

SeaRead

Marine Park news from catchment to coral



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

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Minister releases new report into community consultation processes

A new study released by the Minister for the Environment, Senator Ian Campbell, into aspects of the GBRMPA's recent community consultation processes, by the firm Futureye, noted a range of positive and negative outcomes and also indicated some areas for improvement.

"The Futureye Report noted many strengths but there is always room for improvement, particularly developing practical, local solutions to the challenges facing the Great Barrier Reef coastal communities," Sen Campbell said.

Recent and ongoing research has shown that the majority of the Great Barrier Reef coastal communities were happy with the results. However, some offered a range of criticisms. Futureye was selected by the GBRMPA to carry out the study on those who were dissatisfied with the outcomes of the Representative Areas Program.

Futureye made a number of recommendations but the key outcome for GBRMPA staff will be moves to reduce "silo" thinking, which means that groups and individuals need to view the Marine Park more holistically and not just from a narrow area like fishing or recreation.

Acting GBRMPA Chairman, John Tanzer said it was great to see the hard work of the Authority positively recognised through a range of national and international awards but GBRMPA needed to look into the negative aspects of the consultation process to improve.

"The report shows us that most people view the Marine Park from a variety of angles. For those of us who work on specific areas of management it's easy to not be able to see broader than our own experiences," he said.

The GBRMPA will take a number of steps to implement the recommendations. Most notably will be the establishment of regional offices, which will allow closer input from communities to the Authority.

"A network of regional liaison staff will ensure that the GBRMPA is better able to understand the issues of coastal communities and to develop plans and policies which more accurately reflect the needs of those communities in the longer term," Mr Tanzer said.

The remainder of 2005 will see the recommendations implemented with an even better system for community input and interaction in place.

"This study was undertaken so that we could improve on those areas where there was some community dissatisfaction. Research shows that the community believed that we were already performing at a competent level and the national and international awards we have received attest to that. We've learned a lot and can now look forward to the new challenges ahead," he said.

The complete Futureye report can be found at: www.gbrmpa.gov.au

STOP PRESS

GBRMPA receives peak national Award for Planning

Federal Minister for Local Government, Jim Lloyd at the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) national awards ceremony in Melbourne recently awarded the GBRMPA its peak national award for planning, **The Planning Minister's Award** on behalf of all the Planning Ministers in Australia. The GBRMPA was also awarded **The Community Based Planning Award** for excellence in achieving community goals. In determining both awards, the PIA national judges recognised the enormous and complex issues involved in planning the Great Barrier Reef, and noted, "This Planning Minister's Award recognises the international importance of this project, both in scale and the excellence of the process."

Message from the chairman

the Hon Virginia Chadwick



Welcome to the fourth edition of Searead. It's been very encouraging that we've had many positive messages of support and interest in this new publication.

Easily the most significant story since the last edition has been the public release by the Minister for Environment of the Futureye Report. The report is discussed in detail in this issue but it has already had a substantial impact on the future direction of the GBRMPA's community engagement activities.

The highlight of these changes is undoubtedly the creation of a number of new regional offices for the Authority, allowing us to more closely listen to and understand the issues affecting the Great Barrier Reef-coast communities.

At the time of this going to print, we have already commenced the job of finding the right staff to put into these important community roles. We have also commenced some internal changes within the Authority allowing a realignment of duties and responsibilities to ensure the organisation is well placed to listen to community concerns in any future discussions on reef management.

As these new initiatives are finalised in the coming months, we'll ensure that all of our stakeholders are kept well informed of any changes and of course we welcome your input at any time.

Regards

Virginia Chadwick
Chairman, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

END

Incentives program helps local farmers to do their bit

Improving the health of our waterways to benefit the regional community as well as helping to improve the quality of water reaching the Reef is the purpose of the FNQ NRM Ltd (the regional natural resource management body for the wet tropics) and National Landcare Program Water Quality Incentives Scheme.

Lorens Riera and Miles Darveniza are just two of the many local primary producers who have benefited from Round 1 of this incentives program. Each was awarded \$5000 to make changes on their farms that would help improve water quality.

South Johnstone cane farmer Lorens Riera will use the grant money to revegetate his property's creek banks. The \$5000 will allow Lorens to plant around 1850 native trees along 600m of the banks of Scheu Creek, which runs through his property.

The new trees along the creek's banks will act as a filter to help soak up fertiliser nutrients that may wash from the property's cane paddocks, before they reach the creek.

Miles Darveniza of South Johnstone also benefited from the scheme. He received \$5000 which will go towards the modification of fertiliser equipment.

He is going to install the DICKEY-john Land Manager Precision Spreader Control System into his tractor, which allows him to adjust and maintain the appropriate rate of fertiliser being applied to the crop.

"I think FNQ NRM Ltd are really helping growers to make a difference on their farms through these types of incentive schemes," said Miles.



