SeaRead
Marine Park news from catchment to coral

Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

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Observe to conserve the Reef this summer

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is encouraging users of the Great Barrier Reef to keep an eye out for signs of coral bleaching this summer, as the Reef gets ready for another warm season.

According to Dr Paul Marshall, coral bleaching and climate change expert at the GBRMPA, the first step in understanding the full extent of coral bleaching is to determine which areas of the Great Barrier Reef are affected by bleaching.

"We need all the information we can get from people who use the Marine Park, so that we can identify strategies that might help reefs survive future bleaching events," Dr Marshall said.

"Whether you are a recreational or commercial fisherman, a tourism operator, researcher or student, or even if you only visit the reef once in your life, you can help us to learn more about when and where bleaching occurs on the Great Barrier Reef by keeping an eye out for signs of coral bleaching."

Coral bleaching events occur during the summer months due to elevated water temperatures.

Visitors to the Reef can play an important role in monitoring and assessing the likelihood of bleaching by becoming involved in BleachWatch, which enables reef users to report bleaching observations online at **www.gbrmpa.gov.au**

Dr Marshall said while we cannot control the weather or prevent rising sea temperatures, everyone can do their bit to help corals cope with the stresses associated with climate change.

"In particular, we can take action to make corals more resilient and increase their chances of surviving the effects of coral bleaching by implementing best practices on the land and around our homes," Dr Marshall said.

"By doing simple things such as keeping drains and gutters free of chemicals and rubbish, putting all litter in the bin and recycling and washing your car on the lawn instead of in your driveway, you can help relieve stresses on coral reefs and make them more resilient to climate change."

Dr Marshall said each summer corals in the Great Barrier Reef are at risk of bleaching, however reefs that are healthy and free from other pressures like pollution and nutrient overloading are more likely to survive or recover from a bleaching event.

Coral bleaching events occur during the summer months due to elevated water temperatures. When corals become stressed, due to increased water temperature, they can loose the microscopic algae that live within their tissue, turning them bright white.

"In fact, if temperatures exceed the normal summer maximum by just one degree Celsius for a couple of weeks, many coral species will bleach," Dr Marshall said.

"Unusually warm conditions have now caused widespread coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef in 1998 and again in 2002, with minor bleaching occurring early in 2004."

continued on page 2

What's inside

Message from the chairman

the Hon Virginia Chadwick

In welcoming you to our second edition of *SeaRead* on behalf of everyone at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, I would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year.

Thank you to everyone for the positive and valuable feedback for our first edition of *SeaRead*.

The second edition continues to let you know what is happening within and around the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and focuses on projects and events that happen at this time of year.

With the implementation of new zoning in July, 2004 will be remembered as an historic year for the Great Barrier Reef and for the community along the Great Barrier Reef coast who depend on a healthy Reef for their futures.

It is my goal for next year to ensure we build upon the achievements of 2004 by continuing to focus on community relationships and involvement through research and monitoring of the new zoning, the further development of partnerships with stakeholders and implementation of initiatives to combat declining water quality that we can all play a part in.

Warm wishes to everyone for a happy festive season.

Regards

Virginia Chadwick
Chairman, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

END

continued from page 1

"However, corals that suffer bleaching are not necessarily dead. If conditions improve, corals can survive and will regain their normal healthy colour. Fortunately, this is what happened to most corals during previous bleaching events. However, if the world's climate continues to warm, then we can expect that coral bleaching will become an increasingly serious threat to the Great Barrier Reef."

To monitor coral bleaching, the GBRMPA works with tourism operators who regularly visit certain areas of the Reef as well as other community members who make only occasional trips. The information collected by both regular Reef users and 'one-off' reef visitors helps the GBRMPA detect the onset of bleaching and to assess the full extent and severity of bleaching events.

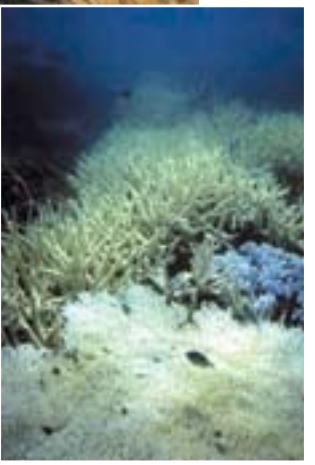
Many tourism operators already play a key role in the GBRMPA's ability to detect the early signs of coral bleaching through weekly reports during the summer season. These regular Reef users are provided with a monitoring kit and receive specially prepared monthly reports on bleaching conditions at their site. The GBRMPA encourage tourism operators and other regular reef visitors to sign up for the BleachWatch (professional) program.

