



CONSERVATION, HERITAGE AND INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CRAC)

24th Meeting

8 and 9 October 2008 – Townsville

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The 24th CRAC meeting was held on 8 and 9 October 2008 in Townsville. Following is a summary of the main items discussed at the meeting.

SPECIES CONSERVATION ISSUES

Members were provided with an update of activities undertaken by the Species Conservation Unit, including:
Raine Island

Limited data available indicates there has been a decrease in green turtle hatching success because the sand layer over the majority of the island is not deep enough to allow successful nesting. Geomorphologists are advising there appears to be a formation of a bryne rock layer under the sand layer which is causing the problems.

East Coast Inshore Fin Fish

Minister Garrett has employed an independent expert review panel. The panel has considered the Regulatory Impact Statement which the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (QDPI&F) produced and has also called meetings with a range of different stakeholders: Last week Conversation, Heritage and Indigenous Partnerships and Fisheries Issues Group staff addressed the panel. Submissions were also received from the Australian Coral Reef Society and WWF.

The panel was candid in declaring that its members do have concerns around sustainability, particularly focusing on shark. The independent review of the East Coast Inshore Fin Fishery is now available online at:
<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/qld/east-coast-finfish/index.html>

INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS ISSUES

The Committee was provided an update on Indigenous Partnerships and Liaison Unit (IPLU) activities. Among the issues discussed were:

- Accreditation for both the Ma:Mu and Wuthathi Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (TUMRA) for a period of five years.
- The appointment of a new Indigenous representative to the Marine Park Authority Board.
- The development of the new Giringun TUMRA and Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) application.

Kuuku Ya'u Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA)

It was explained to members that an ILUA is an agreement about the use and management of land and waters by native title holders and others. Once finalised, the Kuuku Ya'u ILUA will be the first to relate to Commonwealth waters and the Marine Park.

- Although the GBRMPA invests heavily in TUMRAs, it acknowledges the need to consider other avenues for developing and recognising management arrangements, provided they are consistent with the sustainable use of marine resources.
- It is proposed that TUMRAs, ILUAs and other permitting systems should be used as part of a suite of mechanisms for managing traditional use of marine resources in the Marine Park.
- ILUAs will not allow non-Traditional Owners to fish in ILUA areas.

Land and Sea Country Indigenous Partnerships Program component of the Reef Rescue Plan

A discussion took place with members outlining the Land and Sea Country Indigenous Partnerships Program.

Through this program there will be an opportunity to improve the way business is done and attempting to assist communities to reach the point whereby they do have resources (e.g. boats and rangers) on the ground.

Members' comments included:

- Facilitating processes which allow the community to reach agreement on how they might deal with issues, without being seen to be impinging on customary law, should be considered.
- There is a perception that TUMRAs are narrowly focussed.
- The chief interest for Indigenous communities lies with them being empowered. Once that happens, engagement will be easier.

The CRAC supported the proposal to establish an Indigenous advisory group to guide the GBRMPA in implementing the Reef Rescue Plan.

The Committee noted that TUMRAs were originally expected to address all Indigenous marine resource use, but had focussed initially on managing hunting of turtle and dugong. TUMRAs are now expanding from that initial focus to address wider issues about sustainable use of marine resources by Indigenous communities.

The CRAC recommended that the GBRMPA, in the context of TUMRA development and implementation, take on an expanded role to support and facilitate the building of community capacity in governance, in planning and in accessing financial and other resources (e.g. through Natural Resource Management Boards).

The Committee urged the GBRMPA to record the processes and changes in approach, in the development of TUMRAs, and what has been learned from those processes to assist others in future.

OUTLOOK REPORT

The Committee was provided an update on progress with the Outlook Report. Advice was sought from members regarding likely outlooks for the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem and the effectiveness of existing relevant management measures.

Members were advised:

- Most feedback suggests that the reef has a good chance of remaining healthy if resilience is strengthened.
- The Outlook Report Taskforce is receiving differing views regarding to what extent World Heritage should be discussed within the Report.
- An online system for storing and accessing evidence is being developed. It is hoped this will ultimately be publicly available.

