

SeaRead

Marine Park news from catchment to coral



Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

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What's inside

| | |
|---|----|
| BPAY introduced for EMC payments | 2 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park tourism in running for top accolade | 3 |
| Healthy wetlands boost fish stocks | 4 |
| Reef backdrop for big blockbusters | 5 |
| NAIDOC preparations underway | 6 |
| Reef HQ Aquarium celebrates twentieth anniversary | 7 |
| Guardian projects underway | 8 |
| Community consulted on proposed Marine Park changes | 9 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority staff receive Australia Day awards | 10 |

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Green Zones will continue to be enforced



Marine agencies will continue to enforce Green Zones in the Marine Park

Global positioning systems (GPS) will continue to be used as a tool to assist with enforcing zoning in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The confirmation follows a court decision about the reliability of a GPS device used in a case against two fishermen.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Executive Director John Tanzer said the agency took great care to ensure any decisions to prosecute fishermen were based on sound evidence collection.

"The court decision relates to the circumstances of a specific case, and we understand the Director of Public Prosecutions is considering an appeal," he said.

"We will be examining the decision closely and if there are ways we can tighten our procedures based on the outcomes, we will.

"However we are disappointed by the mischievous claims that the decision calls into question the policing of the zones.

"These unhelpful statements are just confusing recreational anglers.

"Thousands of people fish on the Reef each year and they manage to successfully avoid fishing in the Green Zones.

"It is misleading to suggest that fishermen who have been fined for illegal fishing on the Reef in the past were all convicted on the basis of navigational errors, particularly when very few pleaded not guilty.

"GPS is used by shipping and aviation industries throughout the world as a reliable device for navigation and enforcement."

John said the court decision did not relate to the accuracy of Green Zone boundaries.

continued on page 2



The new year has started on a positive note, with recognition for our hardworking staff through our Australia Day achievement awards.

Australia Day saw six of our staff members honoured in our annual achievement awards. The awards recognise staff who demonstrate enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism.

I congratulate Andrew Chin, Hilary Skeat, John Tapim, Maureen Ryan, Karin Gerhardt and Randall Owens on receiving an award this year and thank them for their contribution to our core business across a diverse range of areas including research, tourism management, permits, Indigenous liaison, Reef HQ and fisheries.

Another cause for celebrations has been the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's nomination as a finalist in the prestigious Tourism for Tomorrow Awards.

This is a great achievement for the agency. It demonstrates our officers are world leaders in marine tourism management, while acknowledging the valuable partnership we enjoy with the tourism industry.

Sustainable use of the Marine Park is important to ensuring the long-term future of the area. Our Sustainable Tourism Partnership, recognised by the award nomination, is one of the innovative ways we work with our stakeholders to achieve our objectives.

We also welcome Malcolm Turnbull as the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources. We look forward to working with the new Minister on Marine Park management.

Regards

Virginia Chadwick
Chairman
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

continued from page 1

"The GBRMPA used the exact same coordinate-based mapping tools that are used throughout the world," he said.

"Claims that GPS was used in the development of the Zones are a nonsense.

"Zoning is recognised as a very effective way to ensure the Great Barrier Reef's marine life can stay healthy long into the future for everyone to enjoy."

John said the vast majority of fishermen did the right thing when out on the Reef.

"Scientific research shows no-take areas are improving the Great Barrier Reef's fisheries," he said.

"Coral trout and stripey sea perch have been found to have increased as much as two times in Green Zones since July 2004.

"It's important future generations are given the chance to enjoy fishing on the Reef as well.

"Everyone understands this is dependent on stopping poaching."

BPAY introduced for EMC payments

BPAY facilities were introduced by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) in time for the first payment of the Environmental Management Charge (EMC).

Permit holders wishing to use the new BPAY facilities for the January-March 2007 EMC quarter payment, due 30 April 2007, should refer to the BPAY biller code and reference number for each quarterly Charging Return (printed on the log books and charging returns).

Operators with more than one vessel or permit who wish to combine the EMC charges into a single payment should contact the GBRMPA on (07) 4750 0717 and register as a multi permit user. Customers will be provided with a new customer reference number and sent a Summary Remittance Form, to accompany charging returns.

The 2007 EMC Handbook (purple cover) contains further information on making EMC payments. For more information or assistance, contact the EMC Unit on (07) 4750 0764 or (07) 4750 0702.