Lorens regularly measures water quality in the creek on his property

With this new technology, Miles can customise the amount of fertiliser he uses to suit the needs of the different soil types on the farm. This will save the farm money by reducing over fertilising, which in return will reduce the amount of nutrient runoff into the creek, as well as reducing the time spent in his tractor.

Contributed by Michaela Groenestyn, Communication Officer, FNQ NRM Ltd

Editor's Note: The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is delighted with Loren Riera's and Miles Darveniza's work towards improving the quality of the water entering the Reef. The GBRMPA is keen to support local on-ground initiatives and applauds the work of the FNQ NRM and National Landcare Program Water Quality Incentives Scheme.

END

Communities clean up local **waterways** and **marine** environments

Townsville and Thuringowa's creeks, waterways and marine environments got an overhaul as part of this year's annual Clean Up Australia Day.

Creek to Coral Coordinator, DJ Mackenzie said the Creek to Coral initiative, a combined Townsville/ Thuringowa and State Government initiative, was about highlighting the 'Our Waterways, Our Responsibility' message.

"Clean Up Australia Day provided an opportunity for the community to get behind the Creek to Coral initiative and make a difference to the health of our local waterways and marine environments," he said.

"Many schools across the city have also joined forces with the initiative and participated in removing litter from drains, parks and school grounds as part of Schools Clean Up day."

Over 4000 volunteers cleaned up more than 50 sites across the twin cities during the Clean Up Australia campaign joining over 99,000 other volunteers throughout Queensland to clean up their local areas.



The Picnic Bay Clean Up Team

In the Great Barrier Reef region 200 sites were cleaned up during Clean Up Australia Day, 96 schools participated in Schools Clean Up Day and 10 businesses participated in Business Clean Up Day.

Hugh Yorkston, Director of the Water Quality and Coastal Development Group at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority said it is important to keep creeks and waterways litter and rubbish free otherwise that litter can find its way into the Great Barrier Reef.

"Congratulations to all the volunteers along the Great Barrier Reef coast who participated in Clean Up Australia Day. More and more people are beginning to understand that the health of local waterways is paramount to the health of the Great Barrier Reef," Hugh said.



Picnic Bay photo: Volunteers from the North Queensland Underwater Explorers Club cleaned up underwater at the Picnic Bay Jetty collecting a trailer load of rubbish. Amongst the beer bottles and building materials they found a sleeping bag, drain pipe and a park bench!

END

GBRMPA staff join team to assess **tsunami** reef damage

Staff from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority recently joined teams in the Maldives and Thailand to assess the impact of the December 26 tsunami on coral reefs and baitfish populations.

David Wachenfeld, Director of the Science, Technology and Information Group, was part of a nine person Australian team that joined with scientists from the Maldivian Marine Research Centre in a 17 day mission.

"Our report indicates that the tsunami had minimal impact on the Maldives coral reefs," David said.

"This is great news for the Maldivian people who rely heavily on tourism for their income."

"It is also good news for the fishing industry with relatively little change in fishing conditions."

One hundred and twenty four reef sites were surveyed with additional information from 65 tourism dive sites.

"The Maldives experienced what was basically a very fast rise in sea levels which seems to have caused less damage to surrounding coral reefs than what a large breaking wave might have."

"The Maldives is still recovering from a bad coral bleaching event in 1998. This experience clearly demonstrates the importance of protecting the resilience of coral reefs by protecting biodiversity, and having sustainable fisheries and good water quality."

The report was jointly commissioned by the Australian and Maldivian Governments and included representatives from AusAID, CSIRO, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the GBRMPA and James Cook University.

John Baldwin from the GBRMPA took part in the joint team sent to Thailand to assess the impacts the tsunami had on Thai reefs. This report is due to be released shortly.



Overall, the tsunami had very little impact on the marine environment of the Maldives. However, in some places very fast flowing water excavated significant holes in the reef (above) and in others mounds of rubble were deposited (right).



END

Seabed safari reaches 1000th site

The Great Barrier Reef Seabed Biodiversity Project recently passed a milestone, when the Australian Institute of Marine Science research vessel RV Lady Basten returned from her fifth voyage of discovery to map seabed life in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Seven scientists from the Australian Institute of Marine Science, CRC Reef Research Centre, CSIRO and Queensland Museum, along with the seven ship's crew, spent the last month surveying more than 200 sites between Lizard Island and Torres Strait.

"We have now surveyed 1000 sites between Cape York and Gladstone," said the Project Leader Dr Roland Pitcher from CSIRO Marine.

"We plan one more voyage at the end of this year to the far south of the Reef, to complete the mapping of seafloor life and habitats up to 100 metres deep throughout the Marine Park."

The team used two types of video sampling to build up a picture of life on the seabed. A half million dollar remote controlled video camera was towed over the seabed to record the bottom type and visible life. Scientists also used Baited Remote Underwater Video Stations to attract and count large fish not seen by the towed video.

