



CONSERVATION, HERITAGE AND INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CRAC) 16th Meeting 28 and 29 April 2005 – Townsville SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The 16th meeting of the CRAC was held on 28 and 29 April 2005 in Townsville. Following is a summary of the main items discussed at the meeting.

CONSERVATION, HERITAGE AND INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS (CHIP) CRITICAL ISSUE GROUP

The Committee was informed of the recent restructuring of the Conservation, World Heritage and Biodiversity (CBWH) group with the incorporation of the Indigenous Policy and Liaison Unit (IPLU) into the group. As a result CBWH will now be known as CHIP; and IPLU has been renamed to the Indigenous Partnerships Liaison Unit. Members noted that the full range of issues that the CBWH group has dealt with will continue under the CHIP group; and the short name and acronym remains as Conservation RAC and CRAC respectively.

REPORT ON GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AUTHORITY (GBRMPA) ACTIVITIES

The Committee was briefed on the recent activities of the GBRMPA, including:

- Initiatives to improve community engagement including -
 - The establishment of a special unit (Community Partnerships Group) within the GBRMPA to enhance management decisions, compliance and stewardship through embedding a culture of effective, best-practice community engagement across the GBRMPA.
 - The role of the Local Marine Advisory Committees (LMACs) will be reinforced to try and make them more effective. Senior managers taking responsibility for the LMAC region will be expected to spend more time in the region getting to know the major players and taking responsibility for issues.
 - The establishment of offices in key regional centres along the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) coast to undertake an 'embassy' role. This will not be a regionalisation of the GBRMPA, but providing a mechanism for representing the GBRMPA, facilitating feedback, and feeding issues back into the management system so we can build on the relationships that came into being during the rezoning process.
- Community based monitoring is a component of overall monitoring of the implementation and outcomes of the Representative Areas Program (RAP)/rezoning exercise.

- Additional resources were provided for enforcement and surveillance from 1 July 2005 and there has been a very low level of infringements detected since the zoning plan came into place. This has been interpreted as coming from a combination of education, the deterrence effect of heavy fines for infringements and effective targeting of likely offenders and known 'hot spots'. The focus has changed dramatically towards identifying likely perpetrators and focussing our resources on them.

The Committee supported, in principle, the concept of placement of staff in selected communities to act as 'ambassadors' to improve community engagement by:

- (a) Promoting information about the GBRMP management; and
- (b) Improving understanding of community issues by the GBRMPA staff.

The Committee noted that the successful establishment of such a system will require care in the selection of staff, and commitment to ensure success over the longer term, and suggested a review after 12 months to ensure the system is working.

The Committee recommended that:

1. The role of the GBRMPA regional staff be clearly articulated to the community;
2. The GBRMPA emphasises two-way communication that promotes improved community capacity for sustainable use;
3. A review of the success or otherwise of this initiative after 12 months;
4. Investment in research on community values; and
5. Investigation into the characteristics of communities that best support effective community engagement.

The CRAC supported initiatives to develop community based monitoring and recommended that:

1. The GBRMPA develops guidelines to specify the characteristics of successful community based monitoring programs such as Capricorn Local Marine Advisory Committee and Seagrass Watch;
2. The community monitoring be linked to the successful Reef Guardian program;
3. A process that independently monitors the effectiveness and quality of community information collection be developed; and
4. A framework be developed for the management of community monitors including the receipt and processing of data and feedback to the community.

RAP/REZONING IMPLEMENTATION

The Committee supports the initiative of placing the RAP Taskforce Manager off-line to coordinate the record of the experience of the RAP/rezoning processes.

In this context, members proposed to develop a paper that records the observations and experiences of the CRAC members through the RAP process. The advice will include a summary of information known to CRAC members about in-kind support generated during RAP.

