



# From the Deck

MAY 2012  
NEWSLETTER - 33

## GBRMPA update

This first edition for 2012 touches on a number of important matters affecting the Great Barrier Reef and its management.

In February this year the Australian Government announced a temporary reduction in the Environmental Management Charge which will help ease the current financial pressure on the industry. The change took effect in April.

At its meeting in June 2011, the World Heritage Committee noted with extreme concern the approval of liquefied natural gas processing and port facilities on Curtis Island and requested the Australian Government invite a monitoring mission to visit the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage site.

Specifically, the Committee was concerned about the overall state of conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Reef.

The Government takes the Committee's concerns very seriously and has responded by committing to several activities.

In February the Committee was provided with a full report addressing its concerns and outlining the state of conservation of the Reef. The report will be examined by the Committee in June 2012. (<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/>

[publications/strategy/gbr-state-party-report-feb12.html](http://publications/strategy/gbr-state-party-report-feb12.html))

The Australian Government invited a monitoring mission to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, which took place in March. Members met with key tourism industry stakeholders to discuss management approaches and the long-term future of the Reef.

The object of the monitoring mission was to assess the progress made by the State Party against the decision of the Committee and, in particular, any activities that may have impacted on the OUV of the Reef. The Committee will consider the mission's report in June.

Simultaneously, the Australian and Queensland governments are undertaking a joint strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal zone to develop an agreed, long term plan for

sustainable development within the region.

The assessment, expected to take 18 to 24 months, will consider the adequacy of existing management arrangements and the likely direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of current and future planned development.

In March this year the inextricable link between a healthy Reef and a healthy tourism industry was reiterated by the Government when the Reef was formally recognised under the National Landscapes Program.

The National Landscapes Program is a partnership between tourism and conservation which aims to promote Australia's world class, high quality visitor experiences and build support for protecting our natural and cultural assets.



The Hon Martin Ferguson (Federal Minister for Resources, Energy and Tourism), Andrew McEvoy (Tourism Australia Managing Director) and Andrew Skeat (GBRMPA General Manager) in Cairns to announce the Reef as a National Landscape

# COTS watch

Scientific reports indicate a crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS) outbreak could be on the horizon, due to floods in the catchment between 2009 and 2011 carrying increased nutrients to the Reef.

A definitive link has been established between COTS outbreaks and water quality with one paper estimating current coral cover in the central Great Barrier Reef may be 30 to 40 per cent below its potential value due to COTS outbreaks.

We are starting to receive reports from tourism operators indicating an increased number of COTS at their sites and need you to keep reporting any COTS sightings through *Eye on the Reef* weekly log sheets or *Sightings Network* forms.

Tourism operators can apply for a permit to remove COTS from their sites and, if you already hold a permit, please continue to submit reports as per your permit conditions.



## Reef operators support Eye on the Reef workshops

Our recent Eye on the Reef workshops and in-water training days saw many new faces join the monitoring program.

The Whitsundays training day, held at Mantaray Bay and Luncheon Bay on Hook Island, saw 21 crew from 12 different operators join us on H2O Sports' *Reef Spirit*.

The Cairns training day took place at the Sunlover pontoon at Moore Reef and we were joined by 21 crew from 11 different operators.

Crew were specifically interested in identifying coral disease and there was general concern about the

increasing numbers of crown-of-thorns starfish.

Dr Matt Curnock will be the guest speaker at the next Eye on the Reef workshops in June, talking about Dwarf Minke Whales.



## Comments sought on moorings policy and contingency plan

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's *Policy on Moorings in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park* and the *Marine Tourism Contingency Plan* have been reviewed and will be available for public consultation in May/June. Draft copies of both documents will be available from [www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au).

## GBRMPA and EA partnership refreshed

A commitment to best practice tourism in the Reef is stronger than ever as the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and Ecotourism Australia (EA) announce their renewed partnership.

The agreement sees EA continue to independently assess and certify Reef tourism operators that operate to a high standard in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

There are now 52 Eco Certified operators in GBRMPA's High Standard Tourism Program, carrying more than 60 per cent of all tourists to the Reef.

We will showcase the High Standard Operators at the Australian Tourism Exchange in Perth in June this year.

## Keep informed with e-newsletter

If you'd like to receive the latest in news and events concerning the Great Barrier Reef, subscribe to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's new e-newsletter, *Reef in Brief*.