In some areas, the team pulled a small sled along the seafloor to collect samples of seabed plants and animals.

"This method identifies many more species than can be seen with the cameras, especially small and camouflaged animals," said Chris Bartlett from the Queensland Museum.

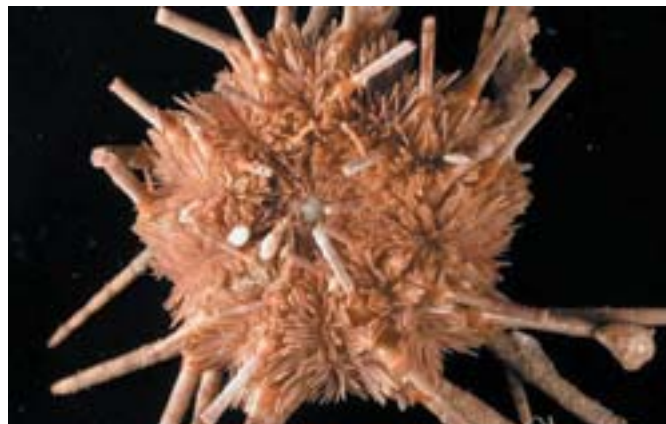
"This trip has uncovered an unusual crab which has never before been recorded in Australian waters. Scientists are making detailed examinations of what we have collected, and we expect to find many more new species."

Information gathered by the Great Barrier Reef Seabed Biodiversity Project will be analysed meticulously over the next two years, and used to create maps of seabed habitats, plants and animals.

"This information will be used to assist future planning in the Marine Park, including management for sustainable fisheries," said Australian Institute of Marine Science scientist and CRC Reef Program Leader Dr Peter Doherty.

The Great Barrier Reef Seabed Biodiversity Project is funded by CRC Reef, the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, and the National Oceans Office. It is co-funded by the Australian Institute of Marine Science, CSIRO, Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, and the Queensland Museum.

Written by Chloe Lucas, CRC Reef



An urchin discovered on the trip. Photo: CSIRO



Turbinaria Cup Coral. Photo: CSIRO

END

Volunteers trained to clean up oiled wildlife

The Day-to-Day Management Coordination Unit (DDMCU) recently held training for 20 far north Queensland volunteers on Oiled Wildlife Response.

Training Coordinator, Marg Crane said an oil incident in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park has the potential to significantly impact seabird populations.

"Between 1.4 and 1.7 million seabirds breed in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area each year. By training volunteers to clean up wildlife that has been oiled the community is better equipped to help if there is an incident," Marg said.

The group learnt about the effects of oil on aquatic birds, search and collection and treatment as well as housing, feeding and releasing.

"The training is great for both Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority as community involvement means there are more skilled people who can cover a greater area in case such an incident occurs," she said.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Officer, Nickie Stewart coordinated and chose the volunteers who are all wildlife carers, vets or wildlife area coordinators from Cooktown, the Daintree, Atherton Tablelands, Cairns, Innisfail and Mission Beach.



Volunteers learning to assess birds

Cairns Beach Resort at Holloways Beach kindly offered free accommodation to those volunteers from out of the Cairns area.

END

Watch out for whales!



A humpback whale

Humpback whales have started their annual migration to the warm waters of the Great Barrier Reef.

With humpback whale populations increasing at about 10% per year you are now more likely to encounter whales when on the water between May and September.

Dr Kirstin Dobbs, Species Conservation Manager at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, said that since commercial whaling ceased in Australia in 1962, humpback whale numbers have steadily increased.

"You are most likely to encounter either minke whales in the Cairns region or humpback whales reef-wide," Kirstin said.

"Humpback whales rely on the Great Barrier Reef as a safe place to breed," she said.

"It is important that people go slow, watch out for these majestic animals and adhere to approach distances when boating or fishing on the Reef."

"While whales can be social animals and may approach boats or people in the water it is important for both the whales and your own safety that you do not approach them. An adult humpback whale is between 12 – 15 metres long and can weigh up to 40 tonne."

