

DISCUSSION GROUP RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Each group was asked to discuss the following questions and record their results. The following is a summation of the results of the discussion groups.

Question One:

Is it agreed that cleaning and rehabilitation of oiled seabirds is a worthwhile and valuable exercise, and that a contingency plan should be developed for the Great Barrier Reef Region?

Response:

All groups were in agreement that a contingency plan should be established; however, three groups raised issues of wildlife management ethics. It was suggested by one group that selection of birds for treatment be based on species importance and the severity of injury. Two groups suggested that only birds with a greater chance of recovery be treated. If selection of birds is based on species it was debated as to whether preference should be given to rare and threatened species or to those that are of ecological importance to the oiled habitat. Three groups stressed the need to realise that other animals aside from birds may be affected by oil and need to be included in the contingency plan. Examples are dolphins, dugongs and turtles.

Four groups questioned the effectiveness of oiled bird treatment. It was mentioned by six groups that further studies must be made into the survival rate of treated birds. One group claimed that treating oiled birds may be ecologically ineffective except with regards to critical species.

Questions were raised with regards to the practicality of such a plan being deployed in the Great Barrier Reef Region. One group identified possible logistical difficulties stemming from the huge geographical area.

A variety of other factors were mentioned as the cause of some uncertainty towards the realisation of a contingency plan. Areas of concern were funding, methods and technology. However, these issues were touched on lightly and were pursued in more detail during the course of the workshop.

It became apparent to four of the groups that the overriding factor for the justification of this plan is political and public pressure. The groups which discussed the ineffectiveness of treating oiled birds all agreed that it may still be necessary to satisfy the demands of the public. One group suggested that the contingency plan be designed for accessible high profile areas only.

It is interesting to note that of the six groups involved there was a diversified response to the question at hand. One group agreed with the need for a plan without any qualifications. Another group focused solely on the ethical factors involved. Of the four groups remaining, each offered varying arguments against the creation of such a plan but recognised the demands of the public.

Question Two:

Which agency/organisation should have primary responsibility for developing and implementing such a plan?

Response:

Five groups suggested that the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage (QDEH) was the most appropriate organisation to take primary responsibility. QDEH was

selected because it is represented regionally along the coast and is the most appropriately trained, experienced, and equipped body in Queensland for this role. It was also mentioned that there should be support from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. One group suggested that the responsibility of developing and implementing an oiled wildlife contingency plan lies with the groups involved in the National Plan to Combat Pollution of the Sea by Oil.

Question Three:

What other agencies/organisations should be involved and what should their respective roles be?

Response:

GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AUTHORITY: GBRMPA was mentioned twice as a source of advice, planning, and research. One group suggested the Authority provide active participants and another group looked to the Authority for funding.

INDUSTRY: All groups stressed the need to involve the oil and shipping industries. Three groups held them responsible for funding while the others were unspecific as to what the responsibilities of industry entailed.

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCE: AIMS was mentioned as a source of scientific information and equipment by two groups.

UNIVERSITIES: Two groups identified universities as being able to offer input into the proposed plan. However, the description of their role was vague. It was suggested by another group that universities could be of some help in monitoring the birds after their release.

ZOOS: Two groups recommended zoos as a source of expertise, manpower, treatment facilities, and resources.

ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS: All groups stated the need for the involvement of the RSPCA, mainly as an adviser on issues such as euthanasia and rehabilitation but also as a provider of resources and manpower.

VETERINARIANS: Four groups felt that local veterinarians would be essential in areas such as treatment and rehabilitation as well as general advisers.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE: The SES was selected by three groups as a supplier of equipment. One group suggested that the SES would be helpful with regards to logistical support and transport.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Local governments were nominated by three groups to provide resources and to establish local treatment stations. Other groups mentioned local governments as playing a role in a contingency plan but did not specify what this entailed.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE: One group nominated the Department of Defence as a supplier of resources and manpower.

COMMUNITY WILDLIFE CARE GROUPS: These organisations were mentioned by all discussion groups involved. It was determined that they could offer assistance in areas such as resources, advice and manpower.

WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND: It was suggested by one group that this organisation could aid in the capture and treatment of injured birds.

QUEENSLAND BOATING AND FISHERIES PATROL: The **QB&FP** was listed by two groups as a source of transport and of resources.

OTHERS: There were a variety of other agencies and organisations mentioned during the workshop. Reef tourist operators, conservation groups, commercial fishermen, the media, scouts, guides and schools were all nominated to take on a variety of different responsibilities such as aiding with the capture and treatment of the oiled birds and providing resources such as transportation.

Question Four:

Briefly, what would be an appropriate organisational framework, including funding and ongoing training arrangements, for such a plan?

Response:

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority was nominated by four groups to fund the plan. Two groups proposed a joint effort between State and Federal government. Three groups targeted oil and shipping industries as a funding source.

A variety of different solutions were offered with regards to ongoing training. Two groups mentioned that QDEH should maintain a fully trained staff who could handle any situation pertaining to oiled seabirds. This staff would also be responsible for coordinating the training of others. One discussion group suggested training sessions be offered once a year in coastal centres. These sessions are to be run by QDEH and volunteers. Another group recommended training courses being offered through **TAFE**. Also mentioned as a source for education was the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

Information sources was another issue tackled by two of the discussion groups. They recommended that a manual be put together to provide volunteers with necessary information. It was stressed that training aids such as manuals, videos, and courses be combined with other existing oil spill response courses offered by both State and Federal government.

Environmental groups and other agencies were nominated to aid in the training of community groups. Furthermore they could play a role in the hands-on training of volunteers at the site of an oil spill.

It was agreed that the main objective of ongoing training is to update and make readily available, through literature and workshops, the information to carry out a contingency plan effectively.

Question Five:

In what areas of oiled **seabird** cleaning and rehabilitation is further research needed?

Response:

All groups stressed the need for monitoring the success rate of oiled **seabird** cleaning and rehabilitation. **Two** groups stressed that attention should be paid to success rates in tropical areas as most work done to date has been done in temperate regions. Also recommended was the monitoring of long-term effects on birds that have been oiled but not treated.

Five of the six participating groups stressed the need for more research on equipment and technique. Specific attention was given to the types of detergents used, their effect on Australian birds and the possibility of using salt water with the detergents.

Three groups listed determination of species priority as a crucial area. If selective treatment is to be adopted, the understanding of the ecologically important species must be more detailed. The focus varied between rare and threatened types and those species important to the afflicted areas. It was emphasised by one group that a priority list of species to be treated be established.

As mentioned previously, there was some concern demonstrated regarding the amount and quality of literature available in this field. Two participating groups identified this problem and recommended determining a central source for existing literature in order to increase public access.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. An Oiled Wildlife Contingency Plan, expanded to include all wildlife, not just birds, should be established for the Great Barrier Reef Region.
2. QDEH should have the primary responsibility for developing, implementing and maintaining the contingency plan with support coming from other bodies.
3. The scope of the contingency plan needs to be determined in order to best respond to ecological requirements and public pressure.
4. An organisational framework that includes involvement from all areas of society needs to be created.
5. The involvement of oil and shipping industries should be ensured.
6. Training programs and literature need to be updated and maintained.
7. A priority of species to be treated should be established.
8. Further research in areas such as success rates, methods, and technology is needed.