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Great Barrier Reef Marine Park tourism in running for top accolade

It's the international tourism industry equivalent of the Oscars and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) has snagged a nomination.

The GBRMPA's Sustainable Tourism Partnership initiative is one of only three finalists in the Destination Award in the World Travel and Tourism Council's Tourism for Tomorrow Awards.

It recognises environmentally sustainable marine tourism has been achieved in the Great Barrier Reef through a highly successful partnership between the GBRMPA and Reef tourism operators.

GBRMPA Chairman Virginia Chadwick said the short-listing confirmed the GBRMPA's Sustainable Tourism Partnership programme was among the world's leading examples of best practice in tourism.

"Over the last five years the GBRMPA and the tourism industry have achieved a well-managed,



The nomination recognises environmentally sustainable marine tourism has been achieved in the Marine Park

sustainable industry and significantly improved environmental, cultural and business outcomes," she said.

"The future well-being of the Marine Park and the tourism industry are closely linked, driving on-ground activities to protect the Reef and provide a world-class tourism experience.

"We do this through a robust, consultative partnership with industry that encourages and rewards high standards and work with industry to monitor the health of the Reef."

Queensland Tourism Industry Council Chief Executive Daniel Gschwind said the nomination was a great achievement.

"The Queensland Tourism Industry Council works closely with the GBRMPA and congratulates the organisation on being a finalist in these prestigious awards," he said.

"We commend GBRMPA on their innovative and cooperative approach

to working with tourism operators and promoting sustainable tourism on the Great Barrier Reef."

Bruce Stobo from Kanimbla Charters congratulated the GBRMPA on being a finalist in the awards.

"The tourism industry recognises the Reef needs to be protected, both for the future of the industry and the future of this internationally-recognised icon," he said.

"The industry is pleased to work with the GBRMPA to ensure tourism is sustainable and it's great to see the merits of this partnership being recognised."

This year there were 130 applications from more than 40 countries in the four categories.

The next stage of the judging process is an on-site visit to collect additional information, with the awards ceremony taking place in Portugal in May 2007.

International guidelines on port dredging to protect coral reefs

International marine and port experts converged on Townsville recently to discuss guidelines for port construction and dredging to avoid harm to coral reefs.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) hosted the four-day conference for the Environmental Commission, a division of the non-profit international marine navigation association Permanent International Association of Navigation Congresses (PIANC).

GBRMPA Manager of Environmental Impact Management Dr Adam Smith said scientists and port authorities were jointly developing the guidelines for the Commission.

"Many ports around the world are located near delicate coral reef ecosystems so it is important the marine environment is protected as ports expand their infrastructure," Adam said.

"The guidelines aim to mitigate environmental issues while also

ensuring the operational needs of the port, such as safe navigation and land reclamation, are met.

"Working with port authorities helps us understand the issues and constraints affecting port operations and developments and it also ensures the guidelines are practical and appropriate for the industry and will be widely supported once implemented."

Chair of the PIANC Environmental Commission working group Tom Foster said the guidelines would complement existing procedures and requirements where such existed.

"The guidelines will form a point of first reference for developers, contractors and consultants in those regions of the world where there are presently no requirements relating to dredging impacts on coral reefs."

Adam said the issue was one of significant importance in Queensland where ports continue to expand along the coast near the Great Barrier Reef.

"We've been working closely with Queensland's port authorities and they recognise the importance of caring for the Reef and want to develop workable guidelines for port dredging and construction."

Representatives of several Queensland port authorities, managers, scientists and environmental consultants attended the working group meeting, along with all members of the Environmental Commission working group.

The guidelines are expected to be completed and released by the Commission in 2008.

Founded in 1885, PIANC is a worldwide non-political and non-profit technical and scientific organisation of national governments, corporations and private individuals.

Healthy wetlands **boost** fish stocks

The vital role protecting wetlands from pollutants and over development plays in boosting fish stocks was recognised on World Wetlands Day 2007.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Water Quality and Coastal Development Director Hugh Yorkston said fisheries in Queensland relied on healthy wetlands.

"If we want to keep catching many of the fish we enjoy, we need healthy wetlands," he said.

"There are 79 fish species that use both freshwater and saltwater wetlands to breed along the Great Barrier Reef coast.

"It's important fish can move freely between saltwater and freshwater wetlands.

"Some fish spend most of their lives in saltwater habitats and migrate to freshwater to breed, whilst others spend most of their lives in freshwater and migrate to saltwater to breed."