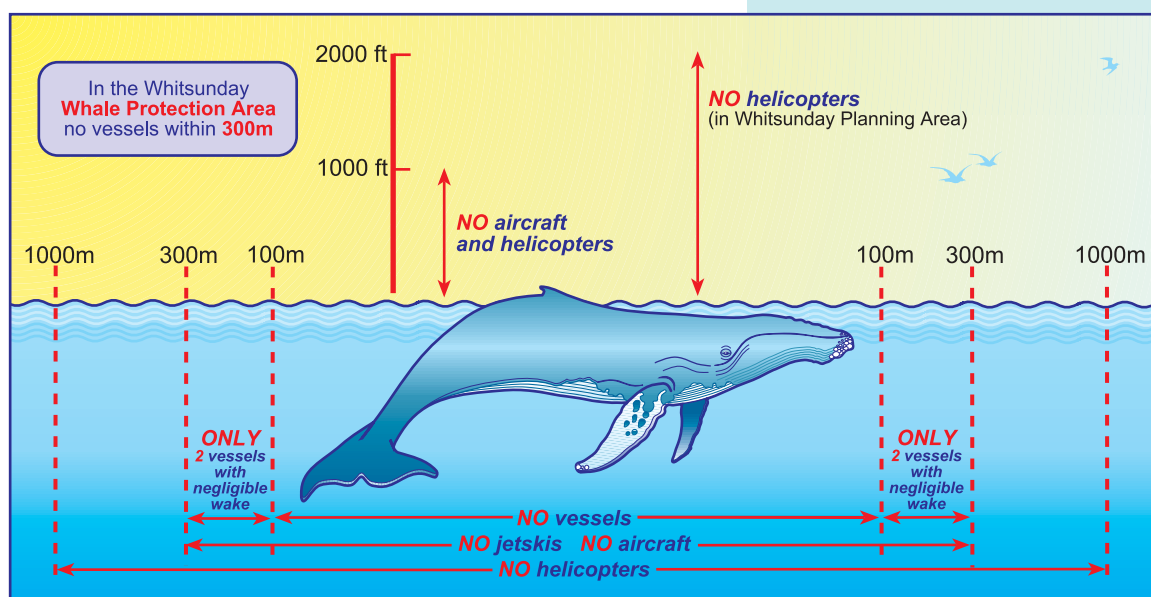
If in the vicinity of whales, vessels must stay at least 100 metres away from the animal and 300 metres away in the Whitsunday Whale Protection Area. In all areas jetskis must stay at least 300 metres away from the animal.

All whale species are protected in Australian waters.

Best Environmental Practices – Whales

There are a number of simple practices you should follow when boating on the Great Barrier Reef during whale season. These are:

- ✓ Be alert and watch for whales at all times
- ✓ Keep a lookout and avoid disturbance to mother whales and their calves, especially from May to September
- ✓ Reduce your vessel speed to minimise the risk of collision in areas where whales have been sighted
- ✓ Abide by approach restrictions
- ✓ Be quiet when you are around a whale
- ✓ Do not get in the water if you see a whale. If you are already in the water do not disturb, chase or block the path of a whale and if possible, return to your vessel
- ✓ If there is a sudden change in whale behaviour, move away immediately
- ✓ Report sick, injured, stranded or dead whales to the EPA Hotline 1300 130 372.



END



Northern Territory students doing their bit to look after it

Although situated in a remote part of the Northern Territory, Borroloola Community Education Centre, has come on board as a Reef Guardian School and the students are keen to do their bit to look after the Reef.

The first to join the program from the Northern Territory, Borroloola has a population of around 1000 people and is situated about 200 km from the Queensland border, and about 1000 km southeast of Darwin.

The town is situated on the McArthur River that runs directly into the ocean where there is a reef situated off the coast nearby. Fishing in the river and along the coast are important to locals and there is a major tourist industry in the area.



Students Abigail Farlam, Shenika Bonney, Jude Bradbury and Shawnee Anderson in front of their Seaweed display

Borroloola Community Education Centre caters for about 150 students from preschool to year 12 and Reef Guardian coordinating teacher Kym Teufel says recycling will be their focus for the year.

"Just some of the projects planned include an extensive art program using recycled materials to design murals about the reef, working with the local shops to sell calico bags, working with the local council to increase community awareness about recycling and developing a recycling centre at the school," Kym said.

"We have already begun improving the school grounds by planting trees, and participating in Schools Clean Up Day. The students also participated in Seaweed by learning about sharks and making masks and displays in their classrooms," she said.

Borroloola Community Education Centre has recently been nominated as the pilot Sustainable School for the Central Storm Cluster. This initiative will focus on waste, energy and water resources as well as improving school grounds. The Centre plans to incorporate the Reef Guardian program into the Sustainable Schools initiative across the whole school.

END

Sharks the focus for Seaweed 2005



Sharks were the focus at Reef HQ aquarium recently with the addition of educational activities designed to help students celebrate Seaweed 2005 - 'SOS Save our Sharks.'

A Tiger Shark

Andrew Chin, Project Manager with the GBRMPA's Research and Monitoring Coordination Unit, said while many people feared sharks they are an important part of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem.

"As a top predator, they remove the sick, the injured and the old, and help keep animal populations in check. For millions of years, sharks have been on the top of the food chain, but this is now changing due to human activity. The removal of millions of tonnes of sharks each year is upsetting the balance in some parts of the ocean," he said.

As part of Seaweed 2005 Reef HQ's education programs provided students with opportunities to develop an appreciation for the importance of sharks and rays ecologically, economically and culturally.

