

Tourism Operation Audits for Climate Action Readiness



Summary

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) has a commitment to assist industries to adapt to climate change. Some of the Great Barrier Reef's certified high standard tourism operations were audited to determine their readiness for climate action. All of the audits demonstrated a high standard of operation, having a minimal impact on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The majority of operators were aware of the issues associated with climate change. All operators displayed a high level of interest in obtaining Climate Action Certification.

Background

Certified high standard tourism operations in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park have demonstrated best practice in environmental, social and economic areas of their business by gaining Ecotourism or Advanced Ecotourism levels of Ecotourism Australia's ECO Certification Program. The review of operations against the ECO Certification standards was a good opportunity to concurrently look at levels of climate change awareness and identify potential action.

The project supported actions identified in the *Great Barrier Reef Tourism Climate Change Action Strategy 2009-2012 (TCCAS)*, (mainly 2.1.2: Support operators to become certified through accredited programs and the adoption of best practice on climate adaptation and mitigation).

Project name: Tourism Operations Audits for Climate Action Readiness
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Outcome: D1.1 & 2.1
Year: 2008-09
Bulletin type: Final

Objectives

- Identify Great Barrier Reef Marine Park operators who are ready to undertake best practice standards for climate action and provide them with individual recommendations.
- Increase understanding by tourism operators of what they can do to reduce their carbon footprint and how to adapt to climate change impacts.
- Increase the capacity of Great Barrier Reef tourism operators to act and make a difference.



High standard operators assist with regular monitoring of Great Barrier Reef sites



Activities

Independent auditors reviewed the operations against current ECO Certification standards and a range of climate action criteria. Audits were undertaken of six Marine Park operations, three in the Cairns area and three in the Port Douglas.

A summary report was provided detailing key findings, any breaches of certification and other compliance matters.

Individual reports were provided on each operation identifying both their strengths in relation to current best practice and any recommended improvements, including key steps required to achieve best practices for climate action.



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Outcomes

All six Marine Park operators were identified as having the passion and drive to run low impact operations as demonstrated by their high level of compliance with the ECO Certification standards.

Audits also demonstrated that operations had already taken some climate action measures such as improvements to fuel efficiency and provision of staff information.

No operations had calculated their greenhouse gas emissions, assessed the risks associated with climate change or developed adaptation strategies. However, all six operations expressed an interest in gaining Climate Action Certification. The barriers they felt impacted their ability to achieve this included lack of experienced staff and resources, and practical matters such as limited alternatives to diesel fuel and limitations in relation to leased offices.

Future directions

The GBRMPA is continuing to implement the TCCAS which will assist operators by providing a series of risk assessment workshops and with practical tools such as a sector specific emissions calculator.

Further reading

Climate Action Certification:
<http://www.sustainabletourismaustralia.com/>
The GBRMPA Tourism Operator Emissions Calculator:
<http://emissionscalculator.gbrmpa.gov.au/resourcedb/>

Key Steps to Climate Action

1. Attend a Climate Action Information Session
2. Identify what your operation requires and where assistance can be sourced
3. Commit to undertaking the tasks
4. Calculate your greenhouse gas emissions
5. Develop an action plan