Wetlands provide important breeding, nursery and shelter habitat for a range of marine life including fish, crabs and prawns. Particularly in floods, fish may be encouraged to move up the river system for spawning.

"This is a technique of survival for the young fish as they can use things such as leaves and branches for shelter and protection from predators," Hugh said.

Wetlands are under pressure from land clearing for urban development and agricultural activities, aquaculture development and man-made barriers such as dams.

Just some of the things you can do to protect wetlands include:

- Taking all of your rubbish home with you when visiting a wetland
- Keeping drains and gutters around your home and work place free of chemicals and rubbish as what goes down the drain may end up in wetlands
- Using garden beds at your home or workplace to capture rainwater and minimise runoff
- Washing your car on the lawn, as washing it on the road or in the driveway washes detergents into nearby drains and may end up in local waterways or the Great Barrier Reef.

Biodiesel trial a **success**

Using environmentally friendly biodiesel to run power generators on Low Isles, off the coast of Port Douglas, is proving successful for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA).

GBRMPA's Commonwealth Islands Manager Kathleen Swalling said the Authority was committed to reducing emissions and increasing sustainability on all Commonwealth Islands, including Low Isles.

"We conducted a contained trial using biodiesel in one of the 40-year-old power generators on Low Isles," Kathleen said.

"After a successful three-week trial we decided to run both power generators on biodiesel and the result has been excellent for both the environment and the bottom line."

Kathleen said the production and use of biodiesel produced approximately 80 per cent less carbon dioxide emissions than petroleum diesel.

"Not only does biodiesel reduce emissions but it has also reduced costs by 40 per cent."

The biodiesel, sourced locally from the Mossman Sugar Mill, is produced by using cooking oils from restaurants and takeaway food outlets from Cairns to Cape Tribulation.

Low Isles Caretaker Steve Sharpe said there were no adverse effects during or after the trial.

"In fact, the only difference we noticed was the smell – instead of the exhaust odour of petroleum diesel, it smelled like walking down a street with lots of restaurants and takeaway outlets," Steve said.

"There are many rumours around that you need to make modifications to your engine to use biodiesel but we didn't change anything and the engines run as they always have.

"To date we have used over 2000 litres of biodiesel and there has been no change in the performance of the 40-year-old engines."

More information about biodiesel and its uses can be found at www.biodiesel.org.au.



Wetlands play an important part in the marine ecosystem

Reef backdrop for big blockbusters

Hollywood came to the Great Barrier Reef recently, giving Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service staff a brush with celebrities.

The Warner Brother's film *Fool's Gold*, starring Kate Hudson and Mathew McConaughey, required a permit from the GBRMPA.

GBRMPA Project Manager John Dunn was on-hand to supervise filming around the delicate marine environments of Low Isles and Lizard Island.

"*Fool's Gold* is a romantic comedy, centering on a search for Spanish treasure, with lots of action sequences and special effects," he said.

"Filming was undertaken in a number of locations, with the major locations involving a fleet of 30 vessels plus a picture seaplane and a camera helicopter.

"Permits are required for photography, filming or sound recording on or under the water in

the Marine Park if it involves using or installing structures such as tripods, props or other devices in the area.

"The permit was designed for maximum flexibility while maintaining environmental safeguards. It included requirements for site supervision, a bond and Environmental Management Plans."

In addition to providing much of the backdrop for this big budget film, the Great Barrier Reef recently starred in the television series *Sea Patrol* and several short documentaries.



On location with the film crew in Queensland (photo courtesy of C Williams, QPWS)

Local fishermen hook funding

A community monitoring programme in the southern part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park recently received a funding boost.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority will provide the Capricorn Reef Monitoring Programme, known as CapReef, with \$10 000 per year for three years.

GBRMPA Executive Director John Tanzer said CapReef was a fantastic example of community, government and scientists working together.

"We are delighted to support Cap Reef," he said.

"The partnership is very much two way. We are learning a lot from the locals about how they value and use the Marine Park. In particular, I would point to the excellent work and efforts of both the Capricorn Coast and Gladstone Local Marine Advisory Committees."

John said the community programme was established to collect information on the effects on fish and fishers in the local Capricorn area.

This followed the 2004 rezoning of the Marine Park and Queensland Government changes to fisheries management including bag and size limits.

CapReef's Bill Sawynok said the programme received enormous support from the Capricorn Coast community.