Fred Nucifora, Reef HQ Education Manager, said the "Shark Discovery Trail" at Reef HQ let students and visitors uncover information about shark behaviour, habitat, teeth and coloration.

"We also facilitated live webcasts to over ninety schools nationally where students were given the opportunity to log in and experience a scuba dive on the reef with sharks and rays," Fred said.

"Students could view live video footage and hear the scuba diver giving a presentation on the importance of these magnificent animals."

A webquest was also developed to help educate students both nationally and internationally about sharks and rays. Webquests are online learning challenges that students can participate in from all around the world. As a part of the "Save Our Sharks" webquest students were challenged to develop their own shark portfolio or webpage.

END

Woongarra State School goes *Totally Wild*

The students at Woongarra State School had a taste of fame recently when Network Ten's Totally Wild visited their school to do a story on their work as a Reef Guardian School.

Woongarra State School is located in Bundaberg close to the Woongarra Marine Park, at the most southern end of the Great Barrier Reef, an area renowned for the hundred's of marine turtles that lay their eggs there.

The students investigated the problems turtles face when it comes to waste, especially plastic bags, and decided to do their bit to help protect the turtles.

The Totally Wild film crew followed the students for a day as they collected rubbish from the beach, printed calico bags and t-shirts with 'Save Our Turtle' messages and sold the calico bags to raise money to assist turtle research.

Woongarra State School principal, Bernie Walsh said the students have achieved more than they ever imagined and have been very passionate about this project.

"It was great to have the students efforts recognised. They were all very excited to have the Totally Wild crew at their school filming what they have been doing to help the turtles," Mr Walsh said.

The money students raised through the sale of calico bags and collecting aluminium cans went towards purchasing turtle taggers and a digital camera to give to the Mon Repos Turtle Rookery to assist with turtle research.

A component of the Reef Guardian School program is 'Education of your community', through the Totally Wild program the students will potentially reach over 400,000 viewers.



Totally Wild crew film Woongarra State School's achievements



Students and the Totally Wild crew

END

More Reef Guardian School Plaque Presentations



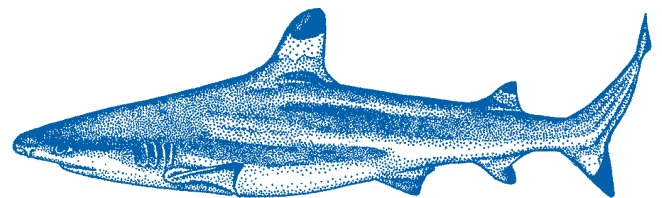
As part of the Reef Guardian Schools program Toowong College has started its own Environment Committee made up of three teachers and seven students. The student members have undertaken the roles of leaders in the implementation of the Reef Guardian Program and this year will be focussing on the health of the local waterways surrounding the school. From left are Ossie Da Silva, Tyahnie Wilson, Tony Duong, Iman Al Masroori, Mutsee Sinprasertporn, Pese Pese.

END

Save our Sharks Webquest

Why not take the challenge yourself, dive in and have a go. Take on and complete the challenges offered throughout the "**Save Our Sharks**" webquest to learn more about these fascinating creatures.

http://www.reefed.edu.au/students/reef_quest/save_our_sharks.html



END

What's new on

www.reefed.edu.au

educate to keep it great

- 2005 Reef Beat – River to Reef
- New schools and activities for Reef Guardian Schools Program

Exploring artificial reefs

Artificial reef structures in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park have been in the news of late with a number of groups discussing potential artificial reef programs focused on diving and fishing activities.

Because of this interest in artificial reefs, the GBRMPA is anticipating future applications for proposed artificial reef programs and is working on assessing all research and monitoring information available on artificial reefs.

An information paper that will provide details on the environmental issues surrounding artificial reefs is to be published shortly.

The GBRMPA will assess any applications for artificial reefs like all proposals for placing structures in the Marine Park, taking into account issues including the environmental impacts as well as impacts on the community and users of the Marine Park.

Dr Adam Smith, Manager of the Environmental Impact Management Team at the GBRMPA said any artificial reef structure, whether for diving or fishing must meet the highest environmental and social standards to ensure there are no negative effects on the Reef or peoples use of the Reef.

For more information visit the latest news section of the GBRMPA website www.gbrmpa.gov.au.



END

Name changes within GBRMPA!

Several recent changes within the GBRMPA have seen a new name for one of the four critical issues group and a relocation of the unit that deals with Indigenous issues.

The Indigenous Partnerships Liaison Unit (known as IPLU) has been relocated into what was previously called the Conservation, Biodiversity & World Heritage critical issue group. The new name of the critical issue group is now Conservation, Heritage and Indigenous Partnerships, which reflects IPLU joining the group, and a clear recognition of the importance of Indigenous issues.

