

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

REPRESENTATIVE AREAS PROGRAM



update

5

october 2002

THANKS FOR YOUR INPUT

OVER 10,000 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

With the closure of the first formal round of community consultation on 7 August, GBRMPA staff are now busy analysing the 10,150 public submissions that were received. This is by far the largest number of submissions ever for a zoning or management planning exercise in the GBR and shows the level of public interest in such an important planning program.

Over 63% of submissions came from people or groups in Queensland (6,163), and 81% of these came from areas that are adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, reflecting the localised interest in the program. Other Australian States accounted for 36% of submissions, while the remainder (about 1%) came from overseas.

A range of techniques and methods were used during the consultation program to reach the widest possible audience and encourage people to get involved. Here are a few more statistics for the first formal Community Participation phase (7 May - 7 August 2002):

- Over 200 formal meetings held with nearly 6,000 people attending
- More than 1,500 community service announcements on regional television
- 33,000 submission brochures distributed
- 38,000 hits on the web site
- Over 4,000 phone calls to the free-call number (still operating: 1 800 990 177)
- Over 100 newspaper articles
- More than 60 radio spots and 10 television spots
- Approximately 70 newspaper advertisements

The Representative Areas Program is a great opportunity to get involved to help determine the future of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Community views will help inform the project team about your areas of concern and views on future management. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority would like to thank those of you who have given us input so far.

WHERE ARE WE IN THE PROCESS?

The re-zoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is being prepared in a number of stages. We have just completed the first formal Community Participation phase. The next stage of the process involves analysing all the issues that were raised in the consultation phase, with a view to developing a draft zoning plan for the entire Marine Park. Where appropriate this will include working with other management agencies such as Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol (QBFP).

It is expected the draft plan will be finalised by mid 2003. The draft plan will be the basis of a second formal Community Participation phase. This will be the opportunity for the broader general public to again have a say. A revised plan will then be prepared and submitted for Ministerial and Parliamentary approval.



GREAT BARRIER REEF
MARINE PARK AUTHORITY

PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY

MORE THAN JUST GREEN ZONES

To put the Representative Areas Program into place requires the whole of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park to be rezoned. The focus during this first round of consultation has largely centred around the size and placement of green zones because that is what is necessary to protect the range of biodiversity. Green zones are the no-take areas and hold most interest for many stakeholders, particularly fishers.

However, many comments have been received about yellow zones (Marine National Park 'A' or Conservation Park Zones), buffer zones or zoning matters affecting specific uses. Yellow zones allow one or two lines per person (depending on the section), and a maximum of one hook per line. These gear restrictions apply to both commercial and recreational users.

The zoning provisions in the most recent zoning plan (Far Northern Section, released April 2002 http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/fns/zone_plan.html) will provide the template for the new GBR-wide Draft Zoning Plan. However, as outlined below, other zoning aspects will also be reviewed (e.g. to ensure consistency). People should bear in mind they can comment and provide submissions about any aspect of zoning (not just Green Zones) during the formal Community Participation phases of RAP, including the second formal Community Participation phase next year.

OTHER ISSUES BEING ADDRESSED**DURING THIS REZONING PROGRAM****Zone definitions**

The rules or zoning provisions that apply to each zone, i.e. the specific uses allowed in each zone, in some cases vary slightly depending upon which section of the Marine Park they are located in. These inconsistencies will be addressed during the rezoning.

Zone names

The Marine Park is divided into a number of zones, which represent different types of allowed or permitted use. Each zone is represented by a different colour on the zoning maps. Many of the zones have come to be referred to by their colour rather than their actual name. Over the years, the Marine Park was zoned on a section by section basis. As new zoning plans have come into being, zones of the same colour have slightly different names depending on which section of the Marine Park they are located in.

For example, a green zone in the Far Northern Section of the Marine Park is called a 'National Park' Zone, while in the Mackay/Capricorn Section green zones are called 'Marine National Park B' Zones. Inconsistencies such as this will be addressed during the rezoning that is occurring due to RAP.

Zone boundaries

Clear identification of the boundaries of each zone as they apply in the Marine Park has always been a challenge and can be confusing for both the general public using and enjoying the area, and for the managers whose job it is to enforce the regulations. It is not possible to put fences in the ocean and, historically, along the coast, distinctive coastal features have been used. However, in the open sea, boundary descriptions have been based on a specified distance from the 'reef edge', which in itself is often difficult to locate, particularly at high tide or when there is poor water visibility.