Tourism operators involved in BleachWatch are provided with a monitoring kit.

The GBRMPA is also establishing a BleachWatch (Reef Guardian) program to help schools contribute to efforts to conserve the Great Barrier Reef.

For details about how you can be involved in BleachWatch email **bleachwatch@gbrmpa.gov.au** or contact the BleachWatch Coordinator on **(07) 4750 0700.** More information about coral bleaching is also available at **www.gbrmpa.gov.au**

Tourist operators and visitors to the Reef help the GBRMPA detect the onset of bleaching.



Corals can survive bleaching events and regain their normal healthy colour once conditions improve.

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LMAC helping protect threatened species

The Whitsunday Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC) is helping to protect threatened species in their region by informing the community about the animals and the important habitats that support them.

Tony Fontes, Chairman of the Whitsunday LMAC, said the Committee is encouraging all members of the community to help protect unique and threatened animals like turtles and dugong so they continue to survive in the waters of the Whitsundays.

"With a large boating and recreational fishing industry and as one of the most visited places along the Great Barrier Reef coast, activities that occur in the Whitsundays can often affect turtle and dugong habitats," Mr Fontes said.

"Therefore, we need to share messages with both visitors and locals to encourage them to be careful and adopt practices that minimise impact when using the Reef and visiting our local beaches."

Mr Fontes explained that one of the major threats to turtles and dugong is the loss of their habitat, seagrass, which can be affected by activities we do on land and in our homes.

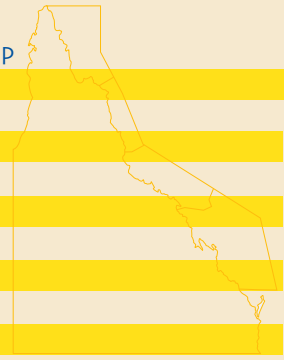
"We would like all Whitsunday residents, resort owners, operators and visitors to implement simple practices in their homes and workplaces to help protect our part of the Great Barrier Reef," Mr Fontes said.

"Some of these practices include making sure your sinks, drains and gutters are kept free of chemicals and rubbish, composting and using garden beds around your home to capture rainwater and minimise runoff and washing your car on the lawn instead of in your driveway or on the street."

The Whitsunday islands

LMACs are:

Cape York Marine Advisory Group
Port Douglas LMAC
Cairns LMAC
Mission Beach LMAC
Hinchinbrook LMAC
Townsville LMAC
Whitsunday LMAC
Mackay LMAC
Capricorn Coast LMAC
Gladstone LMAC



The GBRMPA is also in the process of putting together an LMAC in Bundaberg.

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Snowstorm on the Reef

Coral spawning looks like an upside down snowstorm.

At this time of year, researchers and divers alike converge on the reefs to research or simply witness the coral spawn, described by many as an upside down snowstorm.

The annual mass coral spawning on the Great Barrier Reef is an event unmatched in the animal kingdom. There is no other group of animals where approximately 150 species collectively spawn within a few days, thus making it the biggest reproductive event on the planet.

Corals are tiny animals, called polyps, which build colonies in a variety of shapes, sizes and colours to form the living monument of the Great Barrier Reef.

Biologist Dr Kirsten Michalek-Wagner said the time of year corals spawn depends on their location, corals of inshore reef usually start spawning one to six nights after the first full moon in October, whereas those in outer reef areas spawn during November and December.

"The coral spawning appears to coincide with a massive marine breeding cycle as spring turns into summer," she said.

According to Dr Michalek-Wagner there are currently three triggers identified as important to setting off spawning in corals. The first is a rise in the water temperature in spring, which stimulates the maturation of eggs and sperm inside the polyp. Second is the lunar cycle, which is believed to provide important cues about the exact timing when corals are to release the egg and sperm bundles. Finally, corals always spawn in the darkness of night.

