

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.

FISHERIES REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FRAC)

8th Meeting

25 and 26 March 2003 – Townsville

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

REPRESENTATIVE AREAS PROGRAM (RAP): UPDATE

Members were briefed on the first Community Participation phase, and preparations for the second Community Participation phase of the RAP. There is a variety of mediums being used to inform and educate stakeholders and the community, including a Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP) wide communication strategy of generic communication messages, Reef Watch, Reef Guardians, Reef Ed and Reef Champions.

Members were advised that examples of all bioregions will be protected in marine national park zones. Green zone changes will be numbered; and the maps and zoning plan will include a schedule providing the longitude and latitude details. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) has liaised with other agencies, such as the Queensland Fisheries Service, regarding fisheries data and how these data may be used to ensure there is minimal impact on users. The plan will be available to the community, through local councils, Post Offices, bait shops, libraries, etc. All those who made a submission will receive a map pack.

The FRAC concluded that: "Building on the excellent work done in the first Community Participation phase, the FRAC strongly recommends that the GBRMPA maintains the integrity of the process by undertaking briefings on local issues with key interest groups prior to the release of the draft zoning plan in the second Community Participation phase."

INDIGENOUS FISHING ISSUES: UPDATE

Members were briefed on the structure for land and sea management of Indigenous communities in Queensland.

They were given a background on the use of sea country by Traditional Owners. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners have rights to conduct traditional hunting and fishing activities in marine park zones, which is recognised under Australian law. They would like to have complementary terrestrial and marine zoning rules so that adjacent areas can be managed together.

In conjunction with the RAP, the traditional hunting and fishing framework has been discussed at a series of meetings and workshops with communities. Several communities within the Marine Park area already have set up their own traditional hunting management arrangement; traditional fishing areas may be a bit larger. When the draft framework (with conditions) is accepted, agreements throughout the GBRMP area can be formulated.

In discussion, the following comments were noted:

- Most Indigenous groups are driven by conservation, but want to retain their traditional hunting rights as well.
- Agencies involved in consultation and liaison with Indigenous communities should be briefed on community structures. It may lessen the confusion for Indigenous communities, if agencies were to meet with communities in groups.
- It was suggested that there may be several issues relating to fishing in green zones. While this initiative was seen as a positive step forward, there was concern that some may see traditional hunting in green zones as being a right not enjoyed by any other Australian.
- Concern was expressed that this may affect future Native Title negotiations. It was suggested that a caveat be included, indicating that "this in no way affects negotiations relating to Native Title applications".
- It was suggested that the initiative include a statement relating to the conservation of marine animals, which would provide some support in trying to get rid of poachers.

STRATEGIC POLICY FOR FISHERIES WITHIN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK

Members were reminded that the policy is being developed by the Fisheries Issues Group to ensure that all fishing in the GBR Marine Park is ecologically sustainable. After considering comments and suggestions from previous discussions, a revised draft policy was developed.

The FRAC noted:

- The draft Policy is now looking very good and will be a relevant and useful guide for managing the impacts of fishing in the GBRMP.
- The policy applies to all fishing in the Marine Park; including commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishing. It is intended to be an overarching policy.

Further revision of the draft policy will be undertaken, taking into consideration the comments made.

QUOTA MONITORING IN HARVEST FISHERIES IN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK

Members were briefed on the difficulties associated with managing quota arrangements for harvest fisheries.

In discussion, the following comments were noted:

- It was suggested that most fishers are aware of the costs involved in quota management. If approached in the right way, members of the Harvest MAC (Management Advisory Committee) indicated that their industry may be willing to contribute to the cost of employing a specific quota management officer.
- It was suggested that compliance applies to all fisheries. Whatever quota system is used, there still needs to be a well-resourced compliance system in place.
- There was concern that the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol (QBFP) does not appear to be able to prevent black marketing in far Northern Queensland. Currently, the QBFP is able to approach a showcase on public display, and ask to see the owners' tag or docket for the product; however, QBFP officers cannot enter a back storeroom of the premises without a search warrant.

Members encouraged the GBRMPA to keep the pressure on, so that management programs that can be complied with are introduced for the Marine Park.

GBRMPA's IN-PARK AQUACULTURE POSITION STATEMENT

In developing a position statement for aquaculture in the Marine Park, the GBRMPA must ensure that ecological risk is minimised. Currently, the risks posed by intensive aquaculture (cage culture) are high and unacceptable. It was noted that the position statement is yet to be endorsed by the GBRMPA's Senior Management Team.

In discussion, the following comments were noted:

- In considering the issue of aquaculture in the Marine Park, the GBRMPA needs to be aware that such activities may exclude other users from particular areas. A plan of management on the cumulative impact of aquaculture ventures may need to be considered.
- It was suggested that a statement be included to indicate that "dumping of anything in the GBRMP is

unacceptable". Also, a statement "recognising an area of economical opportunity" could be included.

- It was suggested that there needs to be some differentiation of activities in terms of space allocation; e.g., oyster farming and harvesting. Most aquaculture activities need access to sheltered waters.
- There was concern regarding the impact of escapees; it seems there is a significant trend for such escapees to appear in wild fisheries around Australia's coastline.
- There was particular concern regarding intensive aquaculture; large numbers of animals in a closed environment could lead to introduced diseases running rampant.
- It was noted that feeding fish meal in intensive aquaculture is a major worldwide concern. The cost of feeding the animals on natural resources may exceed the profit gain, which does not seem to make much business or ecological sense.
- A national Indigenous aquaculture strategy was developed a few years ago. Care needs to be taken to explain to Indigenous communities the complexities of translocation and stocking. Communities would be advised to consider more viable economic enterprises.
- It was reiterated that the risks posed by intensive aquaculture are high. Although this paper does not close the door on intensive aquaculture in the Marine Park, it is likely that a proponent seeking a permit at this time would be unsuccessful. However, if technology improves to the extent that the risks are mitigated, then it may become a possibility.
- It was suggested that the wording within the statement may be made a little stronger. There needs to be a clear definition of what the GBRMPA regards as an aquaculture activity.

Members endorsed the general direction of the position statement. The position statement will be submitted to the GBRMPA's Senior Management Team for consideration.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is proposed for June 2003.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr David Bateman	Recreational Fishing
Dr Phil Cadwallader	GBRMPA
Mr Colin Creighton	Water Quality and Coastal Issues
Mr Ian Cresswell	Environment Australia
Mr James Gillespie	Queensland Fisheries Service
Mr Cliff Greenhalgh	Commercial Fishing
Mr Ray Joyce	Charter Boats
Ms Rosemary Lea	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
Ms Margaret Moore	Conservation
Mr John Olsen	Commercial Fishing
Mr Chris Roberts	Indigenous Community
Mr Lyle Squire	Commercial Harvest Fishing
Mr Rod Supple	Fisheries Enforcement and Compliance
Ms Diane Tarte (Chairperson)	Environment
Dr David Williams	Scientific Community