



Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

From the Deck

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NEWSLETTER - 30

GBRMPA roundup

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) has developed its *Corporate Plan 2010-2014*. The Plan sets the future direction for the GBRMPA in light of the *Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009*.



To help improve the outlook for the Great Barrier Reef the Australian Government has committed \$3.8 million over the next two years. This is in addition to an extra \$4 million over two years for Reef HQ and \$4.2 million over two years to ensure the GBRMPA can continue to meet the Government's obligations under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Act 1975*.

When the *Shen Neng 1*, a Chinese registered bulk carrier, grounded on the Douglas Shoal, just north of the Capricorn Bunker group on 3 April 2010 it immediately triggered a response under the *National Plan to Combat Pollution of the Sea by Oil and other Noxious and Hazardous Substances* and the *Queensland Coastal Contingency Action Plan*. Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) led the operational response with support from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and environmental advice and operational support from the GBRMPA and Queensland agencies.

The master and the officer-on-watch have been charged with a variety of offences which hold penalties of up to three years in prison or a \$220 000 fine.

While Douglas Shoal is only one of about 2900 coral reefs and shoals in the Great Barrier Reef, GBRMPA inspected the damage at the site and found a 2.5 kilometre stretch of coral reef and sea bed structure which was crushed and contaminated with antifouling paint. Ongoing assessment is being undertaken.

The fourth term of the Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee

(TRRAC) commenced with the 31st meeting of the Committee in Townsville. The TRRAC provides advice to the GBRMPA on the management of tourism and recreation use and includes an impressive range of expertise. During the April meeting the GBRMPA received valuable advice on topics such as recreation management, scientific information needs, updating the Responsible Reef Practices and vessel sewage management.

A list of current members is available at www.gbrmpa.gov.au, search for 'TRRAC'.

A diver inspecting reef damage caused by the *Shen Neng 1*



TOURISM CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

As promised, the nine Strategy partners have been working furiously to implement the *Great Barrier Reef Tourism Climate Change Action Strategy*. You might have heard that:

- The Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO) is running climate change risk management workshops at Airlie Beach and Cairns in July 2010 (see the 'Bulletin Board' on page 4).
 - Roy Morgan Research, on behalf of the GBRMPA, has completed the Great Barrier Reef Tourism Climate Change Survey. A big thank you to all who participated in this phone survey as it sets the baseline of operators' awareness and action on climate change. The results will be coming out soon!
 - The Queensland Tourism Industry Council participated in the Queensland Environment Minister's Forum on Reef Protection to promote the importance of responding to climate change.
 - The Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association (WCBIA) has formed the Climate Change and Sustainability Committee (CC&S) (see case study right).
 - Tourism Queensland conducted Sustainable Regions projects at Magnetic Island and Airlie Beach.
 - All partners have raised awareness of climate change and actions of operators through a range of media.
- Please email **Lorelle.Schluter@gbrrmpa.gov.au** if you have any actions, as a tourism operator, you would like to share.

CASE STUDY

Industry committed to sustainability

In the Whitsundays, the charter boat industry is showing leadership and innovation on the road towards environmental sustainability.

The WCBIA formed the Climate Change and Sustainability Committee to focus on reducing the industry's carbon footprint. For example, members of the Committee, in partnership with Meridien Marina, put in place a waste management program so that recycling is now possible at Abel Point Marina (see 'Going Green' on page 4). Education is also a key element for the Committee, who are developing education resources for charter vessels and marina interpretive signs to promote best practice principles amongst crew and tourists.

The Committee recently organised clean up events for 'Clean Marine', to remove marine debris from islands and waters of the Whitsundays. By involving the local community in their activities, community awareness is raised and the environment benefits. If you would like to receive the Committee's newsletter or hear more on their great work, email **wcbia@wcbia.com**

Environmental Management Charge update

Are you filling out your EMC logbook correctly?

The information supplied in EMC logbook returns is important to us in managing the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Please read this section carefully, just to be sure that you are doing the right thing.

Locations visited

To help you provide accurate information about the locations your operation visits, the codes and standard names for commonly visited locations are set out in the logbooks. Please double-check these to make sure you are accurately listing the locations visited, especially

as the list has been expanded in the 2010 logbooks to better identify specific sites at some locations. Contact us if you have any queries about correctly identifying the locations you visit.

Permit numbers, vessel names and VIN or BIN numbers

It is important that EMC returns correctly identify the permit number, plus the vessel or bareboat identification number (VIN or BIN) and the name of the actual vessel or aircraft.

Use of your vessels and aircraft

It is also important that you provide information on the use of each individual vessel (VIN or BIN) or aircraft you are permitted to operate. This includes advising if each one has not been used in a quarter. 'Nil Use' can simply be noted at the front of the quarterly return.



Left to right: Members are Emily Smart (Fantasea), Alison Molloy (Prosail), Jo Ladd (Tallship Adventures), Jan Claxton (Ocean Rafting), Nah Turnbull (QPWS), Rachael Bell (WCBIA) and Helen Sheehy (Southern Cross Sailing)

THE SIGHTINGS NETWORK

Did you see that?

The Sightings Network captures previously unrecorded sightings of rare and iconic marine species and other phenomena that are experienced by tourism operators daily in the Marine Park. Since its beginning in 2007, it has generated over 2500 observations from over 10 000 individuals at 340 different locations.

