



From the Deck

DECEMBER 2008
NEWSLETTER - 27

GBRMPA roundup

Welcome to the first new look e-edition of *From the Deck*.

In 2008 the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) took further steps to ensure tourism in the Marine Park is sustainable. This was done in a partnership with the Marine Park tourism industry.

Our continuing commitment to work in a sustainable way has included:

- piloting Ecotourism Australia's Climate Action Certification Program
- trialling the Emissions Calculator to help operators reduce their carbon footprint
- expanding the Sightings Network
- new moorings compliance work along the coast.

A *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008* was introduced into parliament

in the middle of the year. The Bill was debated in the Senate in November where an amendment was made that provides for a tourism representative to be included on the GBRMPA Board. The amendment read, "at least one member must have knowledge of or experience in the tourism industry associated with the Marine Park".

The Bill was given Royal Assent on 25 November 2008 and its provisions are likely to take place in 2009.

The restructuring of the GBRMPA was finalised in November. As was reported in the last edition Andrew Skeat is the General Manager of our branch, Marine Park Management, which includes Field Management, Regional Engagement and Planning, and Environmental Assessment and Management.

Christina Sinnemann joined the Tourism and Recreation Section, in the role of

Climate Change Manager. The GBRMPA looks forward to welcoming back Lisha Mulqueeny as Director of Tourism and Recreation on 2 January.

We wish you all a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Take
action on
climate change!**



The Climate Action Certification Program is a new certification scheme that recognises tourism operators' efforts to reduce carbon emissions and helps businesses plan for climate change into the future.

Launched by Ecotourism Australia at the Conference on Green Travel, Climate Change and Ecotourism in November, the program was jointly funded by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the South Australian Tourism Commission.

Con't on page 2.



Take action on climate change!

Con't from page 1.

The program can be undertaken as a stand-alone certification process, or if operators are already EcoCertified, they only need to complete the additional work sections. The logo illustrated here will be awarded to an Advanced EcoCertified operator who achieved the Climate Action Business level under the Climate Action Certification Program.

Three levels of certification are available: Climate Action Business, Climate Action Innovator and Climate Action Leader, reflecting the performance of the operator in a number of climate change areas such as emission reduction. Fifteen Great Barrier Reef tourism operators trialed the program and eight operators have achieved certification so far:

- Big Cat Green Island Reef Cruises - Leader
- Kiana Sail and Dive - Innovator
- Magnetic Island Sea Kayaks - Business

- Maxiaction/ Ragamuffin - Business
- Ocean Rafting - Innovator
- Quicksilver - Innovator
- Southern Cross Sailing Adventures - Business
- Tall Ship Adventures - Business
- Undersea Explorer - Business

Interested in becoming Climate Action Certified? Visit Ecotourism Australia's website www.ecotourism.org.au/climate_action.asp or email admin@ecotourism.org.au.



Kim Thomas from Big Cat Green Island Reef Cruises receiving his certification.



Reef Rescue Package rolls out

The Great Barrier Reef will benefit from water quality improvements and reduced run-off with the allocation of \$23 million to farmers, natural resource management bodies, coastal catchment groups and research providers through the Reef Rescue Package.



"The Rudd Labor Government has set a clear target of reducing nutrient and chemical discharge from land to the Reef by 25 per cent by 2010," Australian Government Environment Minister Peter Garrett said.

For more information contact our Coastal Ecosystem and Water Quality section on (07) 4750 0700.



Superyacht web pages

New web pages have been created describing how private and commercial superyachts are managed in the Marine Park. The pages provide a 'one-stop' guide for superyacht owners and skippers, explaining where and how to access the Marine Park.

The superyacht webpages are accessible from the GBRMPA's website (for private use) www.gbrmpa.gov.au and the Onboard website (for commercial use) www.gbrmpa.gov.au/onboard.

Don't forget to BleachWatch this summer

Summer is here and regular visitors to the reef can play an important part in monitoring coral bleaching by participating in the BleachWatch Program!

BleachWatch is part of our early warning system that helps to detect the onset of coral bleaching and

provides valuable information about the extent and severity of a bleaching event. It's easy to help! It only requires 10 minutes per week to complete a BleachWatch form.

Want to participate in BleachWatch? Contact the BleachWatch coordinator for further information and to receive your BleachWatch kit by emailing bleachwatch@gbrmpa.gov.au or phoning (07) 4750 0700.

A birds' eye view of Michaelmas Cay

Tropical coastal birds such as pelicans, boobies and herons are suffering a global decline. It is important to keep an eye on their populations, as they are a good indicator of the health of the environment, being amongst the highest order predators in the food chain.

The GBRMPA and the Environmental Protection Agency have developed

a Coastal Bird Monitoring Survey which includes monthly bird counts at Michaelmas Cay. These surveys could not happen, however, without great support from Ocean Spirit Cruises, who regularly transfer Marine Park staff to this important breeding site.

Results of the monitoring program have already helped adjust management actions to minimise visitor impacts on ground-nesting terns.

To help with other bird surveys, contact Malcolm.Turner@gbrmpa.gov.au.

Moorings permit update!

To assist in the management of private moorings in the Marine Park, mooring permittees will be required to provide an approved drawing, compliance certificate, mooring reference number and location for each mooring when renewing or transferring their mooring permit. This requirement will come into force on 1 February 2009.

For more information, contact the Environmental Assessment and Management Section on (07) 4750 0700.

