr Ray Joyce	Charter Fishing
Mr Lyle Squire Jnr	Commercial Dive-based Fishing
Ms Diane Tarte	Independent Chairman
Mr Gary Wicks	Commercial Fishing
Mr Sean Lane (observer)	Dept of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
Mr Greg Smith (observer)	Commercial Fishing
Mr Ian Yarroll (observer)	Qld Primary Industries and Fisheries
Vacant	Qld Environmental Protection Agency
Vacant	Scientific Community