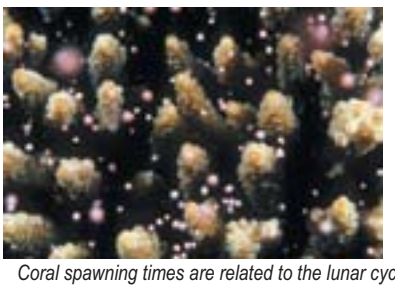
Dr Michalek-Wagner said that most corals develop both the egg and the sperm in the same polyp and that shortly after dusk the coral polyps release their egg and sperm bundles, which float to the surface, often forming large slicks.

The spawning was only discovered in 1981 when scientists began to investigate the annual slicks that covered the sea surface.

"There are many things that we still do not understand about the spawning but each year we are able to make more exciting discoveries," she said.

"We are able to unlock some of the secrets surrounding spawning from our coral reef ecosystem at Reef HQ Aquarium."

"The tank is exposed to the same elements such as rain, storms and natural daylight as the Great Barrier Reef and as such, the corals in the tank spawn on cue at the same time as corals on the Reef."



Coral spawning times are related to the lunar cycle.

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Water quality monitoring to begin

Water quality monitoring for the Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Protection Plan in the inshore and offshore areas of the Great Barrier Reef will begin early in 2005.

Strategies to address the decline in water quality and subsequent health of the Great Barrier Reef have been outlined in the Australian and Queensland government's joint Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, which aims to halt and reverse the decline in water quality entering the Reef within ten years.

Mr Hugh Yorkston, Director of the Water Quality and Coastal Development Group at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, said to achieve this goal, governments, key industry groups and the community will continue to work together to improve landuse practices and to monitor water quality in the Reef and its catchment.

"A number of community groups, government agencies and research groups are currently gathering information on the water quality of the Great Barrier Reef and of the rivers and estuaries in adjacent catchment areas," Mr Yorkston said.

"This information is to be analysed and interpreted to enable reporting on the status of water quality in the Reef Lagoon."

With regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) Boards coordinating the community and scientific monitoring in catchment areas, Mr Yorkston said the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority would focus on water quality and ecosystem health monitoring at selected river mouths and inshore areas of the Reef.

"We are currently going through a selection process to employ a science provider to monitor indicators of water quality and ecosystem health within the Marine Park," Mr Yorkston said.

"The data gathered by this provider will be collated with that of other agencies and with the information gathered by NRM Boards to provide a comprehensive status report on the health of the Great Barrier Reef and its Catchment."

"We are focusing on enabling communities to take the journey with us by helping them to understand the monitoring process, and providing regular reports on the health of the Reef."

A diver performing a video transect.

END

Taking the Reef to the world

Diver and cameraman in tank.

Wherever you are in the world, you can now experience the Great Barrier Reef with Reef Videoconferencing.

Fred Nucifora, Reef HQ Aquarium Education Manager, said during this virtual underwater experience, classrooms, lecture theatres, conference venues and even boardrooms are virtually transported to the Coral Reef and Predator exhibits at Reef HQ Aquarium.

"We were very fortunate to have Sony Australia donate the state-of-the-art videoconferencing technology which has unlocked unique teaching and learning experiences for students of all ages. We can even deliver information live from the tanks via a scuba diver," Mr Nucifora said.

"Reef Videoconferences have been facilitated to schools nationally and internationally including the USA, France, UK, and South Africa."

"One of the many outstanding highlights has been to deliver a Reef Videoconference to a class of deaf students in Pretoria, South Africa."

Mr Nucifora said due to the unique opportunities offered by Reef Videoconferencing collaborative working relationships have been built with international institutions such as the Liberty Science Centre, New Jersey in the USA and also Global Leap in the UK which was launched with Reef Videoconferencing being one of the key links made as part of a worldwide 16 hour videoconferencing event.

"It demonstrated the power of videoconferencing as a resource, which can be used to deliver exciting information to people around the world."

The primary aims of Reef Videoconferencing from Reef HQ Aquarium, the Education Centre for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority are to:

- Share the uniqueness of the Great Barrier Reef with the community (on a national and international level);
- Encourage and stimulate understanding of the issues surrounding the Great Barrier Reef from social and environmental perspectives;
- Provide opportunities for students to share knowledge and interact with each other in a fun and educational setting;
- Develop knowledge and understanding of the Great Barrier Reef;
- Provide an opportunity for people to develop attitudes, values and patterns of behaviour that will enable them to make effective contributions to the ecologically sustainable use of the Great Barrier Reef; and
- Enable people from all over the world to see thousands of live reef creatures, watch them interacting and discover the latest reef research.