"We collected details on 1279 offshore fishing trips for 2005/06 and we were able to use this information to estimate catch rates," he said.

"We determined that the total catch was 17 844 and that around 60.7 per cent of the fish caught were released.

"This information, combined with the two reports we released in 2006, provide reef managers with a great picture of the fishery in our area."

Mr Sawynok encouraged all reef fishers to become involved in the programme and support their local fishery by calling the CapReef hotline on freecall 1800 077 001 after a fishing trip to answer a few simple questions.

Further information about CapReef can be found at www.info-fish.net.

Seahorses

Seahorses are small elongated fish encased in bony plates with an angled head and tube-like mouth, making them look like the knight on a chessboard. Male seahorses carry the eggs instead of females. Seahorses are unique marine animals that are a protected species. This means they require special management and are protected by law.

Threats

Among the biggest threats to seahorses is the loss or alteration of habitat, along with aquaculture, collecting, and marine dredging and construction. Seahorses are also prone to being caught in trawl nets as they are not strong swimmers.

What's being done?

The first restrictions on exporting some of Australia's seahorses came into effect on 1 January 1998 to ensure the sustainable harvest of the animal. Any exports must now be accompanied by a permit from the Australian Department of the Environment and Water Resources. Permits are only granted for captive bred specimens or specimens collected under an approved management regime. Bycatch reduction devices are now also mandatory in the East Coast Trawl Fishery.

What can I do?

Be careful not to pollute waterways or damage important habitat such as seagrasses. When overseas, avoid products or souvenirs that contain seahorses. Learn more about seahorses by visiting Reef HQ Aquarium's new seahorse display in the interactive zone.

Useful information

www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/info_services/publications/misc_pub/fauna_flora





Help monitor marine turtles

Traditional Owners along the Queensland coast can help monitor marine turtles in their sea country by reporting turtle tag information.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Indigenous Partnerships Liaison Unit Manager Chicka Turner said turtle tags helped track the movements of turtles in the Marine Park.

"Turtles travel long distances and may travel to different countries, which means a turtle may have travelled from someone else's sea country in Australia or overseas," he said.

"The tags are small metal tags with a unique identification number and are attached to a turtle's flipper.

"Tagging turtles can help us find out how far and where turtles move, where they nest and feed and their movement patterns."

Chicka said anyone who found a dead turtle or caught a turtle with a tag on its flipper should record the tag number and contact their local Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service office (QPWS) to report the information.

"As well as providing QPWS with the number engraved on the tag, it helps if people are able to provide information on the turtle's location, health, shell size, markings and gender," he said.

"This information will be recorded and will assist agencies to work with Traditional Owners to manage turtle populations in their sea country.

"Traditional Owner groups in the Bowen and Hinchinbrook regions are actively managing turtle populations in their sea country, and all Traditional Owners across the Marine Park can do the same."

Report turtle tag information to Queensland Turtle Research on phone 1300 130 372.

Information can also be posted to Queensland Turtle Research c/ Col Limpus, PO Box 15155, CITY EAST, 4002 or via email col.limpus@epa.qld.gov.au.

NAIDOC preparations underway

It might be several months away, but the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) has started planning for NAIDOC Week.

And this year's celebration in July will be extra special as it marks the 50th anniversary of NAIDOC Week.

GBRMPA Indigenous Partnerships Liaison Unit Project Officer Melissa Sweeney said NAIDOC Week was an important event in the community engagement calendar.

"The theme for this year's NAIDOC Week is '50 years: Looking Forward, Looking Back' and we will be

developing our activities around this theme," she said.

"The 50th anniversary for NAIDOC is an important milestone and an opportunity for us to celebrate the Indigenous cultures of the Great Barrier Reef."

Melissa said various activities were planned including participation in official NAIDOC celebrations and events as well as educational sea country activities for staff.

For more information on NAIDOC Week visit www.naidoc.org.au.

Sea Country Snippets

Introducing Traditional Owner groups along the Great Barrier Reef coast



Wuthathi (Pronounced Wuth-ath-ee)

- The Cape Grenville region is the traditional country of the Wuthathi, and is called Thinkamu in the local language.
- The Wuthathi are known as sandbeach people because their lives were based on the sea. Fishing and other traditional use activities continue to be an important part of daily life for the Wuthathi.
- In 2005, Wuthathi Traditional Owners released a plan to look after their sea country according to lore and culture and to protect their story and water places in their sea country.