Members rated the current status of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem as good, the five-year outlook as fair to good and the 20-year outlook as poor to fair.

Regarding the five-year outlook, members commented:

- The reef has bounced back well from crown-of-thorns infestations and bleaching events. Effects of the Representative Areas Program will reinforce and enable the reef to hold its own for the next five years.
- There is a high level of Australian community expectation of positive management and outcomes.
- Global climate influences will affect all the good local initiatives over the next five years.
- The scale of water quality problems and climate change impacts will not improve much.

Reasons for the poor to fair 20-year outlook included:

- The failure of regional fisheries management.
- The severity of climate impacts will seriously affect coral communities. Responses are very unpredictable.
- Change will be superimposed over a shifting baseline scenario; the new ecosystem may be functional and 'healthy' but radically different.
- The Reef Rescue Plan and whatever comes after will be insufficient to build enough resilience.

It was commented that:

- The Report's benchmark is unclear. We are assuming the way the reef behaves from our past knowledge is that communities change and reform in a linear way. Different communities may respond in a different way.
- The question of different spatial scales has been incredibly confusing.

The CRAC provided advice on the assessment criteria for the Outlook Report and noted that it was unclear whether the Report was addressing the outlook for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) or only the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP). The Committee also recommended that the Outlook Report use the GBRWHA values as a cornerstone of the Report, supplemented by examination of other values not covered by the WHA nomination (e.g. socio-economic and cultural values).

The outstanding universal natural value for which the WHA nomination was made and accepted is an internationally-accepted benchmark against which management effectiveness can be assessed; they also create obligations on the Australian Government under the World Heritage Convention and Australian legislation, thus providing a valuable context for Parliament in dealing with this report.

FISHING IN THE GBRWHA

Members were provided a copy of the 'Fishing in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park: Statement of Intent' document. It was explained that industry called for future certainty, particularly around the management regime and GBRMPA zoning plan.

The CRAC endorsed the preparation of a statement setting out the GBRMPA's approach to fisheries in the GBRMP. The statement should provide a basis for effective engagement with the fishing industry. The CRAC made the following recommendations for consideration in finalising the statement:

- 1) It should address all fisheries occurring in the GBRMP, including Indigenous fishing.
- 2) The term 'fishing' should be defined.
- 3) The management of relationships between the GBRMPA and QDPI&F should be clearly explained.
- 4) The policy scope of the fisheries' statement should be clear; that is, GBRMP or GBRWHA.
- 5) A general principle in the statement should be that all fisheries are ecologically sustainable.
- 6) It should describe all aspects of the management of fisheries by the GBRMPA and clarify the 'rights' of fishers in relation to other users of the GBRMP.
- 7) The intended audience should be clarified and the document written for that audience (CRAC felt that the primary audience should be recreational, commercial and Indigenous fishers as individuals and in representative bodies); and
- 8) The 'take-home messages' in the statement should be clear.

The Committee also discussed possible changes to the way in which the GBRMPA engages with industry and recommended that it move more from a primarily regulatory approach to one that also engages with industry to develop more ecologically-sustainable practices, similar to the engagement with the tourism industry.

The CRAC also noted that the recent report by the CSIRO on the expected effects of climate change on Australia's fisheries was primarily focussed on oceanic fisheries, and did not address climate change effects on tropical inshore habitats and fisheries.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held in February/March 2009.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Doug Baird	Tourism and Recreation
Ms Kate Davey	Non-Government Organisation, Conservation
Dr Mark Read	GBRMPA
Mrs Christine Doherty	Indigenous
Dr Pat Hutchings	Non-Government Organisation, Ecologist
Ms Anissa Lawrence	Fisheries Issues
Mr Bruce Leaver	Dept of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
Dr Ghislaine Llewellyn	Non-Government Organisation, Conservation
Mr Justin McCaul	Non-Government Organisation, Conservation
Prof Helene Marsh	Scientific Community
Mr Peter Ogilvie	Qld Environmental Protection Agency
Associate Professor Stephan Schnierer	Indigenous
Mr Bernie Singleton	Indigenous
Associate Professor Peter Valentine	Conservation, World Heritage, Protected Area Management
Mr Simon Woodley	Independent Chairman