*Reef in Brief* will share the great work being done with our partners to protect the Reef, and will also contain important information for industry and community stakeholders.

To subscribe, go to [www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au)

# Compliance matters

During 2011, there were 328 compliance actions, including 72 prosecutions, for offences against Commonwealth legislation. The Courts issued more than \$350,000 in fines and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority issued more than \$15,000 in infringement notices.

## Summary of Commonwealth incidents during 2011

Activity	Far Northern	Cairns/ Cooktown	Townsville/ Whitsunday	Mackay/ Capricorn	Total
Commercial fishing (including unattached dory in a Green Zone)	6	8	10	57	<b>81</b>
Indigenous hunting/ fishing	0	44	3	0	<b>47</b>
Recreational fishing/ other <sup>1,2</sup>	1	54	93	60	<b>208</b>
Tourism <sup>1,2,3</sup>	1	35	37	5	<b>78</b>
Commercial shipping <sup>2</sup>	0	0	0	5	<b>5</b>
Groundings (commercial vessels)	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Groundings (recreational vessels)	0	1	2	1	<b>4</b>
Groundings (tourism vessels)	0	1	1	1	<b>3</b>
Moorings (unpermitted and non-compliant)	0	3	3	0	<b>6</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>432</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes fishing, unpermitted activity, breach of permit, plan of management

<sup>2</sup> Does not include groundings

<sup>3</sup> Does not include moorings

## Three year EMC reduction

The Australian Government recently announced a temporary reduction of the Environmental Management Charge (EMC) Standard Tourist Program Charge from 1 April 2012 until 31 March 2015. After this date, the full EMC will be reinstated in line with CPI adjustments.

Over the next three years, the Government will offset the lower EMC collected to ensure the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority can continue its high standard of management.

### EMC

01/04/2012 - 31/03/2013

**\$3.50 – full day trip**

**\$1.75 – part day trip**

We recognise the short lead time of this announcement may result in marketing collateral not accurately representing the EMC. We ask that you take all reasonable steps to amend any inconsistencies and please update your websites.

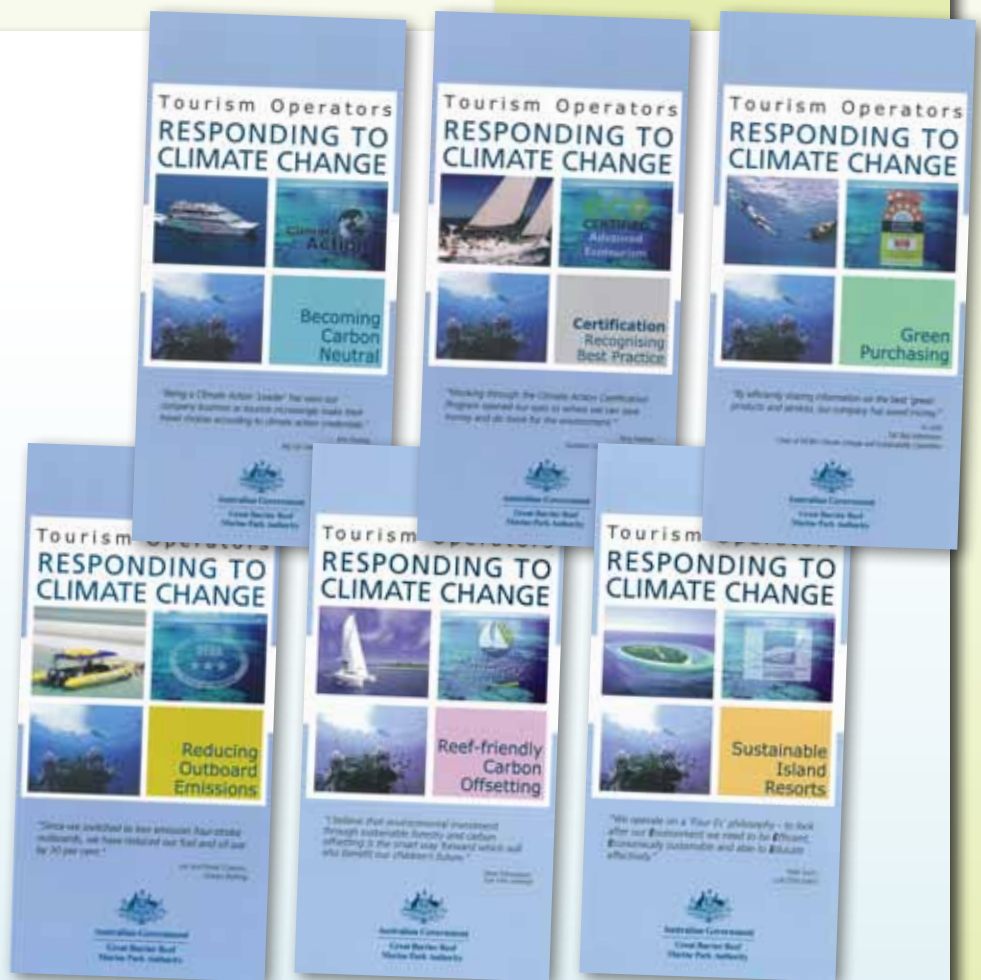
EMC Online, electronic spreadsheets and Charge Returns have been updated to reflect the new charge arrangements. If you have any questions email: [emc@gbmpa.gov.au](mailto:emc@gbmpa.gov.au).

