



Reef 2050 Plan

Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program

Communique

Steering group meeting nine, 27 July 2017

The ninth Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program (RIMReP) steering group meeting was held in Brisbane on 27 July 2017.

The monitoring program is the key mechanism to track the progress of the Australian and Queensland governments' 35-year plan — the Reef 2050 Plan — to protect the Great Barrier Reef. It brings together monitoring, modelling, and reporting activities across the Reef and its catchment to enable timely and appropriate responses by Reef managers and partners to emerging risks and issues.

Outcomes

The steering group discussed the program's development across the three working groups: program design, synthesis and reporting, and data management and systems. The group acknowledged the need to review the sequencing of the program's objectives and improve the clarity of the program vision. It was suggested an update of the current Program Strategy would be useful to share this change.

They also discussed the midterm review of the Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan and recommended the strengthening of climate change in the Plan.

The steering group agreed that the design of the program will occur in three phases across three years. The first phase, which has been completed, consisted of collating existing monitoring indicators and identifying potential new monitoring indicators across the program themes. Indicators are measurable attributes that can improve our understanding of the health of the Reef and detect changes in condition and trend, for example coral cover, light, and sea temperature. The indicators that have been developed are based on the Drivers, Pressures, State, Impact, and Response framework.

The key themes include human dimensions, megafauna, coral, seagrass, physicochemical, indigenous heritage, fishing and fisheries, and catchment and estuaries. The steering group recommended the inclusion of islands as a theme and the evaluation of additional themes, such as microbes.

The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) has been contracted to manage phase two of the program design. This work involves reviewing the adequacy of the indicators identified in phase one, analysing existing monitoring and modelling programs and identifying gaps. An evaluation of new monitoring technologies will also be completed. This will result in recommendations for monitoring and modelling activities in the Marine Park and catchment. The steering group received an update from the AIMS lead on this phase.

The steering group confirmed that phase three will integrate the work of phase two into an overall program design taking into account the linkages and dependences across the key themes. To determine the final recommended design a cost-benefits and trade-off analysis will be completed. This phase will run concurrently with phase two with an estimated completion date of June 2018.



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Processes for developing protocols for managing information and data sharing agreements, including culturally sensitive information, has begun. The steering group acknowledged that a data audit will be beneficial for identifying potential challenges of data sharing agreements and enable project leads to focus on solving access to critical data streams.

Research into the information needs for end-users is being completed. The steering group received an update on the research; with preliminary results suggesting stakeholders want an interactive mapping web-based system that provides access to information from raw data to summarised products. The results of this research will assist with program design to ensure the end product can be used by managers and stakeholders as a decision support tool and to assess the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

Other program achievements and outcomes:

- Investment in key monitoring gaps to ensure continuity of data sets and information for the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019
- Monitoring funded by the program includes five-yearly aerial surveys to monitor dugong populations, protected area management, deep water shoals, water quality in Cape York, and how humans interact with the Great Barrier Reef
- Dugong aerial surveys conducted in October-November 2016 indicate that the dugong calf population post 2011 has gone from zero to 10 per cent of the total population in the southern GBR between 2011—2016; this received positive national media coverage
- The program has contributed funding for the monitoring program which assesses the effectiveness of the Great Barrier Marine Park Zoning Plan for coral reefs. Under the program, AIMS monitors mid-shelf and offshore areas within the Marine Park, and James Cook University monitors the inshore environment. The results show populations of targeted fish species in protected areas (no-take areas) continued to be larger and more abundant. There is evidence that coral habitats recover at a greater rate in protected areas most likely because they are less affected by biophysical impacts from human activity such as anchoring and fishing. This indicates greater coral resilience in protected areas.

Reporting and future meetings

The next steering group meeting will be held in November 2017.



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Attendees

Russell Reichelt	Chairman Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Jim Reeves	Director-General Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
Rachel Parry	Assistant Secretary, Reef Branch Department of the Environment and Energy
Ian Gordon	Regional Manager Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines
Christian Roth	Coordinator Great Barrier Reef Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
Roger Shaw	Chair Independent Science Panel
Mark Jacobs	Deputy Director-General, Strategy and Innovation Department of Science Information Technology and Innovation

Observers/Experts

Margaret Johnson	General Manager, Policy and Stewardship Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Roger Beeden	Director, Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
David Leverton	Chief Information Officer, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Fergus Molloy	Manager, Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Jessica Mead	Communications Project Manager, Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Elisa Nichols	Executive Director, Office of Great Barrier Reef Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
Kirstin Kenyon	Director, Office of Great Barrier Reef Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
Nyssa Henry	Manager, Office of Great Barrier Reef Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
David Souter	Research Manager, Australian Institute of Marine Science