A co-ordinates based approach to boundary descriptions has been identified as the way to go in future, particularly in offshore areas. The new zoning plan will use points of latitude and longitude wherever possible to determine boundaries. These in turn can be interpreted easily with modern navigational systems such as GPS (Global Positioning Systems). However, near-shore and coastal boundaries will still use geographical features as much as possible.

WHAT YOU SAID

Zoning in the new coastal areas

By far the greatest amount of feedback to the Authority was about the new coastal areas of the Marine Park. These were the areas marked in grey along the coast on the Submission Brochure or marked with diagonal stripes on the Detailed Maps (1:250,000 scale) used during the formal Community Participation phase. These are 28 new coastal sections of the Marine Park. We received a wide range of comments about these new sections, mostly identifying them as areas that should not be zoned as Green Zones because that would severely impact upon the recreational lifestyle of the adjacent coastal centres.

As a point of clarification, these new coastal sections are NOT the proposed new Green Zones. Even though there was a lot of media and comments from some sections of the general public suggesting these were the areas GBRMPA had already identified as the new no-take areas, this is definitely not the case!

The facts are, these new coastal sections have only recently, within the last 18 months, been included into the boundaries of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. As such, they are currently unzoned areas and during this rezoning program will be zoned for the first time in some way.

The GBRMPA has no particular agenda for what kind of zones might be best for any of these areas and the final outcomes concerning zoning will depend on community feedback.

Where is the evidence?

Many people questioned the GBRMPA about what scientific evidence was available that supported the establishment of more no-take areas. The latest evidence is focused on the fish side of the story and is interesting despite the focus of the RAP being on protection of the entire range of plants and animals. Associate Professor Garry Russ from James Cook University advocates the expansion of the network of green zones. He calls it "... an insurance policy against over-fishing". His comments are based upon 19 years of research in fisheries management on reefs.

An expansion of no-take areas is important for the future of fish stocks in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park according to Assoc. Professor Russ. "Effectively protecting 25% of the trout habitat in the Marine Park in the long term increases the biomass of spawning fish in the water by 200% compared to having no green zones. Similar benefits could be expected for other species with similar lifestyles to coral trout", he said in a recent media release. He also said it was virtually undeniable that in the long term properly protected green zones would sustain and even enhance fish stocks. For the full text of his media release visit this website: <http://media.jcu.edu.au/story.cfm?id=96>

Correcting misinformation

During the community participation program it became obvious that on a number of issues there was a fair degree of misunderstanding of exactly what the GBRMPA was proposing during this rezoning program. Many people believed that draft plans had already been developed and the locations of new green zones had been pre-determined. In response, a fact sheet entitled 'Correcting Misinformation' was printed and widely circulated at meetings and through the media. For a full copy of this sheet either contact the GBRMPA or download it from our website: http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/consultation/correction_facts.html

REPRESENTATIVE AREAS PROGRAM

The Representative Areas Team Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

PO Box 1379
Townsville
Queensland 4810

Phone: (07) 4750 0700
Facsimile: (07) 4772 6093

Email: registry@gbrmpa.gov.au
Web: www.gbrmpa.gov.au



MORE INFORMATION FROM THE WEB

Information on the GBRMPA's RAP website http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/index.html includes:

1. The current zoning for the GBR Marine Park which can be found at
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/documents/zoning.pdf
2. The 'pie-chart' maps showing the current level of no-take zones in each bioregion
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/documents/nonreef.jpg or http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/documents/reef.jpg
3. Fifteen technical information sheets provide more detailed information about RAP
(eg principles developed by the Scientific Steering Committee; an example of the proposed co-ordinate based mapping approach to define zones; Frequently Asked Questions, etc)
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/info_sheets.html
4. Some of the datasets/maps that were used to help develop the bioregions
(for example, different types of reef morphology and tidal ranges across the GBR, maps of seagrass, etc)
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/maps.html
5. Copies of each of the Update Brochures (five to date) are at
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/updates.html
6. The Overview document which outlines some of the background to RAP
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/rep_area_overview.html

If any one has any questions about the Representative Areas Program, please call 1800 990 177 (FREECALL) or Email: info@gbrmpa.gov.au