Manbarra (Pronounced Mun-burra)

- Manbarra Traditional Owners are part of the Birri-Gubba Nation.
- The cultural and spiritual connection Manbarra Traditional Owners have with their sea country is expressed in many ways, through Dreamtime stories and an intimate knowledge of the islands and surrounding sea.
- Manbarra Traditional Owners are particularly keen to pursue future management options that look after the rich cultural heritage of their sea country for future generations to enjoy.



Reef HQ Aquarium celebrates twentieth anniversary

A bumper year of celebrations is planned for Reef HQ Aquarium's twentieth anniversary.

Reef HQ Director Karen Vohland said this was an important milestone for one of the most recognised and visited tourist attractions in north Queensland.

"We are planning some fantastic events over the coming months and we are keen to include the community in our celebrations," she said.

"Reef HQ has firmly established its place as the world's largest living coral reef aquarium and built an international reputation for exhibiting the unique and unusual.

"We are delighted to be an integral part of the Townsville and Thuringowa communities with almost 10 000 members from across the twin cities and over 150 dedicated and talented local volunteers."

Reef HQ is the National Education Centre for the Great Barrier Reef and plays a key role in educating and raising awareness about the Marine Park.

Since opening in June 1987, the Aquarium has welcomed over 2.6 million local, national and international visitors who have come to experience the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef and find out about the plants and animals that make the Reef such a special place.

Reef HQ was originally opened to create an example of the Great



Constructing ReefHQ's iconic underwater tunnel



The tunnel is popular with visitors

Barrier Reef on land to make the Reef accessible to everybody at a low cost and gain community support for the protection of the real thing.

Following many years of successful operation, the facility was closed temporarily in 2002 to undergo refurbishment.

The Great Barrier Reef Wonderland (as it was originally known) was the brainchild of Dr Graeme Kelleher, former Chairman of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

Construction of the Aquarium was an Australian Government centenary project.



Reef HQ enables visitors to experience the Reef up-close

Successful stinger information session

Stingers and snags were the focus when four north Queensland organisations joined forces for a community information session in Port Douglas.

The community event was a collaboration between Surf Life Saving Queensland, the Port Douglas Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC), Low Isles Preservation Society and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

The free information session included an informal sausage sizzle and Surf Life Saving Queensland's Marine Stinger Advisor Dr Lisa-Ann Gershwin provided information to de-mystify stingers and their behaviour.

Lisa-Ann said it was important the community were given accurate and balanced information about marine stingers and the true risk they posed.

"We hoped to dispel the speculation, whispers and old-wives tales that seem to arise when people talk about marine stingers," she said.

"We gave people tips that work, so you can go to the beach, have a great time and minimise any chance of getting stung.

"It is important that people are not afraid of marine stingers and understand that they can minimise the chances of getting stung."

The sausage sizzle supported the Low Isles Preservation Society, a conservation group dedicated to the protection and preservation of the Low Isles, the marine, coastal and rainforest environments of far north Queensland.



Guardian projects underway

Schools around Queensland have kicked off the fifth year of the Reef Guardian Schools programme.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Reef Guardian Schools Programme Manager Megan Sperring said some exciting projects were in the pipeline.

"We have a good idea of what schools will be working on because last year's Ripples of Change Awards gave some schools \$500 for planned future projects," she said.

"It looks like a big year for the schools, with everything from purchasing water quality testing kits to re-establishing riparian vegetation along creeks.

"We also have new teacher and student resources to assist schools to improve their programme and learn more about protecting the Reef."

Schools that re-register for 2007 automatically receive a new Reef

Guardian Schools yearly planner, including a term-by-term organiser to keep their resources together.

A new series of Reef Beat posters on sustainability are also being developed.

"Sustainability is a major focus in all Queensland schools – education gives young people the ability and confidence to shape their own futures," Megan said.

"Schools have already made considerable steps towards adopting sustainability principles in the formal curriculum and school operation."

Reef Beat covers sustainable tourism, fishing, coastal development, farming, human impacts on the Reef, and practical tips for sustainable living.

The series and activity booklet will be available to all Queensland schools - watch this space for more information.



Reef Guardian Schools Programme Manager Megan Sperring is ready to kick off a big year

Students gear up for environmental work

A Bundaberg-region school is the latest to join the Reef Guardian School ranks.

Moore Park State School teacher Debbie Coates said staff and students were enthusiastic and excited about joining the programme.

