



From the Deck

From the Director's desk

2008 is the International Year of the Reef. This worldwide campaign is aimed at raising awareness about the value and importance of coral reefs and threats to their sustainability, and to motivate people to take action to protect them. You can participate in the International Year of the Reef by promoting the Great Barrier Reef as not only the largest coral reef in the world but most importantly one of the healthiest.

Along the Great Barrier Reef coast this wet season has been a tough one with storms and flooding resulting in significant losses to both infrastructure and business activity in the past weeks. The Whitsundays experienced losses to charter bareboat and recreational vessels with salvage efforts still underway.

Adopting "greener" technologies and forward-looking business planning are ways to ensure that the tourism industry and the reef remain resilient. The healthier the state of the reefs the better able they are to withstand natural occurrences as well as human-induced impacts such as climate change. I encourage you to make individual and business decisions that reduce the impacts of climate change and its effects on the reef including educating and encouraging your guests to do the same.

On the staff front our Director Lisha Mulqueeny and her husband Scott are now proud parents of a baby boy, born in January. Lisha is now on maternity leave until July. In her absence, the role of Director is being shared between myself (from January until the end of March) and Lorelle Schluter, who will be Acting Director until Lisha's return.

We welcome Judy Hassall and Jill Brown to our team until the end of June. Judy will oversee a number of projects including dedicated use moorings and the EMC database and Jill will be dedicated to working on climate change specific projects.

Chris Briggs
A/Director Tourism and Recreation



Switch your power off for the Earth!
29 March 2008
8pm – 9pm

Show the world it is possible to take action on global warming. Register your business at www.earthhour.org

Please let GBRMPA know if you plan to take part on 47500700



High standard operators get ahead

Since its inception the High Standard Tourism Program has attracted nearly half of the industry market. The EcoCertification program offers good marketing tools presenting a point of difference to the discerning and now more environmentally aware tourist.

Operating to a high standard can bring obvious benefits for your business, your clients, your community, and of course, for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

What are the benefits of being recognised as a High Standard Operator?

- You can apply for a 15 year permit
- The GBRMPA promotes your operation at international trade shows, such as the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE)
- The GBRMPA encourages uptake of high standard operation stories by the media and travel industry promotions, such as *Qantas Inflight* magazine

- You are featured on the GBRMPA web site as part of the page: *How to choose a high standard tour*
- You receive a framed certificate recognising your operation as a High Standard Operation.

If you want to be part of the GBRMPA's High Standard Tourism Program and are willing to be independently certified with Ecotourism Australia, then contact Ben Palmer on (07) 4750 0729 or email tourec@gbrmpa.gov.au.



Sharks – worth more alive than dead!

If you think that sharks are more valuable to the regional economy being served up in fish and chip shops than when swimming freely in the deep blue, then think again.

Preliminary research released recently



by the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF) estimates that seeing sharks is a highly valued experience for divers, contributing up to \$1,375 per diver to the tourism industry. Other iconic species are turtles (sightings are valued up to \$1,360) and big fish such as Maori wrasses and potato cods (up to \$1,354).

More work is needed to refine these estimates, but it is clear that iconic species can bring significant economic benefits to the region by simply being seen there.

"It is the presence of these species that attracts visitors and makes the Great Barrier Reef special", says Col McKenzie, Board Member of the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO).

"Tourists related the presence of these species to the health and environmental quality of the Great Barrier Reef," adds lead researcher, Dr Alastair Birtles, from James Cook University.

If you would like to find out more contact Dr Natalie Stoeckl on Natalie.stoeckl@jcu.edu.au.

Watch out for your mooring!

If your mooring is not permitted, or does not comply with the GBRMPA's policy on moorings, you need to do something about it now!

The GBRMPA and Queensland Parks and Wildlife (QPW) have a moorings compliance strategy in place in the Marine Park, and mooring owners who do not comply with the legal requirements may face a range of

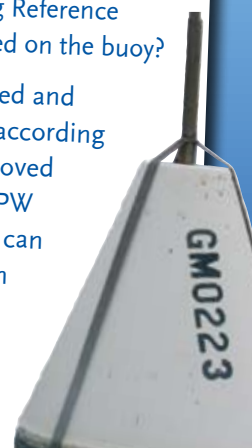
penalties from an infringement notice, to a revocation of their permit, through to prosecution.

Some of the islands and reefs already inspected include Dent, Hamilton, South Molle Islands and Bait, Hardy and Knuckle Reefs in the Whitsunday region. There are plans for further mooring checks throughout the year.

If you answer no to any of the mooring test questions, contact Anne Caillaud from the Tourism and Recreation Group on (07) 4750 0861, or email: anne.caillaud@gbrmpa.gov.au.

Take this moorings compliance test:

- ☒ Do you have a permit from the GBRMPA for each mooring installed?
- ☒ Is the correct Mooring Reference Number clearly marked on the buoy?
- ☒ Is the mooring installed and maintained annually according to the engineer - approved design provided to QPW or the GBRMPA? You can be asked to provide an approved compliance certificate to back this up!





East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Fishery Review

They may have been around for 400 million years, survived major world-shaping events and outlived the dinosaurs, but today 20 per cent of shark species are threatened with extinction worldwide.

In the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage Area, sharks are targeted as part of the Queensland Government's East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Fishery, one of the State's largest commercial fisheries.

The Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (QDPI&F) is in charge of managing this fishery.

The public comment period on proposed future management of the fishery closed on 17 March 2008.

The implementation of a fishery management plan is welcomed, however, the GBRMPA is concerned proposed arrangements do not establish a sufficiently forward-looking management framework for this fishery to protect against the risks to sharks and other species such as dugong.