SONY

END

Managing Environmental Impacts in the Marine Park

Developments and operations in the Marine Park including harbours, pontoons, pipelines and dredging have the potential to impact on the marine environment.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has recently introduced three new policies, which focus on ***Environmental Impact Management***, ***Dredging and Spoil Disposal*** and ***Structures.***

Dr Adam Smith, Manager, Environmental Impact Management at the GBRMPA said these policies benefit industry operators by providing clear guidance for the practical application of legislation regarding proposed developments and operations within the Marine Park

"These new policies help to ensure that activities within the marine park are ecologically sustainable and that detrimental impacts on the Marine Park are minimised," Dr Smith said.

"The policies were developed based on past experience, best available scientific information, community consultation and current GBRMPA best practice," he said.

The development of the new policies was also a collaborative effort with other key Government Agencies and stakeholders. The GBRMPA worked closely with the Queensland Ports Corporation, Queensland Premiers and Cabinet, Queensland Government Agencies and the Department of the Environment and Heritage during the development of these policies.

The Environmental Impact Management policy details the process employed by the GBRMPA to identify and mitigate potential impacts and includes scoping, assessment, implementation and auditing.

Dredging and sea dumping is sometimes necessary in the Marine Park to maintain accessibility to ports.

Dredging operations.

"The Dredging and Spoil Disposal policy supports successful management and mitigation of environmental impacts associated with such proposed developments," he said.

The Structures policy outlines design requirements for construction, operation and decommissioning of structures, such as pontoons in the Marine Park.

Dr Smith said collectively these requirements minimise detrimental impacts on the marine environment.

Copies of these policies can be downloaded from GBRMPA's website:
www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/eim/eia/index.html

END

Reef history to be restored

The glass bottom boat waiting restoration.

A piece of reef tourism history is set to hit the water again with help from the Cairns Maritime Museum.

A project to restore the last surviving glass bottom boat from the early days of tourism on Green Island has received a national conservation grant.

Phillip Holt, President, Cairns Maritime Museum said the boat is the only known example remaining in Cairns of the famous glass bottom boat.

The original glass bottom boat was designed by Blake Hayles in the 1950s and was used up until the 1980s. Newer versions as well as glass bottom semi-submersibles also pioneered by the Hayles family are used today.

"Before then tourists and visitors to the Reef would use floating glass boxes for coral viewing. The glass bottom boat revolutionised Great Barrier Reef tourism, it opened up Green Island to tourism and made it an international destination," Mr Holt said.

Use of the glass bottom boat also represents an important development in reef conservation, providing tourists with a way of experiencing the wonders of the reef without damaging the delicate environment.

Mr Holt hopes to have the boat back in the water by next May where it is planned that it will take groups out on the calm waters of Trinity Inlet for historical tours about Green Island and the area.

The conservation grant received from the Maritime Museums of Australia Project Support Scheme will allow the Cairns Maritime Museum members to purchase the material they need to start the restoration. It is hoped that further financial or in-kind support will be received from the local business community.

END

If you are planning on going boating or fishing in the Marine Park this festive season, before you go check the zoning plan. Detailed maps are available from Community Access Points such as bait and tackle shops displaying this sticker.

reef guardian school

Reef Guardian Schools Awards announced

Students from Mt Larcom State School with posters they displayed on the local ferry service.

Mount Larcom State School has taken out the top prize for their Reef Guardian Schools Program with the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, announcing the school winners of the award for Outstanding Excellence in Reef Guardianship.

Senator Campbell said Mt Larcom State School had excelled in implementing initiatives to help protect the Great Barrier Reef and would receive $5000 to further enhance their Reef Guardian activities.

"Mount Larcom State School has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to the Reef Guardians Program, implementing initiatives across the entire school from preschool to Year 10," Senator Campbell said.

"The school's projects are amazing and students have really made a difference in their community to help protect their local waterways and the Great Barrier Reef."

The school undertook a range of activities to help protect the Reef from the impacts that individuals, industries and entire communities can have on our most precious marine environments.

Some of the school's activities include a calico bag initiative, school clean up days, energy police days, planting rainforest gardens and native plants, composting, recycling, drain stencilling, monitoring water quality in local waterways and stormwater drain conservation program.