"We are taking a whole school approach to the Reef Guardian Schools programme so all our students and teachers will be committed Reef Guardians," she said.

Projects for 2007 include revegetating the school grounds and the community and reducing their environmental impacts.

"Water, waste and green waste audits will be completed at the

beginning of the year so we can determine the school's ecological footprint," Debbie said.

"The school will start composting, mulching green waste and incorporating a recycling system."

And the school are spreading the environmental message to their community.

"The school will work with the Burnett Mary Regional Group, Burnett Shire Council and the local Landcare to identify and implement long-term strategies in the area," Debbie said.

"This includes weed management, green waste management and water quality improvement to help protect our local area and the Great Barrier Reef.

"The students will consult and liaise with landholders and farming families in the area and discuss issues relevant to the community."

Joining the Reef Guardian Schools programme expands the school's environmental programme.

They have already been researching and monitoring turtles as part of a Moore Park Turtle Research Programme, run by local volunteers.

Interesting Facts

- Gulls are the best-known seabird in the world and are found from the polar ice caps to the equator.
- Butterflies are among the most prominent insects in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The area is home to 118 species, including two endemic subspecies.
- There are between 400 and 500 species of marine algae in the Marine Park.

Community consulted on proposed Marine Park changes

Community consultation on proposed amendments to the Cairns Area and Whitsundays Plans of Management for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park closes on 19 March 2007.

The community are invited to provide feedback on a range of changes across the two Plans including more mooring opportunities in the Cairns Area and an additional area for motorised watersports in the Whitsundays.

The changes aim to simplify the Plans so they are more user-friendly and provide increased flexibility for tourism in the areas.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Planning Manager Sally Peut said community input was essential to ensure the Plans reflected the recreational and commercial needs of the community.

"We welcome community input on the proposed changes and are particularly interested in hearing from people who live in or use the



The consultation looks at issues relating to the Cairns Planning Area

Cairns Area and the Whitsundays," she said.

"It is our goal to ensure the Marine Park is protected while providing opportunities in the Plans for recreational and commercial activities.

"We have developed an online submission system where people can read about each proposed change and provide their comments."

Sally said the amendments addressed area-specific issues.

"Plans of Management complement zoning by addressing issues specific to an area, species or community in greater detail than can be accomplished by the broader reef-wide Zoning Plans," she said.

Other proposed changes in the Whitsundays include increasing the

maximum vessel length to Hardy Reef and the southern end of Whitehaven Beach and extending the Manta Ray Bay no anchoring area.

Changes proposed for Cairns also include increased flexibility for daily tour operators conducting charter fishing and increasing the maximum group size at Flynn Reef and Pellowe Reef.

The public can also comment on site plans for the setting five (protected) areas in the Whitsundays and if glass bottom boats can be permanently moored at Upolu Cay, offshore Cairns.

Information on the proposed changes and an online submission form is available at www.gbrmpa.gov.au under "Latest News."

Habitats examined in Reef report



Mangroves and saltmarshes are the focus of the latest update to the State of the Reef Report.

The new chapter is part of the regularly updated online publication, which sheds light on the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Project Officer and chapter author Katrina Goudkamp said the report outlined strategies to protect these habitats.

"Mangroves and saltmarshes are an important part of the Marine Park because they filter land runoff and improve the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef lagoons," she said.

Coastal development and declining water quality are the main pressures for these habitats, with significant degradation since European settlement.

"The Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, a 10-year strategy by the Australian and Queensland Governments, is looking at ways to halt and reverse the declining quality of water entering the Marine Park," Katrina said.

"In Queensland all mangrove and saltmarsh plants, along with all other marine plants, are also protected by law and this goes a long way to ensuring these habitats are looked after."

There are 39 mangrove species and hybrids and 26 species of

saltmarshes, covering approximately 3800 km² along the Great Barrier Reef coast.

Katrina said mangroves and saltmarshes contributed to the biological productivity and food webs of coastal waters.

"Mangroves and saltmarshes link the marine and terrestrial environments and provide habitat for both marine and terrestrial organisms, including several threatened species," she said.

"They provide critical nursery areas for many fish and crustaceans, including commercially and recreationally important species."

Agriculture, oil spills, sediment nutrients, storms and cyclones also affect mangroves and saltmarshes.

A full copy of the *State of the Reef Report* chapter is available online at www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/info_services/publications.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority staff receive **Australia Day** awards

A shark expert and café supervisor were among the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) staff recognised with an Australia Day achievement award.