This change will assist in closer integration between the Species Conservation Unit and IPLU, as they work jointly on the development of Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreements.

END

Providing Expertise

The Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee (TRRAC) recently held its eighteenth meeting. Made up of a range of experts from various fields relevant to tourism and recreation, the Committee provides valuable advice to the GBRMPA.

As part of the meeting held on Hamilton Island in the Whitsundays, members participated in an informative field trip around the area hosted by David Hutchen, Managing Director of Fantasea Cruises.

Ms Lisha Mulqueeny, Director of Tourism and Recreation at the GBRMPA said the field trip around the Whitsundays was very valuable in providing members with an opportunity to see first hand some of the site issues for that area.

The Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee is one of four advisory committees to the GBRMPA, each providing advice on one of the Marine Park's major issues: Tourism and Recreation, Water Quality and Coastal Development, Fisheries and Conservation, Heritage and Indigenous Partnerships.

Each committee is designed to work closely with staff of the relevant critical issue group to ensure that policy development and strategic direction is developed in consultation.

The TRRAC provides comprehensive advice based on industry and recreational use knowledge of the Marine Park.

"This is especially valuable for the GBRMPA programs such as moorings management, improved compliance, encouraging best practice tourism and the management of tourism permits," Lisha said.

The Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee has 20 members comprising nine marine tourism operators plus others with knowledge of the tourism industry, recreational and commercial use and indigenous communities, along with representatives of relevant government bodies.

For further information about the committee contact the GBRMPA on 07 4750 0700 or e-mail tourec@gbrrmpa.gov.au.



Members of the Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee and GBRMPA staff during their field trip around the Whitsundays.

END

Balancing act in Princess Charlotte Bay



Aerial image of Princess Charlotte Bay

Princess Charlotte Bay on eastern Cape York is recognised as an important area for dugong and inshore dolphins. It is also an important area for the commercial inshore net fishery that targets fish such as barramundi and tropical salmon.

Government officers, commercial fishermen and representatives from the Cairns and Cooktown communities worked together to develop appropriate netting practices in the Bay for the protection of dugong and dolphin and their habitats.

Dr Phil Cadwallader, Director of Fisheries at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority said that detailed data about dugong numbers in Princess Charlotte Bay, provided by scientists from James Cook University and information on seasonal movements and abundance of dugong in Princess Charlotte Bay, provided by experienced commercial fishermen were critical in discussions to finalise management arrangements.

Parts of Princess Charlotte Bay are zoned as Special Management Areas by the Australian and Queensland Government. Any commercial netting (use of large-mesh nets) in the Special Management Areas is required to operate under a Marine Parks permit.

"Fisherman who are able to satisfy netting history criteria are eligible for the grant of such a permit," Dr Cadwallader said.

The 2005 barramundi fishing season on the east coast of Queensland opened on 1 February. At the start of the season, a limited number of permits was issued to enable long-time commercial fishermen to continue netting in parts of Princess Charlotte Bay.

Ryan Donnelly, Executive Officer at Ecofish said the outcome was good for the few commercial fishermen that had the required netting history in Princess Charlotte Bay as they now have exclusive netting access below high water and a permit that adds value to their commercial fishing license.

Dr Cadwallader said the netting restrictions detailed on the permits reduce the threats of fishing nets to dugong and inshore dolphins.

Renowned expert on dugong, Professor Helene Marsh, said the outcome increases the protection of dugong and inshore dolphins in Princess Charlotte Bay and represents a reasonable compromise to a complex management issue.

"The foundations for this balanced management outcome began several years ago and the outcome would not have been possible without the assistance and encouragement from representatives of the Cairns and Cooktown communities and local commercial fishermen," Dr Cadwallader said.

END

Mangrove's Muddy Makeover

The Mangrove Exhibit at Townsville's Reef HQ has undergone a major facelift adding new life to the aquarium's entrance.

The artificial mangroves, near Reef HQ's entrance, were closed to the public for just over a week as aquarists and exhibit officers replaced much of the synthetic exhibit materials with genuine articles to make way for an increased variety of animals that can be housed in the exhibit.

Visitor Services Manager, Mark Jones, said all exhibits at Reef HQ are designed to be as close to their natural equivalent as possible.

"By undertaking this refurbishment aquarists are now able to introduce a greater variety of mangrove creatures which can burrow into the thick mud," he said.

To date the Mangrove Exhibit has been good at highlighting important marine species such as barramundi, trevally and mangrove jack, which live in these types of environments. However, mangroves perform a number of incredibly important roles. These include maintaining water quality as mangrove roots act as a filter that traps sediments.

The habitat also acts as a nursery ground for the young of many commercial species who spend part of their life breeding in shore before moving out to the Reef. The refurbished exhibit aims to highlight these issues for visitors to the region.

