



ECOSYSTEM REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ERAC) 3rd Meeting – 30 March 2011 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The third meeting of the ERAC was held in Townsville on 30 March 2011.

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.

EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

This summer has seen a series of extreme weather events that are historically significant and likely to have serious implications for the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem.

Members were updated on the implementation of a suite of projects designed to provide an initial assessment of the ecological impacts of Tropical Cyclone Yasi and the flooding of the Fitzroy, Mary and Burnett Rivers. Surveys are also being planned to assess the implications of Tropical Cyclone Yasi for reef-dependent industries, building on the knowledge gained from research on the impacts of Tropical Cyclone Hamish in 2009. A working group, led by Fisheries Queensland, was formed after Cyclone Hamish, with the primary output being to develop a response plan using all the information collected at that time.

The GBRMPA is working with Traditional Owners and fishermen to gather as much information as is available, both in terms of impacts on animals (e.g. dugong) and for the fishing sector, in terms of displacement for both.

The Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) representative advised that after the recent flooding event in south-east Queensland, some displacement of dugong has already been experienced in Moreton Bay, which has led to the issuing of public notices cautioning people to be alert on the water as they are likely to come across animals in areas where they are not normally found.

The Committee noted and endorsed the strong collaboration between the GBRMPA and Queensland agencies in monitoring and responding to the 2010/11 extreme weather events. The

Committee recommended ongoing analysis of the implications of these events on Reef habitats and species in the short, medium and long term. In identifying responses to these events, the Committee suggested the following should be considered:

- The role of resilience of the ecosystem and potential refugia for both species and habitats.
- Ongoing monitoring of impacts on critical habitats and species.
- Infrastructure (needs and opportunities).
- Temporary management measures.
- Public understanding and engagement including participation in Eye on the Reef program.

The Committee also noted the need for timely advice being provided to the Queensland Flood Recovery Group.

ECOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENT FOR TRAWL

Members were updated on the progress of the Trawl Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) Project.

The Committee reaffirmed its support for the ERA process and noted that it has proven to be a useful and valuable contribution to the ongoing management of the trawl fishery. Communicating the results of the assessment should be done jointly by the GBRMPA and Queensland agencies to both relevant industries and the general public. The importance of timely and accurate reporting was noted.

The Committee also noted the value of this work to the development of other management processes including the proposed GBR Biodiversity Strategy and the review of Trawl Plan, and endorsed that the assessment's findings contribute to the identification of priority research needs for the Great Barrier Reef.

BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Members were updated on the progress of the Biodiversity Strategy, and provided comment and feedback on addressing key questions including determining targets and milestones, and integrating biodiversity priorities into management frameworks.

The Committee noted that the draft Biodiversity Strategy proposes the development of an Integrated Inshore Biodiversity Program as one action under the Strategy. While acknowledging that the draft Strategy confirms the importance of responding to the pressures on the Reef's inshore biodiversity, the Committee recommended that the scope and intent of the proposed program be better defined.

The Committee reaffirmed that the proposed Biodiversity Strategy should include targets, and recommended that the targets should:

- Link to the 2009 Outlook Report
- Reflect both outcomes and processes identified in the Strategy
- Relate to both the status of habitats and species in good condition and reduction of risks
- Be consistent with targets in other programs such as Reef Plan
- Be limited in number.

REGIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN THE BURDEKIN – A PILOT STUDY FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Members were provided a briefing on a pilot study relating to the management of fisheries in the Burdekin area of Queensland, and proposed changes to commercial netting closures within the region which have been driven by the community. The changes are the first step in co-managing the area's fisheries on a regional basis, and will benefit the recreational and commercial fishing sectors and support the environment in terms of dugong protection. Fisheries Queensland conducted a survey of the Burdekin community, seeking comments on the proposed changes.

This pilot study presents major challenges and opportunities – it is at the core of working adaptively to implement ecosystem based management that recognises and seeks to quantify the substantial resource management knowledge that local fishers have in the Burdekin of inshore biodiversity and the factors impacting it.

The project has demonstrated that working with knowledgeable local fishermen provides an opportunity to build up a detailed picture of species and human use of locations along the coast. Systems are required to capture and utilise this knowledge.

Drawing on the experience of the regional management project in the Burdekin and the discussions relating to responses to extreme events in the Great Barrier Reef Region, the Committee considered that changes to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan could be considered during the seven-year life of any Zoning Plan under the following circumstances:

- No changes to highly protected zones (i.e. green and pink).

- There is nett conservation benefit.
- The changes advance the objectives of the Great Barrier Reef Zoning Plan.
- Scientific basis.
- Community support.
- Due consideration of unintended consequences.
- Meets a stringent set of criteria for nomination.
- Proposed changes to be very limited in spatial extent.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK

Members were provided an update on progress in developing the Recreation Management Strategy for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

After further consultation with the other RACs and the Local Marine Advisory Committees (LMACs), the latest draft Strategy reflects the comments received from those committees, and features the more explicit inclusion of fishing as a recreational activity.

Members noted the arrangements for managing the extractive impacts of recreational fishing are not a focus of the draft Strategy, and will continue to be addressed in other strategies, policies and management arrangements of both the GBRMPA and its partner agencies.

It is intended that the final Strategy will be submitted for approval to the Board of the Marine Park Authority mid-year.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled to be held in September 2011.

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 Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPC)
A/Professor Stephan Schmierer	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
Dr Mark Read	Acting Director, Ecosystem, Conservation and Sustainable Use, GBRMPA