



ECOSYSTEM REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ERAC) 1st Meeting – 17 and 18 March 2010 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

BACKGROUND

The Ecosystem RAC was appointed in November 2009. The Committee's first meeting was held in Townsville on 17 and 18 March 2010.

The GBRMPA's 2008 restructure saw the merging of the Conservation, Biodiversity and Indigenous Partnerships Group and the Fisheries Issues Group, to form the Ecosystem Conservation and Sustainable Use (ECSU) Section. As a result, the Conservation, Heritage and Indigenous Partnerships RAC merged with the Fisheries RAC to form the ERAC, which will reflect the ecosystem-based management focus of the ECSU Section.

Several members of the Conservation RAC and the Fisheries RAC have been appointed as members of the ERAC, along with several new members with appropriate expertise and/or stakeholder or government body representation.

Other changes affecting the RAC structure included:

- The establishment of the Indigenous RAC, to provide strategic-level advice to the GBRMPA on the management of matters that relate to Indigenous Partnerships.
- Renaming of the Water Quality and Coastal Development Group to the Coastal Ecosystem and Water Quality Section, and the subsequent renaming of the Water Quality and Coastal Development RAC to the Catchment and Coastal RAC.

The Catchment and Coastal RAC, the Ecosystem RAC, and the Tourism and Recreation RAC all include Indigenous representation.

MEETING SUMMARY

The Chairman paid respect to the Wulgurukaba and Bindal Traditional Owners and acknowledged their traditional land and sea country in the Townsville region.

A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

SPECIES CONSERVATION

Members were updated on activities undertaken by the Species Conservation staff.

Science workshops have been conducted in Indigenous communities to ensure information is made available; this is a means by which we can provide information to Traditional Owners and get information back as to what they are doing in their Sea Country. GBRMPA staff are also getting information about Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreements

(TUMRAs) from TUMRA holders; and are working collaboratively with Torres Strait Island people.

This specific program has been running for a couple of months, and aims to be completed by the end of the year. The GBRMPA is looking to get input from key stakeholders including Indigenous people about key issues and the draft biodiversity strategy.

Members agreed this research must be done in full effective partnership, and should include consultation with the Indigenous community. Co-management and regional management are important.

The Committee recommended the GBRMPA considers the engagement of key stakeholders in the development and use of decision-support tools such as computer models used for species population models. For example, the involvement of traditional elders into the development of the northern Great Barrier Reef green turtle population model.

SUSTAINABLE FISHING

Members were updated on activities undertaken by the Sustainable Fishing staff. The GBRMPA acknowledged the work being done by stakeholder groups in their particular fisheries.

Sunfish Queensland acknowledged the work being done by GBRMPA staff towards improving the relationship between Marine Parks and recreational fishers, through attending meetings and working to bridge the gaps. However, in terms of co-management, Sunfish Queensland felt there is still a long way to go before sufficient trust is built.

Members agreed the work on the regional management project for fishing is something on which the ERAC should maintain a watching brief. In addition, several members were interested in the ecological risk assessment approach being applied as part of the review of the trawl plan, and it may be a methodology for consideration in the biodiversity strategy.

HERITAGE

Members were updated on Heritage activities, including requirements to prepare a retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SoOUV), and a Periodic Report for the World Heritage Area. It was noted the Great Barrier Reef was nominated for its natural values, rather than for cultural values; however, that does not mean Indigenous and other cultural values are not protected.

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF ECOSYSTEM

Members were asked to consider the development of a vision statement and objectives for the biodiversity strategy; the appropriateness of the content of the biodiversity summary tables and prioritisation criteria; and the best method for engaging with stakeholders.

Vision

"Biodiversity in the GBR is healthy and resilient, supporting sustainable use, environmental, economic, social and cultural values of present and future generations, while considering the effects of a changing climate."

Principles

1. All use of resources should be sustainable
2. Biodiversity is supporting harvested resources
3. No nett loss of biodiversity (genetic, species and habitat)
4. Biodiversity is maintained to support essential goods and services
5. Biodiversity underpinning world heritage values.

In concluding discussion, members endorsed the preparation of a biodiversity strategy that:

- a) Builds on the *Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009*.
- b) Draws on the experience gained from developing the Climate Change framework, including the Vulnerability Assessment and Action Plan.
- c) Facilitates integration with key sectors and other management agencies, and considers relevant biodiversity plans and strategies.
- d) Includes conducting a series of workshops during the preparation of the Strategy to facilitate access to information and help prioritise actions.

CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Members heard a presentation on climate change, and provided advice on priorities, order and timing of work on biodiversity and fisheries; the framework for adaptation planning in the Great Barrier Reef context; and considerations for the effective implementation of adaptation projects.

In concluding discussion, the Committee:

- a) Strongly supported the climate change adaptation planning framework.
- b) Supported the practical and stepwise approach for its implementation, while recognising the potential need for transformative change to occur.
- c) Recommended opportunities for increased collaboration with Fisheries Queensland.
- d) Recommended documenting the benefits of implementing adaptation measures for fishers.
- e) Acknowledged the significant communication challenges to engage a range of sectors in considering and responding to Climate Change.

DRAFT POSITION PAPER ON HERBIVOROUS FISH IN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Members heard a presentation on the draft position paper on the Protection of Herbivorous Fish in the Great Barrier Reef, and provided advice on the most appropriate format for such position papers

recognising the range of views of different stakeholders.

In concluding discussion, the Committee:

- a) Supported the intent and development of the position paper on herbivorous fish, and recommended the paper include recognition of -
 - i. existing and future co-management options and stewardship approaches,
 - ii. importance of intact foodwebs at all trophic levels,
 - iii. the need for better understanding of take and trends.
- b) Noted the need to work with Fisheries Queensland in development of the position paper.
- c) Recommended the development of appropriate web-based material that is easily understood.

KEY ISSUES/GAPS IN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF OUTLOOK REPORT 2009

Members heard a presentation on the development and outcomes of the 2009 Outlook Report, and were asked to consider policy and information gaps, and synthesis work for the preparation of the 2014 Outlook Report.

The GBRMPA is hoping to keep the structure, the assessment criteria and the assessment approach the same for the next Outlook Report if possible. The look of the next Outlook Report has not yet been decided; however, the GBRMPA would like to build on the new information about climate change, as well as social and economic values along the Great Barrier Reef coast. Whether risks have increased or decreased will also be a consideration.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on 1 and 2 September 2010.

Current Membership of the Committee 2009-2012

Dr Andrew Ash	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
Mr Graeme Devin	Queensland Game Fishing Association (QGFA)
Dr Peter Doherty	Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS)
Mr Shaun Hanson	Commercial fisheries
Mr Terry Harper	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), Department of Environment and Resource Management
Mr Winston Harris	Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA)
Mr Darren Kindleysides	Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS)
Dr Gilly Llewellyn	WWF Australia
Professor Helene Marsh	Species ecology conservation
Dr Barry Pollock	Sunfish Queensland
Mr Nigel Routh	Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA)
A/Professor Stephan Schnierer	Indigenous fisheries and conservation research and policy
Mr Lyle Squire Jnr	Dive-based fisheries
Mr Bruce Stobo	Charter fisheries
Ms Diane Tarte	Independent Chairman
Mr Ian Yarroll	Fisheries Queensland, Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI)

Supported by:

Mr Peter McGinnity	General Manager, GBRMPA
Mr Jon Day	Director, Ecosystem, Conservation and Sustainable Use, GBRMPA