We will be working with other Australian Government agencies and the Queensland Government to refine and improve the management of this fishery.



INTERP SNIPPET Hoons vs home bodies

Two types of dugongs have been described:

Hoons – that rove and travel long distances to feed,

Home bodies – that stay in the same area.



Compliance matters

Offences reported between 1 October 2007 and 31 December 2007

Offence	Far Northern	Cairns/ Cooktown	Townsville/ Whitsunday	Mackay/ Capricorn	TOTAL
Breach Permit Condition	0	0	7	0	7
Foreign Fishing Vessels	2	0	0	0	2
Illegal Discharge	0	4	4	2	10
Illegal Fishing (Commercial)	10	12	3	9	34
Illegal Fishing (Recreational)	5	30	27	23	85
POM Offences	0	6	11	0	17
Unpermitted Purpose	4	11	6	3	24
Other	2	8	28	2	40
State Offences	4	4	10	20	38
TOTAL	27	75	96	59	257

Become a BleachWatch champion!

Marine Park tourism staff are in a prime position to notice signs of coral bleaching at their regularly visited sites, and to report this valuable information to the GBRMPA.

In some instances these signs can be difficult to interpret. How can your crew be sure they are witnessing, and reporting, a bleaching event?

Simply register to be part of the GBRMPA's BleachWatch Program,

and the GBRMPA's Climate Change Group will help you by providing staff training and information on regional bleaching trends.

Call (07) 4750 0783 or email: bleachwatch@gbmpa.gov.au.



Research aids better Whitsunday islands management

Queensland Parks and Wildlife (QPW) is working with *Focus on Research*, a research consulting firm, at some of the busiest sites in the Whitsunday region (including Whitehaven Beach, Tongue and Nara Inlets, Black Island and Dugong Inlet-Sawmill Bay) to survey visitors about their experiences and needs.

The research will help the QPW understand how visitors use these

sites and how satisfied they are with the current visitor facilities such as tracks and signage. The survey results will help ensure visitor expectations are met as the QPW continues to improve management on the Whitsunday islands.

Staff and volunteers from *Focus on Research* will be handing out surveys to visitors and tour guests in January, April and September 2008. Please show your support for this initiative if your guests are approached! Contact Amanda Delaforce from QPW on (07) 4936 0119 for further information.

Going Green

Contributed by Alan Wallish, Passions of Paradise (Cairns region)

Passions of Paradise has always taken a proactive approach to carbon-minimisation. One major initiative is painting the hulls with a smooth two-pack paint finish and then cleaning them instead of using anti-foul.

As Managing Director, Alan Wallish, explains, "cleaning the hulls using a hydraulic sweep means the hulls are always fast and slick

which ensures the quickest possible travelling times. No poisonous toxins are leached onto the reef and being a sailing catamaran, we don't need large diesel engines, just an efficient and clean hull design."

On top of these hands-on measures, Passions of Paradise is running an on-board awareness program on shark conservation, in association with the Oceania Chondrichthyan Society (OCS).

Are you doing something innovative to make your operation more green? We'd love to hear from you! Please email: tourec@gbmpa.gov.au.



High standard operators

Townsville's Sunsea Cruises recognises that a healthy marine environment is what makes their business tick, and it was a natural progression to gain ECO Certification for their reef operation.

Chris Morris of Sunsea Cruises says that accreditation "put a stronger focus on how we interpret and educate our customers on the marine environment".

The process of certification was "absolutely worth it" as it was an opportunity for the business to continually improve performance to industry best practice.

An extensive sales mission to Europe also revealed that ECO Certification was a major selling point.

"Travellers of today are more environmentally aware and sensitive and are looking for products...that are more environmentally in tune," Chris said.

To join the ranks of High Standard Tourism Operators contact the Tourism and Recreation Group on (07) 4750 0775.



BULLETIN BOARD

- The crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS) Control Program finishes this month. Over 102,000 COTS have been removed from over 160 sites on 65 individual reefs since 2002.
- The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is now called Queensland Parks and Wildlife.
- The Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference will be held in Townsville in March 2009. This conference will be an excellent forum for those involved in Indigenous tourism to meet and form new partnerships. For further details contact: waitoc@westernaustralia.com.



- Congratulations to Quicksilver for winning the prestigious 2007 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards (QATA) under the Major Tour & Transport category.
- Did you know that you are required to record each location that you visit in the Marine Park on your EMC logbook? Most locations have a reef name or identification number, however, if you cannot find these, GPS locations are acceptable. You can find an index of reef names and identification numbers at: www.gbrmpa.gov.au/onboard/home.
- Around 250 top-level tourism industry representatives and media will converge on North Queensland in May when the United Kingdom's national tourism promotion board VisitBritain holds its Asia-Pacific region annual event in Port Douglas. For information go to: www.cairnsconventionbureau.com.au.

- Your local GBRMPA representatives from the Community Partnerships Group are here to help you! Pop by your local office and get to know the team.
- Did you know one of the MTSRF's many programs monitors patterns of reef tourism, focusing on markets, activities and experiences. You can become involved in this research and participate in regional workshops by contacting Dr Alexandra Coghlan at: Alexandra.coghlan@jcu.edu.au.

Would you like to receive this newsletter electronically and make it easier to share this information with your staff?

Please provide your details to Karen Stephen on (07) 4750 0775 or email: tourec@gbmpa.gov.au.

Your contributions, ideas and feedback are welcome. Contact Karen Stephen in GBRMPA's Tourism and Recreation Group on (07) 4750 0775 or email: tourec@gbmpa.gov.au.

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