For the first time in the 2009 humpback whale migration season, tourism operators and crew provided accurate GPS positions and a brief behavioural description of all humpback whales that they sighted as part of the Sightings Network. The data collected last year has proved to be very valuable to managers and researchers providing a better idea of temporal and spatial distribution patterns of humpback whales in the Reef. If you would like to contribute to this year's humpback whale sightings project

or have seen something worth sharing with others please email sightings@gbmpa.gov.au.

Please remember: you must not approach closer than 100 m to a humpback whale in the Marine Park. If they have a calf or if you are in the Whitsundays, you must be 300 m away.

This image of two Humpback whales was taken by Matty Borg from Fantasea in August 2009.



Cultural connections: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the Great Barrier Reef



Did you know that there are more than 70 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owner clan groups living along the Queensland coast from eastern Torres Strait to just north of Bundaberg? Each of these groups have continuing connections with the Great Barrier Reef and hold a range of deeply valued cultural, spiritual, economic and social heritage values for their land and sea country.

The Woppaburra peoples, a clan of the Dharumbal Traditional Owner group and custodians of traditional country spanning the Keppel Islands near Yepoon, explain that: 'We have a lifelong spiritual and physical

connection to the land and sea...(and) a lifelong responsibility to our ancestors to care for land and sea country... Through countless generations, our forebears have passed down traditional knowledge of the islands and their natural resources, the seasons, the tides and ocean movements, the flora and fauna, and also what used to be here' (Quoted by the Woppaburra Traditional Owners).

Find out more about this relationship and the depth of knowledge that Traditional Owners have about their sea country by visiting: www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/indigenous_partnerships.

Compliance: your mooring matters

There have recently been a number of unpermitted or non-compliant moorings reported to the Field Management Compliance Coordination Unit which are being investigated. So remember, if you have a mooring you need a valid permit for each mooring, the mooring reference marker must be clearly marked on each buoy and the mooring must match the design of your approved drawing. Keep a copy of your latest mooring maintenance certificate ready as you can be asked to provide proof of ongoing maintenance at any time and having it available will help when renewing or transferring your permit.

Receive From the Deck electronically

Thank you to everyone who is receiving From the Deck electronically!

You are helping us respond to climate change and operate more sustainably! If you are still receiving a paper edition of *From the Deck* but would prefer an electronic copy to circulate to staff and crew, simply email us at tourec@gbmpa.gov.au with *From the Deck* in the subject heading and include your full name and organisation.

Going Green

Tall Ship Adventures is reaching new heights in sustainability...

When Jo and Warren Ladd dreamed of a sailing venture in the Whitsundays, they knew their business would be green. Jo comments "We treat the Whitsundays like our back yard and take every measure to reduce our environmental impact".

Tall Ship Adventures focuses on: water and waste management, recycling, energy efficiency and conservation. Their business initiatives include storing and treating sewerage, choosing tour locations to ensure minimal disturbance, using sail whenever possible and encouraging guests to use water and energy wisely.

A lack of local recycling facilities at the marina did not stop them in their energy efficiency quest.

"We enlisted the help of other members of the Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association and formed the Climate Change and Sustainability Committee. One of our first major action items was to bring recycling facilities to the marina and we can now recycle all our cans, bottles, cardboard and oil."

It is no surprise that Tall Ship Adventures is Eco Certified and won an Ecotourism Award.

"It certainly doesn't happen overnight," said Jo, "but the sustainability road is getting easier as more operators become involved".



Quicksilver Connections

Our profiled High Standard Operator...

Tony Baker, from Quicksilver Connections, says that formal recognition of Quicksilver's commitment to environmental sustainability was the main reason Quicksilver sought Eco Certification through Ecotourism Australia.



Tony says that whilst the process required a little time to complete, the contacts at Ecotourism Australia were extremely helpful and walked him through any issues he encountered.

Eco Certification not only helped Quicksilver Connections formalise and document some of their practices, but also provided an excellent baseline to measure continued improvements, as well as helping to create realistic performance targets for the future.

Tony believes Eco Certification delivers ongoing marketing advantage as the program continues to gain recognition both nationally and internationally. "I have always believed that the Eco Certification program was worthwhile, and I would encourage all operators to give it a go," he said.

The GBRMPA's High Standard Tourism Program recognises the Eco Certification Program at the Ecotourism and Advanced Ecotourism levels. To find out more, contact us on **(07) 4750 0868**.

CONTACT US:

Your contributions, ideas and feedback are welcome. Please call us on **(07) 4750 0775** or email **tourrec@gbmpa.gov.au**

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BULLETIN BOARD

- Have you enrolled for the **'Acclimatise your business' climate change workshops** to be held at Airlie Beach and Cairns in July 2010? For more details, please call the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators on (07) 4044 4990.
- **High Standard Operators** were showcased by the GBRMPA and its partner Ecotourism Australia at the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE 2010) in Adelaide in early June 2010.
- **Big Cat Green Island Reef Cruises** generously provided prizes for the Cairns Earth Hour film competition and the Cairns "Keep it Wild" school art competition.
- Do you have a Special Tourism Permission? **Remember to use it or lose it**, because on renewal, the GBRMPA checks that you have made 'reasonable use' (an average of 50 days per year per vessel) of these types of permits.
- Well done, over 450 **BleachWatch** reports were received last summer with mostly low level bleaching observed. For more details click on the 'Current Conditions' icon at: www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/climate_change. To join the BleachWatch program: email bleachwatch@gbmpa.gov.au.