"We want visitors to realise that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is not just about corals on the outer reef. All the habitats are interlinked and what happens in one area can have consequences for other habitats," Mark said.

Mangrove forests occupy an area of 2,070km² along the Queensland coast and form a critical link between the land and the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem.



Revamped mangrove exhibit at ReefHQ

END

Monitoring programs to help determine the state of our Reef

The GBRMPA is working with governments, scientists, industry groups and the community to monitor the current state and changes in the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

Manager of Research and Monitoring Coordination, Dr Laurence McCook said the GBRMPA's monitoring programs would not just provide data about the state of the Great Barrier Reef, but would also help the GBRMPA to work with communities to improve its overall health.

"We want Queensland coastal communities to get involved in monitoring within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park to encourage those who use and rely on the Reef to help monitor and assess its condition," Laurence said.

"Many community groups and individuals are already participating in various Reef monitoring programs by organising and coordinating monitoring activities and by promoting practices that help to protect the Reef."

Laurence said the monitoring programs for the Great Barrier Reef are long-term, so the GBRMPA will work with governments, industry groups, scientists and communities over many years to monitor the state of the Reef and improve the practices that affect it.

"Many locals and industry partners have a fantastic knowledge of their local area of reef, so by working with communities we can get a much better picture of the state of the Reef in regional areas."

Some existing monitoring programs that involve industry and communities include the BleachWatch and Eye-On-the-Reef programs, in which tourism operators and other community members provide up to date reports on the condition of their "patch" of Reef.

"Over the recent summer the Climate Change Response Program received invaluable reports on the extent of coral bleaching at a much larger range of reefs than ever before and much more than they could possibly survey themselves," Laurence said.

The GBRMPA is implementing two new major monitoring initiatives in 2005 - the water quality and ecosystem monitoring program and the rezoning monitoring program. These programs will be supported by existing community programs such as Seagrass Watch.

The water quality and ecosystem monitoring program was developed under the Australian and Queensland Government's joint Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (Reef Plan), which aims to halt and reverse the decline in water quality entering the Great Barrier Reef within ten years.

The rezoning monitoring program will bring together existing and new projects that look at the effects of the new Zoning Plan, both in reef and inter-reefal areas. A major focus will be understanding the benefits of the Zoning Plan on fish stocks within Green Zones and throughout the Marine Park.

For more information about how you can be involved, contact the GBRMPA on 07 4750 0700.

END

GBRMPA Scientist on top of the World

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority scientist, Dr Laurence McCook, has recently been honoured as the only Australian, this year, to win a prestigious Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation.

The Pew Institute for Ocean Science, based in Miami Florida USA, invites 50 leaders worldwide from marine science and conservation to apply for a (US)\$150,000 Fellowship to conduct a three-year conservation project. Dr McCook was one of only five applicants to receive the Fellowship.

Dr. Ellen Pikitch, Executive Director of the Pew Institute for Ocean Science and a Pew Fellow herself, said the five Pew Fellows chosen this year were remarkable individuals.

"The Fellows join a network that has been 15 years in the making. These are true 'heroes of the sea,' dedicated to conserving and restoring the largest and most biologically rich place on earth," Dr Pikitch said.

As GBRMPA Manager of Research and Monitoring Coordination, Dr McCook will expand his expertise in coral reef degradation and explore how managers can support reef resilience in the face of damaging climate change. Climate change is the main cause of mass bleaching of corals.

GBRMPA chair, Virginia Chadwick said Dr McCook's contribution was very valuable to the ongoing protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

"We are very fortunate to have on our staff a highly dedicated team of marine scientists and researchers. It's fantastic that Dr McCook has received this international recognition. I'm sure his endeavours will be put to good use not only for the Authority but for all those who care for and cherish the Reef," Mrs Chadwick said.

The Pew Fellows Program in Marine Conservation strives to undertake, sponsor, and promote world-class scientific activity aimed at protecting the world's oceans and the species that inhabit them.



2005 Pew Fellow in Marine Conservation, Dr Laurence McCook

END

Creature Feature

Razorfish Family Centriscidae



- Razorfish swim in an unusual vertical posture. They are only ever horizontal when feeding.
- This vertical position allows them to hide amongst the spines of sea urchins or between branches of coral.
- The razorfish body is extremely thin, almost transparent and enclosed in heavy plates.
- They are closely related to seahorses and pipefish.
- Their swim bladder can easily be seen if a light is shone behind them.

END

MARINE PARK PARTNERSHIPS



Profile of Coastwatch Operations Supervisor, Cairns **Keven Gray**

Keven is the Supervisor for Coastwatch Operations in Cairns and has been in the position for the last 12 months following some 18 years working as a Customs Officer.

Keven plans and coordinates maritime surveillance for all Queensland waters with the exception of Torres Strait. A major part of his job involves liaising between client agencies as Coastwatch complete surveillance tasks for a number of different Commonwealth agencies.