It was acknowledged that despite considerable efforts by GBRMPA officers and associated supporters, there were some sectors of the Australian and international community that are still unaware of the success of the RAP process and the lessons that can be applied to the conservation of marine resources elsewhere. For this reason the CRAC reiterated the desirability of promoting the knowledge gained in accessible international media.

The CRAC therefore recommended:

1. The consolidation of the papers that document the RAP processes and learning through the production of a special issue of a journal with a high impact factor;
2. The use of an external editor to facilitate this process by coordinating production and writing of papers; and
3. The production of advice about the cost of undertaking RAP, that will allay concerns that marine bioregionalisation processes are too expensive to be undertaken elsewhere.

INDIGENOUS ISSUES UPDATE

Members were advised that the GBRMPA's IPLU staff are currently investigating options to integrate the new national approach to Indigenous Affairs by the Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICC), and the Indigenous Partnership Five Year Program objectives along the GBRMP coast. Three ICC offices have recently been established by the Federal Government along the GBR coast (Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton), with the priority to work with regional networks of representative Indigenous organisations to develop Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) and Regional Partnership Agreements (RPAs).

WATER QUALITY UPDATE

The CRAC received a presentation on the implementation of the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (Reef Plan). While it was noted that the implementation of the Reef Plan is progressing satisfactorily, there was concern about the relationship between the time available for the implementation of the plan through Natural Heritage Trust (NHT)/National Action Plan (NAP) grants and the time period in which significant changes were likely to be seen on the ground; and as a result the land-based reform processes may lose momentum in the longer term because of the lack of immediate results.

The CRAC recommended that:

1. The GBRMPA focus monitoring on specific locations that will illustrate the positive aspects of change to land-owners and communities in catchments, and use these locations for a public communication strategy; and
2. The GBRMPA use its influence to ensure that long-term monitoring is continued in catchments, after initial NHT/NAP grants have expired.

SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOP

At the last CRAC meeting the concept of sustainability outside highly protected areas was debated and it was decided to pursue this issue at the next meeting.

A mini workshop was conducted to help members focus on any advice they might give to the GBRMPA about sustainability issues over the whole GBR World Heritage Area.

Members provided a brief summary of what they perceived 'sustainability' was.

In conclusion, the Chair advised that he would develop members' comments into a paper and circulate it to members for comment, with a view to developing a document for discussion at the next meeting. The purpose is to see whether the CRAC can develop useful advice that will assist the GBRMPA in management of the GBRWHA.

SEABED BIODIVERSITY PROGRAM

The CRAC received a briefing on the CRC Reef Seabed Biodiversity Project. Members were informed of the progress to date and were also advised that due to the new zoning arrangements some sampling stations that were previously located in general use zones were now in new green zones. Alternative stations were able to be found for all but about 30 of these. If these remaining stations inside new green zones are not able to be sampled there will be a significant loss of information. The steering committee for the project recommended that the project seek an amendment to the current permit, for access to the most critical of the rezoned sites that cannot be moved, and that the GBRMPA advisory bodies (e.g., Fisheries RAC and Conservation RAC) should be consulted.

The Committee supports the Seabed Biodiversity Program (as amended post 1 July 2004) and recommended that the GBRMPA support the completion of sampling at green zone stations where the data cannot be obtained from any other site, to ensure that the essential objectives of this program are met.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 26 and 27 July 2004.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Doug Baird	Tourism & Recreation
Ms Kate Davey	Non-government organisation, Conservation
Mr Jon Day	GBRMPA
Dr Pat Hutchings	Non-government organisation, Ecologist
Mr Bruce Leaver	Dept of the Environment and Heritage
Mr Richard Leck	Non-government organisation, Conservation
Prof Helene Marsh	Scientific Community
Mr Peter Ogilvie	Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service
Assoc Prof Stephan Schnierer	Indigenous Issues
Mr Tim Smith	Water Quality, Coastal Issues
A/Prof Peter Valentine	World Heritage, Protected Area Management
Mr Simon Woodley	Independent Chair