



FISHERIES REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FRAC)

21st Meeting

19 and 20 August 2008 – Townsville

DRAFT SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The 21st meeting of the FRAC was held in Townsville on 19 and 20 August 2008. A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

SUSTAINABLE FISHING IN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK (GBRMP)

The Committee supported the development of a Statement of Intent and Guidelines on sustainable fishing in the GBRMP.

Members reviewed a draft Statement which provides for fishing as one of the allowable uses of the Marine Park. The draft Statement describes the range of considerations that the GBRMPA should take into account to ensure that fishing uses of the Marine Park are consistent with the GBRMP Act, while preserving the values of the World Heritage Area.

Members' comments included:

- There is a need to be consistent with the Intergovernmental Agreement between the Australian and Queensland governments being drafted.
- The GBRMPA should consider whether there are legal implications regarding any provisos.
- Key Performance Indicators should also be considered.
- The draft Statement goes some way towards addressing an industry desire for a statement which says that the GBRMPA does accept fishing at a sustainable level in the GBRMP.
- Perhaps an aspirational statement is also appropriate.
- There is a challenge in managing cumulative and competing uses.

It was concluded that the Sustainable Fishing Group, in its development of the Statement, should reflect on members' comments regarding principles, key performance indicators and legal implications in achieving the right balance.

RECOGNISING AND FOSTERING MARINE STEWARDSHIP

The Committee discussed a range of initiatives designed to recognise and foster marine stewardship in

the GBRMP. It also recommended that the GBRMPA conduct a gap analysis and develop an options paper for discussion about marine stewardship in relation to fishing uses of the Marine Park, including consideration of mechanisms to recognise stewardship by individuals or groups.

The following comments were made by members:

- Industry is starting to be proactive in taking a stewardship role.
- Stewardship initiatives may be at a sectoral or individual operator level.
- There is a desire that governments recognise individuals striving to do the best they can as well as current initiatives by sectors.
- One challenge is how to encourage cooperation of typical recreational anglers and reward stewardship in the recreational sector.
- There are concerns fisheries in Queensland are not yet ready for accreditation approaches until they meet higher standards in the water: there might be a risk of misbranding.
- Commercial operators would be looking for industry-driven approaches and would prefer one set of procedures which meets requirements of all government agencies. There is a need for strong government involvement.
- The desire or will to do the right thing in terms of stewardship comes from a sense of custodianship.
- Stewardship initiatives provide opportunities to improve relationships.
- There is a need to acknowledge best practice and effort. It is about the process of engagement and commitment to improvement.

The Australian Government is heavily involved in the process, though is not taking the lead.

In summary, it was noted that the discussion under this item had brought out some useful common themes. Consideration should be given to developing a mechanism to easily recognise and potentially reward individual fisheries or groups of fishers for improving practices.

OUTLOOK REPORT: MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS

The Committee considered progress on the GBR Outlook Report, advised on the effectiveness of existing management measures and rated the outlook for the Great Barrier Reef.

Members were asked to rate management effectiveness based on nominated statements regarding context, planning, inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes. Some comments received were:

- Improved water quality should be delivered within the next 20 years.
- Socio-economic information is good though it is limited.
- The challenge for management is not to become detached from the fisheries they manage.
- We have data sets but need to improve on the interpretation of them.
- All questions posed regarding the management effectiveness document were framed in the positive, not the negative. A question rating system of one to five would have been more effective.

Members were also requested to comment on the current status of the GBR ecosystem as well as the prospect in five years and 20 years. Ratings were generally in the good/fair/poor range.

EFFECTS OF TRAWLING, RECOVERY OF TRAWL SITES AND SEABED BIODIVERSITY

The Committee reviewed outcomes from a suite of research projects, conducted over the past decade, into the effects of prawn trawling, the recovery of trawl sites, seabed biodiversity mapping and evaluation of management strategies on the Great Barrier Reef by CSIRO and the Australian Institute of Marine Science. Some comments received were:

- There is a direct relationship between the level of information and confidence in a decision.
- Pursuing greener catches is about gear technologies.
- The reports which accompanied the projects are extremely complex. A short version which is easily interpreted by non-academics should be produced.
- There is a need to continue validating the outputs of computer models.

When asked about re-sampling timeframes and future research needs, the researchers advised this would depend upon the question of interest, and emphasised the need to for a conceptual framework.

QUEENSLAND DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND FISHERIES (QDPI&F) UPDATE INCLUDING INSHORE FINFISH FISHERY

Members were provided an update on recent QDPI&F issues including the Strategic Plan and fisheries strategic policy framework. New principles to be

considered in the Fisheries Strategic Policy Framework include knowledge, relationships and partnerships.

Inshore Finfish Fishery

A regional management research project relating to the Inshore Finfish Fishery is proposed to look at resource allocation at a regional level. There is a need to commence the engagement process to clarify co-management and regional management expectations.

The recommendations from Queensland's Inshore Management Advisory Committee are confidential, although there is a web summary available. There have been over 6,000 letters regarding the Inshore Finfish Fishery. A lot of letters are now being received regarding the plight of the fishing industry in general.

Members commented that:

- There has been a widespread opinion expressed to the QDPI&F not to proceed with formalising the target shark fishery.
- The conservation sector stated they are looking for a phasing out of targeted shark fishing. It was stated it may be difficult to separate out shark because other inshore species are caught with them.

Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL)

This has been an interesting and challenging sector to manage. A meeting in December identified that the sector would move to a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) system. There has been a voluntary industry agreement to close the fishery at midnight on 5 September 2008.

It was commented that fishing efficiency and the level of sophistication in the TRL industry is very high. Because there are very few players, their agreement will work.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is proposed for February/March 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 James Gillespie	Qld Dept Primary Industries and Fisheries
Mr Bob Grimley	Qld Boating and Fisheries Patrol
Mr Nick Heath	Conservation
Mr Stephen Jeston	Fishing Guide
Mr Ray Joyce	Charter Fishing
Mr Andrew McNee	Dept of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
Mr Lyle Squire Jnr	Commercial Dive-based Fishing
Ms Diane Tarte	Independent Chairman
Mr Bruce Wallner	GBRMPA
Mr Gary Wicks	Commercial Fishing
Dr David Williams	Scientific Community
To Be Appointed	Qld Environmental Protection Agency