The 'Energy Police' from Mt Larcom State School.

Senator Campbell said the school gained the top award for its ability to implement such a broad range of successful activities and for the student's commitment to sharing messages about ways to ensure the Reef is looked after for the future.

"Through their Reef Guardian projects, Mount Larcom State School has formed ongoing links within their community and are taking great steps to get all industries, businesses and individuals involved in activities to protect the Great Barrier Reef."

More than 40 of the 129 Reef Guardian Schools in Queensland submitted nominations for the awards.

Five other Reef Guardian Schools will be awarded Excellence in Reef Guardianship and receive $2500 each to further their Reef Guardian initiatives. These schools are Bli Bli State School, Boyne Island State School, Hermit Park State School, Belgian Gardens State School and Alexandra Bay State School. Five additional schools will be awarded Highly Commended in Reef Guardianship and will receive $500 each. These schools are Burdekin Christian College, Nerimbera State School, Mossman State School, North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre and Sunshine Beach State High School.

"I would like to congratulate all the schools involved in the Reef Guardian Schools Program and in particular the winners of the 2004 awards," Senator Campbell said.

END

What's new on

www.reefED.edu.au

educate to keep it great

Recently new to Reef ED:

- GBR Traditional Owners section provides loads of information about the traditional owners and uses of the Great Barrier Reef and how these uses are managed today
- Industry Training Courses including the Reef Discovery Course and the Bareboat Operators Course

Melbourne Students doing their bit for dugongs

Four year 10 students from Mac.Robertson Girl's High School in Melbourne recently held the 2nd annual "Do It For The Dugongs Footy Day" raising $500 to support dugong conservation.

The four students, Heather Stewart, Uyen Nguyen, Achla Sinha and Laura Adams held the first "Do It For The Dugong Footy Day" in 2003 raising $540.

This year the students raised money during the Footy Day and throughout the year holding weekly cake stalls and selling handmade dugong soft toys complete with miniature footy scarves.

Heather Stewart, one of the students who organised the fundraising effort, said she first became interested in helping conserve dugong when she visited the Great Barrier Reef a few years ago.

"I didn't get to see one but I did do a project on them and since then they have stayed with me," Miss Stewart said.

"We wanted to raise money for the dugong and also raise people's awareness of this unusual animal as some people here didn't know they existed".

The money donated is assisting a project studying the behaviour and movement patterns of dugong along the coast of Queensland by attaching satellite tracking devices to the animals for a period of time. The satellite records the length and frequency of the dives, dive depths and where the animals travel. This information will be used to better manage activities for the conservation of dugong.

James Sheppard from the CRC Reef Research Centre said the student's donation was a great help to the program and dugong conservation.

"In recognition of the work done by the students we named one of the dugong we were tracking 'Mac.Robertson' which the students have affectionately nicknamed 'Macca'," Mr Sheppard said.

"We were able to send the students a photo of him and maps showing his travels which have been documented using the satellite tracking system."

"Dugong numbers have declined dramatically in the last 40 years and are listed as vulnerable to extinction so the support of the community is vital in helping protect this species."

"Macca" a tagged dugong.

The team behind the fundraising effort Uyen Nguyen, Achla Sinha, Laura Adams and Heather Stuart with mascot Jenny Kulas.

Dugongs are the only marine mammals that are herbivores.

James Sheppard and the dugong research team in action. Image: James Sheppard

Students from Melbourne High School joined Mac.Robertson Girl's High School for the "Do it for the Dugongs Footy Day" which included a Student vs. Teacher football match and handball and arm wrestling competition.

Students said the annual event is becoming more popular every year.

END

MARINE PARK PARTNERSHIPS

Profile of QPWS Officer
John Scwarzrock

John is the Ranger in Charge of the Hinchinbrook Marine Park and has been with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service for 12 years.

John works in the day to day management of the Hinchinbrook Marine Park which covers an the area from Lucinda to North of Mission Beach and encompasses the family group of islands including Dunk and Goold islands and the World Heritage listed Hinchinbrook Island.

John's days are filled with a wide variety of activities including contact with the public and education, compliance, vessel patrols, infrastructure maintenance on Island National Parks, Natural Resource Management, fires and community liaison to name a few.

As a Ranger, John is the public face of day to day management of the Marine Park and in fulfilling his job he says working with members of the public and helping them appreciate our National Parks is the most rewarding and enjoyable part of the job.