Compliance matters

Offences reported between 1 July and 30 September 2008

Offence	Far Northern	Cairns/ Cooktown	Townsville/ Whitsunday	Mackay/ Capricorn	TOTAL
Breach permit condition	0	1	4	2	7
Foreign Fishing vessel	0	0	0	0	0
Illegal Discharge	0	0	0	1	1
Illegal Fishing (commercial)	1	2	0	8	11
Illegal Fishing (recreational)	0	14	46	13	73
Illegal take of vulnerable species	0	0	0	6	6
POM offences	0	1	7	0	8
Unpermitted purposes *	1	3	4	0	8
Moorings **	0	27	16	20	63
Other ***	0	2	3	2	7
State offences	0	4	35	25	64
TOTAL	2	54	115	77	248

* Unpermitted purpose includes unpermitted operations, entering SRZ

** Moorings include unpermitted moorings/Mooring Reference Numbers not displayed

*** Other includes damage to reef/swimming with cetaceans/historic shipwreck act

Low Island gets low on carbon

Low Island is now one of the only islands in the world to be over 95% powered by renewable energies.

The GBRMPA's Commonwealth Islands Program helped the island deliver on the triple bottom line through:

- **Solar panels:** the island moved from 100% fossil fuel supply to 97% renewable supply, through solar panels and recycled bio-diesel

generators. The remaining 3% is gas used for cooking.

- **Water tanks:** enough were installed to ensure the island and its residents are provided with adequate rainwater during the drier months.
- **Upgrade of the sewerage treatment plant** to reduce its energy requirements.
- The involvement of **local suppliers**, with the double benefit of using local knowledge of tropical environments, and building capacity to deliver future sustainability

outcomes in the Great Barrier Reef and its communities.

Lessons learned from Low Island's journey towards sustainability are now being used on other Commonwealth GBR islands such as Lady Elliott. Tourism operators are encouraged to follow Low Island's sustainable example – it also all makes great financial sense!

To find out more contact Kathleen Swalling, Manager Commonwealth Island Program, on (07) 4750 0782 or email kathleen.swalling@gbbrmpa.gov.au.



Sharks in pink, green and blue

New research results show that shark numbers in "blue" Habitat Protection Zones are heavily depleted compared to numbers at more protected reefs in "green" Marine National Park and "pink" Preservation Zones.

Results also revealed densities of whitetip and grey reef sharks were twice as abundant in pink zones as in green zones.

These results stress the need for effective compliance in green zones, as sharks are particularly vulnerable to low levels of illegal fishing due to their conservative life-history characteristics (e.g. slow growth and reproduction rates).

You can help compliance by submitting an Eyes and Ears incident report form whenever you spot someone fishing in a green zone. For more information on these results visit our website www.gbbrmpa.gov.au.

Going Green

Reef cruise operator Quicksilver Cruises is making a substantial investment in terms of sustainable practices. Its flagship 45m catamaran Quicksilver VIII was recently refitted with four MTU 2000 series diesel engines, providing a 40% weight reduction from the previous engines and an impressive reduction of carbon emissions by 20%.

Tony Baker, Managing Director of the Quicksilver Group, said: "At a cost of \$3 million, the refit and new engines were a considerable investment. With significant advances in technology, the choice of these engines ensures we will continue to deliver the 'best practice' we strive for as a company. They will also allow us to reduce our carbon emissions by about 20%, reinforcing our commitment to the environment and sustainability".

Quickly 8, as the vessel is affectionately known, operates a daily outer reef cruise to the magnificent Agincourt Ribbon Reef.

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



High standard operators

The GBRMPA's High Standard Tourism Program has just turned four! Congratulations to those pioneer operators who have proudly maintained their EcoCertification status throughout those 4 years:

- ✓ Coral Princess Cruises
- ✓ Fantasea Cruises
- ✓ Great Adventure Cruises
- ✓ Haba Dive
- ✓ Low Isles Sailaway
- ✓ Magnetic Island Sea Kayaking
- ✓ Poseidon Outer Reef Cruises
- ✓ Quicksilver Connections
- ✓ Sea Kayaking Whitsundays
- ✓ Tall Ship Adventures
- ✓ Undersea Explorer Adventure Diving and Research Expedition
- ✓ Wavelength Reef Charters

A further 31 tourism operators have joined the ranks of GBRMPA high standard operations since the program commenced. The full list of high standard operations can be found on the GBRMPA website by following the "How to find a high standard tour" link under Tourism and Recreation.

If you would like more information about the high standard program, and the benefits it can bring to your business, contact Ben Palmer on (07) 4750 0729 or email ben.palmer@gbbrmpa.gov.au.

Get to know your new POM!

Significant changes have been made to both the Cairns Area and Whitsunday Plans of Management (POMs) and all permittees will receive a special bulletin explaining the amendments in December.

Key changes include the exclusion of children under 4 from group size limits, weather mooring opportunities in Cairns, and new limits in Setting 5 areas in the Whitsundays.

Further information is available at www.gbbrmpa.gov.au.

BULLETIN BOARD

- The recently updated Code of Practice for dwarf minke whale interactions is now available online at www.gbbrmpa.gov.au, under Latest news/updates.
- The Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee (TRRAC) held its 28th meeting in Townsville in November.
- Thanks to all who provided emails to keep receiving *From the Deck*. If you haven't done so yet, please email tourec@gbbrmpa.gov.au with your preferred email address.
- The Environmental Protection Agency – Rockhampton is

inviting submissions on a draft management plan for the Byfield area. Submissions can be sent by e-mail to parkplans@epa.qld.gov.au before Saturday 31 January 2009.

- Four new no anchoring areas have now been installed in Keppel Bay. For more information visit www.gbbrmpa.gov.au/keppelbay.
- Reef HQ Aquarium is looking for sponsorship to establish a Turtle Hospital. To make a contribution email Fred.Nucifora@gbbrmpa.gov.au or call (07) 4750 0881.



Your contributions, ideas and feedback are welcome. Please email the GBRMPA at: tourec@gbbrmpa.gov.au

© Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority 2008