



## FISHERIES REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FRAC)

14<sup>th</sup> Meeting – 20 and 21 June 2005 – Townsville

### SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the FRAC was held in Townsville on 20 and 21 June 2005. A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

#### STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At FRAC 13, the FRAC discussed initiatives to improve community involvement in decision-making by the GBRMPA, following the release of the Futureye Report and the Minister's press release in which he announced that the GBRMPA would have a greater presence in regional communities, through a network of regional offices. Members were asked to consult with their constituents and report on how communications could be improved or refined between stakeholder/community groups and the GBRMPA. A number of consistent messages emerged, particularly in terms of communication, engagement and partnership, and the Representative Areas Program and its consequences. In discussion, the following additional comments were noted:

- Some definite tasks and outcomes need to be identified for the regional offices, as well as identifying the needs and expectations of the community.
- There was concern in terms of the types of expectations that some communities may have of the regional offices. The GBRMPA was urged to make contact with these communities, to ensure that it is fully aware of local issues, and then determine a management protocol for the regional staff to respond to those issues.
- Staff in the regional offices will gain a knowledge and understanding of emerging issues in the areas, with a view to passing that collective community intelligence on to the GBRMPA for consideration.
- The FRAC is an important resource that the GBRMPA can use to disseminate information to the community through members' constituents.

Members were encouraged to discuss the issue with their constituents, in light of the discussions during the meeting. Any additional comments made by members would form the basis of the Committee's advice to the GBRMPA on community engagement.

#### WETLANDS IN THE GBR CATCHMENT – THE GBRMPA'S INVOLVEMENT

Members were briefed on the wetland conservation programs currently underway in the GBR catchment. The Queensland Wetlands Program is made up of two sub-components: the GBR Coastal Wetlands Protection Program, and the Natural Heritage Trust Wetlands Program, both of which will be delivered over a five-year period. The Program will seek to emphasise: communication of the technical guidelines and management practices developed by the funded projects; the need for the adoption of best management practice when dealing with land use that may impact wetlands adversely; and the need to establish effective communication networks with and between stakeholders and the community.

One of the key projects of particular interest to the FRAC is the development of education products by the GBRMPA to support wetland conservation in the GBR catchment. In discussion, the following comments were noted:

- The Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (QDPI&F) provided the coastal wetland mapping, and the Environmental Protection Agency provided the regional ecosystem mapping; the two were combined to form the revised Queensland definition.
- The task of fostering interest and reinforcing attachment to the GBR could be undertaken through the school system.

- There was some concern that delivery of the plan may be left to regional volunteer groups.
- One of the difficulties in managing water quality issues is the management of peoples' expectations.

The Committee conveyed to the GBRMPA its support for the speed with which these wetland plans had been progressed, and expressed its concern that reliance on a regional volunteer group as a sole vehicle for delivery of the plans would be unfortunate.

#### DIVE-BASED FISHERIES – UPDATE

*Coral:* Members were updated on the QDPI&F's amended draft management policy. The policy was being progressed as quickly as possible, and a process of education would begin shortly. There were still some outstanding points to consider, and it was suggested that the tourism and coral harvest industries should work closely to resolve any potential areas of conflict. The Committee's involvement was acknowledged in what was a very long process, resulting in a good outcome.

*Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL):* Members noted the linkages between this fishery and the Torres Strait fishery, and were concerned at potential impacts as a result of delays in addressing the latent effort problem during the Queensland Government's "year of consolidation". The Committee conveyed to the GBRMPA its concern at the delay in developing a mechanism to address latent effort in the fishery.

*Sea Cucumber:* During 2004, the two major operators adhered rigorously to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Their compliance was monitored through the Vessel Monitoring System.

#### EAST COAST TRAWL FISHERY (ECTF) – UPDATE

Members were briefed on recent developments within the ECTF.

*GBR World Heritage Area (WHA) Effort Cap:* Negotiations were continuing between the GBRMPA, Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) and QDPI&F over the GBR World Heritage Area (WHA) Effort Cap in the ECTF. To adjust the annual effort cap, the effort units purchased from the ECTF during the recent Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) by the DEH would be removed from the GBR WHA Effort Cap and regular adjustments would need to be made for effort creep in the fishery. An Independent Review Panel will be set up to review the work on effort creep in the ECTF since 2001.

*Environmental Risk Assessment Workshop on the ECTF:* The need to carry out an Environmental Risk Assessment for the ECTF and other major Queensland fisheries with an export component was a requirement under the DEH recommendations arising from the fishery assessment process. A workshop was held by the QDPI&F in early May 2005. It is likely to be a lengthy process to prepare a comprehensive document that identifies all the components of the ECTF in a fishery risk-assessment framework.

*Amendments to the ECTF Management Plan:* Several issues listed for amendment to the ECTF Management Plan were considerably overdue; this was a reflection of the "year of consolidation" by the Queensland Government. Aside from the lack of implementation of a GBR WHA Effort Cap for 2005, the prescription of Turtle Exclusion Devices (TEDs) design needed to be amended to bring it in line with best design standards and the import requirements by the USA for shrimp fisheries. The technical specifications for Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs) also needed to be amended in line with the gear trials that had been conducted.

*2005 Scallop Season:* The trial of a lower size limit for the Queensland saucer scallop is to be repeated this season. The analysis

of results from the 2004 season, when the size limit was reduced from 95 to 90 cm for October and November, showed that there was increased production in the scallop fishery. However, given the large inter-annual variability in scallop fisheries generally, caution was urged against drawing definitive conclusions at this early stage. The GBRMPA would be closely working with QDPI&F to ensure that the trial could proceed within the legislative framework of both agencies.

#### RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Members were updated on the research priorities for the Fisheries Issues Group and the status of the Fisheries Research Development Corporation's (FRDC) funding cycle. It was pointed out that research is about knowledge to support management and policy development, and should be undertaken as part of a systems approach and include socio-economic analysis. In terms of the GBRMPA's research priorities, members were advised that while the GBRMP Act and regulations provide the GBRMPA with a mandate to undertake research, research and monitoring programs are delivered through outsourcing. In discussion, the following comments were noted:

- Research priorities were a communication tool, to provide researchers and funding bodies with a clear indication of research requirements and where funding should best be directed.
- There is a range of strategies, including a partnership approach through sitting on various boards, matching funds, etc. The value of the relationship between the GBRMPA and CRC Reef was acknowledged; the interaction with researchers was important and has been very productive.

#### MONITORING PROGRAMS IN THE GBRMP

Members were updated on the role of monitoring in managing the GBRMP. In discussion, the following comments were noted:

- The GBRMPA is taking on a mediation role in terms of quality assurance in the monitoring process. Many people think that there should be more community monitoring done because it is normally undertaken by volunteers; however, there are costs involved in providing these volunteers with the appropriate training, normally provided by scientists and/or researchers. Successful programs require a large amount of training and maintenance for the delivery of useful information and engagement of the community, and realistic consideration should be given in terms of costs and benefits. In terms of community involvement, when appropriate, a promotional campaign for television would go a long way in helping to build awareness of the issues (e.g., a segment on water quality issues at the end of the local weather segment).
- While acknowledging the development of a framework for the community monitoring program, it was noted that there were also some big challenges to be addressed in terms of the process coming together.

#### REEF WATER QUALITY COMMUNITY MONITORING PROGRAM

Members were updated on the Marine Monitoring Program, a component of the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, and the opportunities for community involvement in the program. In discussion, the following comments were noted:

- Mud crabs had been chosen as indicator species because of tests carried out on bioaccumulation, as well as the species' availability and responsiveness to concentrations of pollutants.
- Although the data collection and database will be managed by a contractor, the GBRMPA is keen to ensure that the community has ownership of the data. While the reporting process was still being worked out, there would be regular reporting back through community groups. A communication strategy was also being developed.
- While most of the sampling will occur close to shore, as that is where it is expected the biggest effects will be seen, some water samples will be taken off-shore and on some reefs.

#### ARTIFICIAL REEFS – UPDATE

Members were advised that there were no formal applications for artificial reefs in the GBRMP under consideration at this stage, and that the guidelines were being finalised. For artificial reefs, the effects of introducing a structure, and the objectives in terms of managing the GBRMP would need to be considered in relation to any application to install an artificial reef.

Members were updated on the CRC Reef Research Centre's review on the effectiveness of artificial reefs in achieving their objective. As a result of the diversity of views expressed by members, a suite of issues emerged for the GBRMPA to address, one of which was the need for proponents of artificial reefs to articulate their objectives. Members agreed on the need for a communication strategy to be developed, in relation to community engagement. Further suggestions included developing some brief information sheets based on the CRC Reef report.

#### QUEENSLAND BOATING AND FISHERIES PATROL (QB&FP) – UPDATE

Members were updated on compliance issues being addressed by the QB&FP. The new provisions of the reef plan had generally been well received. Offences within the GBRMP are prosecuted through the Federal Department of Public Prosecutions.

#### QUEENSLAND FISHERIES IN THE GBRMP

Members were updated on issues being addressed by the QDPI&F, including:

- State government currently assessing the Queensland Seafood Industry Association's recent decision not to accept changes to Turtle Extraction Devices proposed by the USA.
- Subject to State government approvals, a draft filleting policy should be released for stakeholder comment in July 2005. Holders of current filleting permits have been issued new permits until 31 December 2005 to allow for the draft policy to be finalised.
- The Minister currently is considering options available to progress management arrangements for east coast sharks.
- The Minister has flagged support for a general marine Regulatory Impact Statement for 2005, providing the proposal has the support of all stakeholders.

#### GBRMP AQUACULTURE REGULATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE AQUACULTURE POLICY

Members were updated on the management of land-based aquaculture adjacent to the GBRMP. In discussion, the following comments were noted:

- The issue of discharge restrictions would be addressed through the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan. Both State and Commonwealth legislation applied, depending on where the discharge occurs.
- Newer facilities may now be required to have a protocol in terms of site remediation/rehabilitation under the new Environmental Protection Agency regulations.
- Need to action the development of policy on in-park aquaculture.

#### DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE – UPDATE

In terms of the strategic assessment of fisheries management arrangements under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, it was noted that the new deadline for the completion of all assessments was 1 December 2006.

DEH also endorsed the retention of a trawl effort cap in the WHA.

#### NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is proposed for 22 and 23 September 2005.

It was noted that the current term of the RACs will cease on 23 February 2006.

#### CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr David Bateman .....	Recreational Fishing
tba .....	Qld Environmental Protection Agency
Dr Phil Cadwallader .....	GBRMPA
Mr Kevin Chard .....	Spear Fishing
Mr Colin Creighton .....	CSIRO Water for a Healthy Country
Mr Ian Cresswell .....	Dept of the Environment and Heritage
Mr James Gillespie .....	Qld Dept Primary Industries and Fisheries
Mr Cliff Greenhalgh .....	Commercial Fishing
Mr Bob Grimley .....	Qld Boating and Fisheries Patrol
Mr Ray Joyce .....	Charter Fishing
tba .....	Conservation
Mr John Olsen .....	Commercial Fishing
Mr Chris Roberts .....	Indigenous Community
Mr Lyle Squire .....	Commercial Dive-based Fishing
Ms Diane Tarte .....	Independent Chairperson
Dr David Williams .....	Scientific Community