The annual awards recognise staff who are dedicated and work hard towards helping to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

GBRMPA Executive Director John Tanzer said the agency employed people with a range of expertise.

"It is the employees who have helped make the Authority internationally recognised as a leader in environmental management," John said.

"This year we had staff from a range of areas receiving awards, from the Project Manager of our Indigenous Partnerships Liaison Unit to the Café Supervisor at Reef HQ."

The following staff were also presented with Australia Day awards:

- **Andrew Chin**, a shark expert, received an award for helping raise awareness about the sad condition of shark populations in the Marine Park and helping GBRMPA to identify management responses.



Andrew has been working with the GBRMPA since 1999 and his other achievements include project managing the environmental monitoring of Nelly Bay Harbour, establishing the Eye on the Reef programme and updating the State of the Reef report.

- **Hilary Skeat** has been the backbone of the Tourism and Recreation group as their Project Manager. She played a key role in developing the *Tourism Operators Handbook*, which is critical in ensuring tourism in the Great Barrier Reef remains economically and environmentally sustainable.



- **John Tapim** works in the Indigenous Partnerships Liaison Unit and has built a reputation for being passionate about management of sea country and Indigenous engagement. John's work as an advisor, negotiator and extension officer has earned him respect amongst various communities.



- **Maureen Ryan** plays a tremendous role as the Café Supervisor at Reef HQ Aquarium. Maureen first started three years ago and has run the cafe as if it were her own ever since. Under Maureen's ever-watchful eye, the cafe has achieved a remarkable improvement in operations.



- **Randall Owens** has made a significant and unique contribution to the work of the GBRMPA firstly as a fisheries expert with valuable field experience in remote areas and secondly by being a part of the rezoning team. He is currently Acting Director of the Fisheries Issues Group.



- **Karin Gerhardt's** skills and commitment to GBRMPA have been evident throughout her time with the agency and they have been highlighted and tested through the challenging role of Project Manager of the Permits, Compliance and Management System. Once up and running the system will improve compliance management significantly.



Volunteering to help the environment

Are you interested in being a part of a hands-on project to help the environment?

Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) is conducting Green Corps projects from Mackay, Townsville and Cairns over the next three years. Each project runs for 26 weeks and involves 10 young people, between 17 and 20-years-old, and a CVA Team Leader. Participants receive a weekly allowance, a uniform, accredited training and fantastic work experience.

For more information contact CVA on 1800 032 501 or visit www.conservationvolunteers.com.au.

Preparing to protect oiled wildlife

Specially trained staff will be ready to come to the aid of oiled wildlife in the event of an oil spill off Queensland's coast.

Staff from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service have recently undergone training in Cairns.

Course presenter Mike Short from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service said trainees learnt how to give first aid to animals drenched in oil.

"Oil spills are rare in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park but it's essential to be prepared," he said.

"After three days in the course, we then tested their skills through a field deployment exercise so they could act out a real life situation. First aid demonstrations were shown on healthy seabirds.

"It's a tragedy when animals get covered in oil. Seabirds can suffer hypothermia, dehydration, starvation, skin burns, eye damage and egg and chick losses.

"Our trainees need to know how to respond quickly and effectively to keep them alive.

"They had to develop a plan of action then put it into practise, testing their equipment, to see if it would work. All of the participants performed extremely well."

Anyone who sees an oil spill or sick, injured or dead dugongs, turtles, whales or dolphins should report it to the EPA Hotline on 1300 130 372.

Marine Park Partnerships

Profile of Creek to Coral Coordinator and Water Quality Improvement Plan Manager, Townsville City Council



DJ MacKenzie

This Scottish-born lad loves his job because it is about working with people, communicating, interacting and inspiring.

As Creek to Coral Coordinator, DJ Mackenzie has overall responsibility for this Townsville City Council environmental programme.

"We work with Thuringowa Council to maintain and enhance our healthy waterways in the coastal dry tropics," he said.

"Our aim is to achieve and promote the benefits of clean water ecosystems to the community."

DJ also keeps busy with his role as the Water Quality Improvement Plan Manager.

"The plan sees a range of organisations working together in on-ground activities to improve the quality of water in our local waterways," he said.

"The plan complements Creek to Coral - both roles are about encouraging and supporting integrated catchment management within the community."

DJ has lived in the region for the past six years, saying the people and the lifestyle keep him here.