His aim is to provide quality service to client agencies and ensure that all clients are aware of the information currently available courtesy of Coastwatch.

Coming from a more traditional Customs work area, Keven enjoys the variety provided by his work at Coastwatch. His tasks can include trying to locate a suspect vessel somewhere off the east coast to coordinating forward air support for patrol boats that are boarding foreign fishing vessels. While many of these types of activities are office based he often gets on operational flights.

Coastwatch flights cover all Queensland waters and deployments go up and down the coast ranging from 1 to 8 days at a time.

Having lived in the Cairns region for the last 10 years Keven says the environment is pretty hard not to love.

"Not many other areas in Australia have access to so many pristine natural features. My house looks out onto a rainforest covered mountain. Ten minutes down the road is a palm lined tropical beach. Then I can hop on a boat and be on a World Heritage listed coral reef. Pretty hard to go past that as a living environment," he said.

As a keen recreational fisher, diver and snorkeller Keven can often be seen out enjoying the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.



The photo of 'Keven' his colleagues sent in!

END

International Marine Protected Areas Congress – a global first.

The first International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC1) will be held in Geelong, Victoria from 23- 27 October this year. The GBRMPA is co-hosting the congress, along with the World Commission on Protected Areas and Parks Victoria.

The congress will bring together marine protected area managers, planners, scientists and policy makers to discuss important issues about the planning, management and wise use of marine protected areas.

Jon Day, Director of Conservation, Heritage and Indigenous Partnerships at the GBRMPA and Program Coordinator for the congress, said IMPAC1 was shaping up to be a world-class event, with expressions of interest from people in over 60 countries.

"Some 620 abstracts from around the world have been submitted for consideration, and the final program of around 170 formal presentations will be of a very high quality," Jon said.

The congress will provide participants with the opportunity to exchange ideas and lessons learnt on the establishment and management of marine protected areas. It is hoped that IMPAC1 will become the first of a series of international conferences on improving MPA planning and management.

"A number of well known experts involved in marine protected areas have been invited as keynote speakers including Achim Steiner, Director General of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and Sylvia Earle, world famous oceanographer and marine biologist," said Jon.

In addition, a number of pre and post congress technical tours are on offer, including tours to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Ningaloo Reef, Heron Island and two tours offering participants a chance to see the different aspects of Victoria's marine environment.

For more information, or to register online go to www.impacongress.org.

END

Doing your bit to look after it!

When diving or snorkelling in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park you can do your bit to look after it by:

- ➡ Never leaning on, holding onto or touching any part of the reef. Avoiding hovering over or leaning on corals when taking underwater photographs
- ➡ Securing all gear (eg. secondary regulators, gauges etc) so that it doesn't dangle and catch on the reef
- ➡ Being properly weighted before diving near a reef. Practicing buoyancy over sandy patched and testing buoyancy whenever using new equipment
- ➡ Not blocking the path of any marine animals or causing them to change direction. Not chasing or attempting to ride or grab free-swimming animals
- ➡ Not making sudden or loud noises underwater.



END

Community Links



A profile of **Bill Shannon** Chairman Mission Beach LMAC

Bill Shannon is the Chairman of the Mission Beach Local Marine Advisory Committee. Bill has been the chairman of the Committee for two years having been a member representing Tully Sugar Limited for two, three-year terms previously.

Bill was born and educated in Sydney. He completed an Economics degree at the University of Sydney before running a successful business as a Chartered Accountant.

Bill has lived in Mission Beach for eight years and is an active member of the Mission Beach community not only representing the community on the Local Marine Advisory Committee but as the Chairman of the Mission Beach Community Association. He is also Director, Industry for FNQ NRM Ltd (the regional natural resource management body for the wet tropics).

He is interested in all aspects of the preservation of the Marine Park and believes the Local Marine Advisory Committees are very important in linking the community on a local level with the GBRMPA.

One of his goals when he commenced as the Chairman was to re-engage all sections of the community following the Mission Beach Trawl closure.

While Bill has been the Chairman, the committee has been actively involved in the Reef Guardian Schools Program and water quality aspects of the Greater Tully-Murray Floodplain Renewal Project.

They have also started a seabed watch program to identify and monitor types of seagrass and growth in the area.

In partnership with his wife, Bill operates a cattle breeding stud and commercial cattle property and cane farm. He loves most sports and spends his leisure time watching and referring rugby, horse riding, scuba diving and fishing.

END

Calendar of events

26 April 2005

Mackay LMAC meeting

27 April 2005

Gladstone LMAC meeting

28 April 2005

Capricorn Coast LMAC meeting

5 May 2005

Bundaberg LMAC meeting

11 May 2005

Mission Beach LMAC meeting

1 June 2005

Whitsunday Local LMAC meeting

5 June 2005

World Environment Day

8 June 2005

World Oceans Day

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