

CONSERVATION, BIODIVERSITY AND WORLD HERITAGE REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

6th Meeting

26 and 27 July 2001 – Townsville

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

A summary document is prepared after each meeting of the Reef Advisory Committee to inform other advisory committees serving the Authority, and persons generally (including the public) of business of the RAC. The document forms part of the records of the meeting and so its content is limited to matters raised in the meeting, and, where necessary, background details given to the meeting. Any inquiries should be referred to the Authority's Secretariat, or to the appropriate Member.

WATER QUALITY STRATEGY FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK (GBRMP)

Members were given a presentation, in which the following topics were discussed:

- The outcomes of the last 15 years of research has shown that water quality in the near-shore regions of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) is declining due to polluted run-off from the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) catchment.
- Scientific studies estimate that there is approximately four times as much sediment and nutrients entering the in-shore lagoon of the GBRWHA from the GBR catchment per year since pre-European coastal settlement.
- Water discharged from the GBR catchment in a flood event extends, in a plume, over the in-shore lagoon and may reach mid- and outer-shelf reefs, subject to weather conditions.

An Action Plan is to be developed, designed to suggest end of catchment targets for water quality discharges from all catchments adjacent to the GBRWHA. The Plan will cover aspects including:

- Identifying the major catchment-based threats to water quality in the GBRWHA.
- Identifying priority catchments and sub-catchments in terms of potential risks to the World Heritage (WH) values.
- Recommending specific targets (including pollution loads and concentrations) for individual river outflow water quality and for reef water quality.
- Suggest actions and a timetable for implementation which need to be taken to improve the quality of water entering the GBRWHA.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) has formed a committee of water quality experts with representatives from the GBRMPA, Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), Australian Centre for Tropical Freshwater Research (ACTFR) and the Reef Co-operative Research Centre

(CRC Reef) to assist in identifying requirements to address the points above.

Members were also advised that the Water Quality and Coastal Development critical issues group would be releasing a current issues paper shortly, which will be a comprehensive review of water quality matters.

ENVIRONMENT AUSTRALIA'S (EA) OVERVIEW OF MARINE INVERTEBRATES

Members were advised that the study "Overview of the Conservation of Australian Invertebrates" was commissioned by EA. The study was one of three reports commissioned, the broad purpose being to provide EA with better consolidation of information on marine biota.

Members recognised that the lack of knowledge of marine invertebrates was of concern, especially in the intertidal shelf slope and abyssal areas. The GBRMPA views the report as a very useful document and is recommending finalisation and publication.

PROGRESS REPORT ON WORLD HERITAGE ISSUES

Members were advised that:

- The World Heritage Bureau and the World Heritage Committee held their 24th meetings in Cairns from 27 November to 2 December 2000.
- A progress report on the "Framework for Management for the GBRWHA" was provided to the November meetings of the WH Bureau and Committee. The report provided updated actions against the five priority action areas identified by the Australian Committee for IUCN (The World Conservation Union) (Land and coastal catchment issues; Fisheries; Shipping and ship-sourced marine pollution; Representative Areas; and resources for research and management).
- The ship grounding at Sudbury Reef was of considerable interest to the WH Bureau, who requested an update at the next meeting.

- The WH Bureau met again in June 2001 in Paris; information on the recovery of Sudbury Reef was provided.
- Australia has a requirement to report periodically on the state of the GBRWHA (every six years), with the first report being due in 2002/03.

UPDATE ON REPRESENTATIVE AREAS PROGRAM (RAP) and DISCUSSION OF ISSUES ARISING FROM THE PROGRAM

Members were briefed on achievements with the RAP since the last meeting in February 2001, including:

- The distribution of the March RAP updates, with regular updates being produced and distributed.
- Bioregions are now finalised and printed.
- Bioregion information sheets are being finalised, and will be available on the web.
- Positive feedback had been received from the technical workshop recently conducted for stakeholders. The workshops are resource intensive, but workshops or briefings would be run again focusing on representatives of other stakeholder groups to report back to their constituents.

Members were advised that in the First Community Participation Phase (CP1), the reasons for rezoning of the Marine Park will need to be clearly explained. The main reasons included the protection of biodiversity; ensuring consistency of zoning; providing zoning for the recent inclusion of new areas; and implementing the new co-ordinate-based zone boundary approach.

Liaison with various communities had uncovered a range of issues, and RAP staff were distilling key issues for the general public and for stakeholder groups. The GBRMPA is developing a professional CP1 presentation to stakeholders, to ensure consistency of messages, and is also developing protocols for a media launch of CP1, for the flow of information going out and coming back in, for tracking and recording this information. Advice on guidelines for consultation processes with Indigenous and traditional people has also been received.

Members were advised that the GBRMPA was aware of the need to ensure consistency of zoning and was endeavouring to minimise confusion. To assist:

- Informal Community Participation has been occurring.
- Wide consultation is to be undertaken.
- Gazette notice to invite submissions to all Zoning Plans will occur.
- The Gazette notice will mark the beginning of the First Formal Community Participation Process.
- An informal scoping of new Zoning Plan options will follow the CP1.
- The Second Formal Community Participation Process will focus on a Draft Zoning Plan (DZP).

GBRMPA TURTLE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Committee recommended that a Turtle Research Strategy for the GBRWHA and Queensland waters be developed by the GBRMPA and the Queensland

Environmental Protection Agency, in collaboration with appropriate agencies, institutions and individuals. The aim would be for the Strategy to serve as a guide for setting priorities, allocating funds and assessing performance of actions for turtle recovery and conservation in these waters, in conformity with the existing Research Priorities of the GBRMPA, and in a similar manner to the GBRMPA's Dugong Research Strategy.

Members commented that it is not just scientific information that is of importance, but also cultural information and the need to protect Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous hunting. As well as providing more data to communities on which stocks are being fished, more information should be provided regarding the GBRMPA's position on traditional hunting.

DRAFT POLICY ON THE CONDUCT OF EXTRACTIVE RESEARCH IN "GREEN" ZONES

Members were advised that this draft policy will be provided to interested parties for comment, and noted that the policy needs to be read in the context of other policy issues such as intellectual property rights, traditional ownership and permitting processes. Members commended the policy approach which should help clarify matters for the research community, and suggested the following:

- The GBRMPA should involve all groups likely to be affected in developing research policy, to increase understanding and ownership of the policy.
- The policy needs to comprehensively define "extractive research", and be as clear as possible so that research of importance to the GBRWHA is conducted in the Area and the information is not lost for research and management.
- There is a need for protocols, processes, ethical practices and guidelines for scientists to use.
- Under the Native Title Act it is compulsory to consult with communities before research is conducted; 28 days has to be allowed for every permit.

NEXT MEETING

Next meeting proposed for November 2001.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE	
Mr Doug Baird	Tourism and Recreation
Ms Kate Davey	Conservation
Mr Jon Day	GBRMPA
Dr Pat Hutchings	Ecologist
Mr Ted Loveday	Fisheries
Prof Helene Marsh	Scientific Community
Mr Bruce Leaver	Environment Australia
Ms Melissa Nursey-Bray	Conservation
Mr Peter Ogilvie	Qld Parks and Wildlife Service
Assoc Prof Stephan Schnierer	Fisheries relating to Indigenous Peoples
Mr Tim Smith	Water Quality, Coastal Issues
Mr Peter Valentine	Conservation, Protected Areas Management
Mr Simon Woodley (Chairperson)	Research
Ms Imogen Zethoven	Conservation