"I travelled to north Queensland in 1999 to 2000 to undertake a community conservation experience with Conservation Volunteers Australia," he said.

"I really wanted to work adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and be in the tropics.

"I then joined Green Corps to support young people engaged in practical conservation work, before joining Townsville City Council in 2002."

Since then DJ has also been involved in many other marine-related programmes.

"I am passionately involved in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Reef Guardian Schools programme and support local school projects," he said.

"I have also worked with the Authority to develop Reef Guardian Councils and been involved in the Townsville Local Marine Advisory Committee, Reef Check and Seagrass Watch."

DJ initially came to Australia to travel and gain practical conservation experience - it certainly sounds like he found what he was looking for.

Creature Feature

Sea Cucumbers

- Are cucumber-shaped with no arms and live in sandy and muddy areas.
- Have an unusual method of respiration: they take in water through their anus to breathe.
- When disturbed or frightened, some sea cucumbers pour out a mass of sticky white threads to confuse or trap their enemies. Others are capable of releasing toxins, which have been known to kill all the animals including the sea cucumbers themselves.
- Some sea cucumbers have a commensal fish known as the pearl fish (*Carpus sp.*), which lives inside their anus during the day and emerges at night to feed. When morning comes, it simply waits for the anus to open as the sea cucumber breathes, and swims back inside.



Doing your bit to look after it!

SCUBA diving and snorkelling are the most popular ways to experience the Marine Park. Recent studies show most divers cause little detectable damage to corals. Careful use of diving fins and buoyancy control are critical.

- ➔ Check you are weighted correctly before diving and practise buoyancy control away from coral or animals
- ➔ Secure diving equipment such as spare regulators and gauges to your body
- ➔ Move slowly and deliberately in the water, relax and take your time
- ➔ Avoid leaning on, standing on, holding onto or touching any part of the Reef and take extra care when taking photographs underwater
- ➔ Avoid touching anything with your fins and try not to disturb the sand
- ➔ Observe animals and do not touch, poke, handle, prod or chase them
- ➔ Do not disturb the environment as all creatures play an important role in the Marine Park.



Community Links

A profile of **Emily Smart**

Marine Biologist and Interpreter
with Fantasea Cruises and
Bleachwatch participant



Not too many people have an office as amazing as Emily Smart's.

As a Marine Research Coordinator and Reef Interpreter with Fantasea Cruises in the Whitsundays, she snorkels and dives on the beautiful Reef almost daily.

She also takes customers on guided snorkel tours and gives marine biology presentations on boat trips to Fantasea's Hardy Reef pontoon.

"I enjoy educating guests about the Reef, its plants and animals and also taking people snorkelling for their very first time," Emily said.

"It is fantastic to take someone who is a non-swimmer or terrified of the water or marine life on a snorkel tour and see their reactions.

"I have had a number of people who thought snorkelling was the best thing they have ever done, so that is a very rewarding part of the job."

As a Marine Research Coordinator Emily also spends two days a week doing research and fieldwork.

"I mainly concentrate on the crown-of-thorns starfish eradication programme," she said.

"I am beginning to compile a species diversity list and photo identification for the marine life around the Hardy Reef pontoon.

"Fantasea Foundation's research has only been running for a few months so we are still currently implementing and devising other research options."

Emily hopes to set up some long-term monitoring studies for fish, coral and other invertebrates on Hardy Reef.

"I intend to set up research programmes to collect data for the Foundation as well as the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), the Australian Institute of Marine Science and James Cook University."

Emily also submits weekly surveys to the GBRMPA's BleachWatch programme and is a member of the Whitsunday Marine Stinger Management Committee.

"I have a passion for the ocean and love learning about the marine life and passing this information on to others," she said.

"I love living in the Whitsundays, close to amazing diving and many incredible islands to explore."

Calendar of events

04 – 10 March 2007

Seaweed: marine bycatch matters

22 March 2007

World Day for Water

06 April 2007

Good Friday

09 April 2007

Easter Monday

10 April 2007

Port Douglas LMAC meeting

11 April 2007

Cairns LMAC meeting

17 April 2007

Hinchinbrook LMAC meeting

19 April 2007

Townsville LMAC meeting

25 April 2007

ANZAC Day

GBRMPA contacts

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
2-68 Flinders Street
PO Box 1379
Townsville Qld 4810

Phone: (07) 4750 0700
Fax: (07) 4772 6093
Email: info@gbrmpa.gov.au

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