## Go green to stay in the black

At a time when everyone is looking at their outgoings and wondering how to reduce them, Reef operators are finding practical and creative ways to save money as well as be kinder to the environment.

We have produced six case studies on sustainability topics, such as becoming carbon neutral, green purchasing and reef-friendly carbon offsetting, to help operators decide what they can do to reduce costs and be more environmentally friendly.

Check out all six case studies: [www.gbmpa.gov.au/our-partners/tourism-industry/tackling-climate-change](http://www.gbmpa.gov.au/our-partners/tourism-industry/tackling-climate-change).



# Reef friendly carbon offsetting

Steve and Katrina Edmondson from Low Isles Sailaway think and act green and their focus on protecting the environment is integral to the experience they deliver to their visitors.

Having calculated their businesses carbon footprint they found they were well on the way to sustainable practices through the use of wind power, recycled biodiesel and 4-stroke outboards on their luxury catamaran 'Sailaway IV'. They needed very little to offset their residual carbon emissions.

"We were looking for something we could do ourselves to provide offsets, something local and credible that

connects the World Heritage rainforest with the Reef," said Steve.

The answer was the staged revegetation of a 28 hectare former cane paddock outside Port Douglas which has allowed the Edmondsons to educate visitors about carbon offsetting and demonstrate sustainable practices.

For more information, check out the Tourism Operators Responding to Climate Change case studies at [www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au) and our online emissions calculator at <http://www.emissionscalculator.gbrmpa.gov.au/tourism/>.



## TRUE BLUE SAILING

### Our profiled High Standard Operator...

True Blue Sailing in the Whitsundays was the 50th Reef operator to become certified under Ecotourism Australia's Eco Certification Program.

True Blue Sailing's General Manager Tony Brown says they had followed the practices and ideals of Eco Certification from the beginning but it wasn't until 2010 that they started to get the process of certification really happening.



Tony sees the revision of their business plan as one of the key advantages of becoming certified. "It is always a strong tool to revise your business through a process like this, as we do tend to get caught up with the day-to-day grind."

One area True Blue Sailing needed to formalise was their interpretation planning and briefings. This process highlighted to Tony how much the crew wanted to learn about the Whitsundays and then pass that knowledge on to their passengers.

Tony recommends the process to other operators, saying "Anyone who is attracted to this type of industry should naturally be interested in operating within this framework".

## BULLETIN BOARD

- Our new and improved online **Tourism Operators' Emissions Calculator** allows you to compare emissions year on year and identify inefficient vessels: <http://www.emissionscalculator.gbrmpa.gov.au/tourism/>.
- Follow us on **Facebook** and post your Reef observations, photos and videos: [www.facebook.com/GreatBarrierReefMarinePark](http://www.facebook.com/GreatBarrierReefMarinePark).
- The 36th **Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee** meeting

was held in Townsville in March and discussed port development proposals, the recent World Heritage Committee visit and crown-of-thorns starfish.

- From 1 January 2012 a surcharge of two per cent will apply to all **Permit Application Assessment Fees** paid by credit card.
- For copies of the latest Reef Facts for Tour Guides edition, **Traditional Owners of the Great Barrier Reef**, email: [tourec@gbrmpa.gov.au](mailto:tourec@gbrmpa.gov.au).



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