John's goal in work is 'to keep learning' and in life 'to live life to the fullest' putting him in good stead for working in one of the world's most diversely magnificent wilderness areas. His work regularly takes him to the unique and pristine Hinchinbrook Island National Park, Australia's largest Island National Park.

The Hinchinbrook Island National Park covers the entire island, an area of 39,900 hectares. John's work on the island involves educating visitors and ensuring the island's cultural values are maintained. He also spends time maintaining the island's walking trails and infrastructure such as the world-famous Thorsborne Trail.

John encourages people to visit the region and experience it's majesty although he encourages the practice of minimal impact bushwalking and camping to help ensure places like Hinchinbrook Island remains in a pristine condition for many more years to come.

END

Reef HQ online

Reef HQ Aquarium has launched a new website and it is receiving high praise from all corners. The website, which has been developed in partnership with Townsville business BoaB Interactive using state-of-the-art technology, is designed to attract people not only to the Reef HQ Aquarium but also to promote Townsville as a whole.

The website development has taken just over three months to complete and includes a virtual tour of the aquarium, introductory information on each reef zone that can be found at Reef HQ, as well as interactive games aimed at getting children interested in the Great Barrier Reef.

Reef HQ General Manager, John Hoey, says the new website will be more than just a simple marketing tool for Reef HQ.

"We envisage this website being a useful resource for anyone promoting Townsville as it highlights the best that the city has to offer including the Great Barrier Reef and our partners around town, as well as providing an entertaining and educational introduction to marine issues for children," Mr Hoey said.

Additional features of the site includes the history of how the 2.5 million litre Coral Reef Exhibit was built, behind-the-scenes stories about animal rescues and more.

Explore the site yourself at

www.reefHQ.com.au

reefHQ AQUARIUM

END

Creature Feature — Nudibranch

- They are marine snails that have no shell.
- They are mostly smaller than 10cm.
- They are often colourful which acts as a defence.
- Some have small poison glands used to deter inquisitive fish and other predators.
- They are both male and female producing sperm and eggs.
- They come together side by side to mate and both go away to lay millions of eggs.
- They bury themselves in sand or hide during the day coming out at night.

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Making it easier to report suspicious behaviour

A new Information Report has been developed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Day to Day Management Unit to make it easier for people to report suspicious or inappropriate behaviour in the Marine Park.

Peter Allen, GBRMPA Intelligence Analyst, said the new Information Report would mean that rather than having to complete an Incident Report users of the Marine Park can simply phone the Unit with information and staff would fill out the report for them.

"While the Incident Reports are quite detailed, the new Information Reports enable people to confidentially report suspicious behaviour with a minimum of fuss," he said.

"Just a moment of your time and a quick phone call could really assist us in making sure users of the Marine Park are doing the right thing."

Peter Allen said the Day to Day Management Unit relied heavily on information from the public.

"The Marine Park is such a large area with so many people undertaking a wide variety of activities in it, that at some time users of the Marine Park are bound to see something a little out of the ordinary or what they think is inappropriate behaviour," he said.

"We encourage people to continue to let us know of instances such as these, no matter how small or insignificant the incident appears to be.

"The smallest bit of information may be the key to us being able to act on something much bigger."

END

Fantastic Fish Calendar 2005

The 2005 Fantastic Fish Calendar is now available from Australia Post, the Reef HQ shop and selected fishing and dive shops. Produced by the GBRMPA's Dr Adam Smith, the calendar contains spectacular illustrations, best fishing days and hotspots, fascinating facts and essential information and rules.

END

Joint effort to define the best for the Reef

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, tourism operators and other Queensland government departments are working together to develop a new set of best practices for users of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Best practices are designed to reduce human impacts on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park by promoting environmentally responsible behaviour.

Ms Lisha Mulqueeny, Director of the GBRMPA's Tourism and Recreation Group, said best practices provide individuals and operators with information on how we can all do our bit to protect the Reef.

Ms Mulqueeny explained that the best practices are being redefined to ensure they continue to be the best and most practical that can be achieved.

"We need to take into consideration any new practices, equipment and technology that is being used by tourism operators and recreational users of the Marine Park," she said.

To start work on the revision of the current best practices document a two-day workshop organised by the Tourism and Recreation Group of the GBRMPA was held in Townsville last month.

Ms Mulqueeny said the workshops provided an opportunity to take a fresh look at the current set of best practices.

A diverse range of participants attended the workshops including operators from the tourism industry, officers from the GBRMPA, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Maritime Safety Queensland and Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol.

Tourism operators from throughout the Marine Park who attended the workshop provided an extensive level of expertise in a range of activities, from anchoring and fishing to whale watching and waste disposal.

"We are thrilled that so many high standard operators are donating their time to this important task and look forward to a whole new set of practices that are the best that can be achieved and are practical for users," Ms Mulqueeny said.

The new best practices will be incorporated into the Tourism Operators Handbook which is due for release in a new format early next year and will also be available on the GBRMPA website.

Participants at the 'Best Practice' Workshop.

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Assessing fisheries in the Marine Park

Coral trout are a major target species in the Coral Reef Finfish Fishery. This fishery occurs mainly in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and requires assessment.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is working with the Department of the Environment and Heritage in assessing all export fisheries, which operate in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Dr Phil Cadwallader, Director of the Fisheries Issues Group at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, said the assessments are important in ensuring that fisheries are managed in a way that takes into account their impact on the environment.

"This will increase the community's confidence that fisheries are well managed and provide greater certainty for the future of the fishing industry," Dr Cadwallader said.

Assessment of fisheries is a legal requirement under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The assessments are undertaken in accordance with the Australian Government's guidelines for ecologically sustainable fisheries and are based on two principles.

Firstly, a fishery must be conducted in a manner that does not lead to over-fishing or, for those stocks that are overfished, the fishery must be conducted in such a way that the stocks will recover. Secondly, fishing operations should be managed to minimise their impact on the structure, productivity, function and biodiversity of the ecosystem.

"The GBRMPA works closely with the Department of the Environment and Heritage during the assessments of fisheries in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and provides advice in accordance with the guidelines," Dr Cadwallader said.

Assessments have been completed for the spanner crab fishery and the incidental catch of seahorses and pipefishes in the trawl fishery, with the east coast otter trawl and mud crab fisheries assessments nearing completion.

"Following a fishery assessment, if the management recommendations are implemented fully, the fishery is likely to achieve ecological sustainability, helping us meet our goals at the GBRMPA," he said

The GBRMPA works closely with the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries to bring about changes in fishing practices to try to achieve ecologically sustainable fisheries in the Marine Park.

For more information about the assessment of commercial export fisheries visit the Sustainable Fisheries Section on the Department of the Environment and Heritage website, www.deh/gov/au/coasts/fisheries

END

Spectacular reef images

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Library Services incorporate the Image Library where you can access up to 70,000 spectacular marine and coastal images.

To view the selection of images visit the Image Collection Service at **www.gbrmpa.gov.au**.

For information concerning the Image Collection or access to a wider selection of material or services, please contact the Image Collection Officer on **4750 0707** or **images@gbrmpa.gov.au**.

The Image Collection Officer will promptly provide information on any fees and conditions of use that may apply to use any of these photos.

END

Electronic navigation products available

To assist users of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park to navigate the zones, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has provided electronic mapping information to electronic navigation companies able to produce products featuring zoning from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003.

A range of electronic mapping information has also been available on the web since the implementation of the new zoning on 1 July 2004.

Dave Lowe, Manager of the mapping unit at the GBRMPA said the production and distribution of electronic navigation products that include zoning has been dependant on the companies that produce the products.

"Some products are available now, while others are still being developed," Mr Lowe said.

"We are advised by the manufacturers as to the expected release dates of their products, but the manufacturers control the actual times of year and dates that their products become available to the public."

Mr Lowe said people who are keen to use products from manufacturers such as Garmin, C-Map and Navionics should talk directly to the companies for more information about the latest release details.

Below is a list of electronic navigation products with expected release dates from recent advice from the manufacturers.

Interactive Mapping Website
Available Since July 04

HCRF Raster Charts, HSA Systems Sydney
Available Since July 04

C-PLOT, TMQ Marine Electronics Brisbane
Available Since July 04

Magellan, Handheld GPS Download
Available Since July 04

Garmin, Handheld GPS Download
Available Since July 04

Garmin, Blue Charts, Development in the US
Expected Dec 04

C-MAP Australia, Development in Italy
Expected Jan 05

Navionics, Development in Italy
Expected early 05

END

Box Jellyfish now in residence at Reef HQ

Each year the potentially fatal box jellyfish is an unwelcome visitor to our North Queensland beaches. But how many North Queenslanders have actually seen one up close?

A fascinating new exhibit at Reef HQ has visitors standing just centimeters away from these intriguing creatures.

Regarded as being the most venomous creature on earth, the box jellyfish *Chironex fleckeri* are found in coastal Queensland waters north of Gladstone during the summer months from October through to April.

Their numerous tentacles, which can stretch over two metres to feed upon small fish and shrimp, are capable of inflicting serious, and even fatal, stings to humans. Upon contact with food the tentacles quickly contract to only a few centimetres and bring the food to the mouth. At Reef HQ visitors can view the infamous animals as they feed on live shrimp.

Reef HQ aquarist, Thomas Hatley said the box jellyfish at Reef HQ were captured off The Strand near Tobruk Pools recently and are on display at Reef HQ in the 'Hot Topics' zone, playing a vital role in educating Australian and international tourists of the dangers associated with box jellies.

"We constantly try to educate visitors about North Queensland's dangerous marine animals including venomous animals like box jellyfish. Having live animals on display helps bring home the message that these creatures are swimming around off the beaches right now," Mr Hatley said.

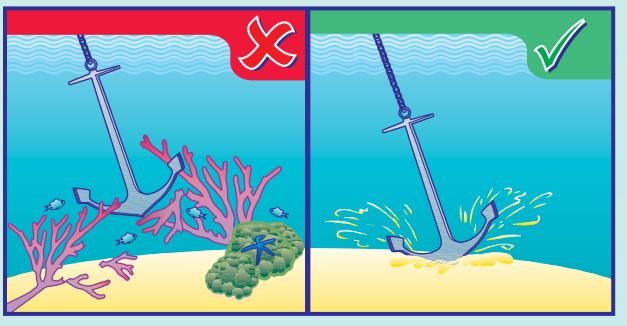
A box jellyfish Chironex fleckeri

END

Doing your bit to look after it!

You can avoid damaging coral or the seabed with your anchoring gear when out boating in the Marine Park by:

- using a mooring instead of anchoring whenever possible
- checking that you are away from coral and other fragile communities before your drop anchor
- anchoring in sand or mud away from corals
- using the most appropriate type of anchor for the area that you are anchoring in
- carrying enough chain and line for the depth you want to anchor in
- motoring in the direction of the anchor when hauling it in



Community Links

A profile of
Doug Baird
Chairman Port Douglas LMAC

Doug Baird is the Chairman of the Port Douglas Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC) and he has held this position since last year.

As a member of the LMAC Doug represents the tourism industry and is interested in issues relating to marine conservation and tourism use and access to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Doug has worked in the marine science field for many years; he worked in a marine research laboratory in Scotland before migrating to Australia. He currently works for Quicksilver Connections as Assistant Operations Manager and prior to this, he worked for Quicksilver Connections as a Marine Biologist where he also managed Quicksilver Connections team of biologists for three years.

Doug believes the Port Douglas LMAC plays an important role in the management and protection of the Marine Park as the LMAC has representatives from various stakeholder groups, which are able to discuss issues at meetings and then provide feedback on marine management issues and raise awareness to potential issues.

Doug's goal as the Chairman of the LMAC is to engage and inform the community about marine issues. One of his achievements as the LMAC Chairman is encouraging local schools to sign up as Reef Guardian Schools, raising participation from one school to six schools out of the seven in the area.

Doug is also a member of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Conservation Biodiversity and World Heritage Reef Advisory Committee and is a Member of the Wildlife Tourism Extension Group. This highlights his commitment to marine environmental issues.

END

Calendar of events

31 January–6 February 2005
World Wetlands Week

Midday 1 February 2005
Opening of barramundi season

2 February 2005
World Wetlands Week

7 – 10 February 2005
National WaterWatch Conference Melbourne

1 March 2005
Business Clean Up Day

4 March 2005
School Clean Up Day

6 March 2005
Clean Up Australia Day

6 – 13 March 2005
Seaweek – SOS Save Our Sharks

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Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

our great barrier reef
let's keep it great

Natural Heritage Trust
Helping Communities Helping Australia
A Commonwealth Government Initiative