

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are directed at the management of marine resources used by Aborigines in areas of the GBRMP adjacent to the Trust Areas. The numbers in parentheses refer to the section and page number of the report upon which the recommendations have been based.

10.1 The Authority should set up a formal consultative or coordinating committee for the consultation and direct participation of Hopevale and Lockhart River communities in the management of their marine resources, primarily dugongs, but with potential to include other species (9.1/122; 9.2.2/126; 9.3/129; 9.4/130; 9.5/131).

The committee should be set up to work within the already existent Aboriginal Community Council system, which is the major official Aboriginal decision-making body within the community. A possible committee structure and method of functioning suggested by the author is included in Appendix 3.

The establishment of such a committee should be discussed with Community Councils, to assess its feasibility.

Aboriginal communities are currently not represented on the Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee, and due to their isolation are not readily accessible to the normal public participation techniques such as television and newspapers. The proposed committee would allow Aboriginal users of the GBRMP greater input to the development and management of the Park.

The committee, if established, should not be a token gesture, it should have a key role in management of the resources they use.

It may take a number of years for the committee to become properly functional, however, by working within the familiar structure already established for Aboriginal Community Councils, a number of problems should be alleviated.

This approach is in line with the Queensland State Government's policy for increasing the level of Aboriginal participation in matters affecting Aboriginal communities.

As other management problems arise, e.g. green turtles, then the committee should be designed to be able to address those problems. If necessary, it could also be extended to include fisheries problems, in which case an observer from Queensland Fisheries (DPI) may be invited to join.

If properly established, such a committee system would permit each community to be treated on an equal level, yet maintaining the ability to adapt to the often markedly different management problems in each community.

10.2 A representative from the east coast Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal communities should be appointed to the Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee (9.1/122; 9.2/123; 9.3/129; 9.4/130; 9.5/131).

Aboriginal interests are currently not represented on the Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee. The functions of the Committee, defined in Section 21 of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act (1975) are as follows:

- (a) to furnish advice to the Minister, either of its own motion or upon request made to it by the Minister, in respect of matters relating to the operation of this Act; and

- (b) to furnish advice to the Authority in respect of matters relating to the Marine Park, including advice as to the areas that should be parts of the Marine Park, referred to it by the Authority.

The Committee membership is intended to represent a wide and varied cross-section of interests in the Great Barrier Reef. The Committee is at present the only means by which user groups have a say in the management of the GBRMP. This Report has shown that Aborigines constitute a major user group of both the Cairns and Far Northern Sections of the GBRMP. Aborigines should therefore be represented on the Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee and allowed to contribute to its stated functions.

10.3 The dugong hunting permit system be modified* as follows (9.2/123):

10.3.1 Hopevale:

- The areas presently used for hunting dugongs should be declared as 'hunting areas'. These areas should not be a 'Zone', but could be declared through the 'Areas of Periodic Restricted Use' provisions or the community permit. This declaration would serve two functions: (i) the recognition of Aboriginal dugong hunting rights for the area, and (ii) prevention of expansion of hunting into other areas, should the means become available, until the status of the dugong population is determined.

The area for Hopevale hunters should be from Nob Point in the south to Murdoch Point in the north, and east to the 10m depth contour.

- Dugong hunting should be permitted via a dugong hunting permit issued to the Council for the whole community. The permit should stress that the whole carcass should be used, and that hunting should not utilise commercial freezer boats.
- There should be no quota applied to the community.
- The closed season should be retained, however, details of its duration and timing should be discussed with the Council. There should also be provision for the Council to apply for a special permit(s) to take dugong(s) for special community occasions (e.g. dance festivals, but not weddings).
- The QNPWS should attempt to maintain catch records for the community, perhaps via the Council.
- Provision should be made for the collection of dugong skulls, or at least the tusks, with any available capture information, by QNPWS and then forwarded to appropriate scientists for analysis. A pamphlet explaining the reasons for collecting skulls or tusks, including diagrams emphasising that female as well as male tusks need to be collected, should be given to all dugong hunters in the community.
- The management plan for dugong hunting at Hopevale should be reassessed at the time of the Cairns Section Zoning Plan review.

10.3.2 Lockhart River:

- The areas presently used for hunting dugong should be declared 'hunting areas'.

The area for Lockhart River hunters should be from First Red Rocky Point in the south to Bolt Head in the north, and east to the 10m depth contour.**

* This recommendation by Marsh and myself, has already been accepted and was trialled in January 1987.

** QNPWS Officers, after consultation with Lockhart Council, have suggested Bobart Point to Mosquito Point (Fig. 7); a slightly larger area than suggested above.

- Dugong hunting should be permitted via a dugong hunting permit issued to the Council for the whole community. - No closed season should be applied at present, however this should be the first restrictive option considered if required in the future.
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- The QNPWS should attempt to maintain catch records for the community, perhaps via the Council.
- Provision should be made for the collection of dugong skulls, or at least the tusks, with any available capture information, by QNPWS and then forwarded to appropriate scientists for analysis.
- The outside take of dugong by Weipa/Bamaga Aborigines and Islanders in the Lockhart River area should also be controlled perhaps through the community permit. The hunting of dugongs by non-Lockhart Aborigines was not covered in this study. The situation may involve questions of resource ownership and the legal status to hunt (i.e. if not residents of Trust Areas).

10.4 The imposition of any inappropriate or unenforceable restrictions should be avoided (9.5/131).

For example, restrictions on the taking of female dugongs with calves, although biologically desirable, would be totally unenforceable. The main result of such a restriction would not be a reduction in the take of females with calves, but the lack of any information on their take being accessible, i.e. the non-recording of these animals being taken. They would still be taken, both deliberately and accidentally, as they are a preferred target.

10.5 GBRMPA/QNPWS should continue and expand their extension/education programmes in Aboriginal communities explaining the need for, purposes of, and effects of the Marine Park (9.1/122; 9.5/131).

10.6 The GBRMPA/QNPWS should take immediate steps to control illegal trawling activities in the Marine National Park 'A' Zone immediately north of Cape Bedford (9.1/122).

The trawlers, their perceived damage, and apparent immunity from restrictions are a sore point with Hopevale residents.

10.7 That serious consideration be given to the potential problems of implementing management of turtle hunting (9.3/129).

10.8 Aborigines should be employed as Liaison Officers and Rangers by GBRMPA/QNPWS to work in the Cairns and Far Northern Sections of the Park (9.1/122; 9.5/131).

Preferably these people should be full-time employees (e.g. as QNPWS Rangers) selected from any of the east coast Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal communities. GBRMPA could also employ Aborigines on a contract basis as Liaison Officers to work with QNPWS Rangers and Officers in Aboriginal communities. Their roles and responsibilities could involve working with the committee (10.1) as an observer/adviser. Their presence could alleviate potential cultural misunderstandings. The training of Aboriginal Rangers has been discussed in detail in Smyth, et al (1986).

10.9 Continuity of QNPWS Officers and Rangers should be maintained when working with an Aboriginal community (9.1/122; 9.5/131).

Current QNPWS Officers and Rangers working with Aboriginal communities should be allowed to develop a working relationship with communities through continuity of personnel, and by adjusting their work commitments to permit an extended stay in the community to allow them to become 'known'. One longer stay would allow better rapport to develop than a number of brief stays, although the total time in the community may be the same.

10.10 The GBRMPA should undertake to support an anthropological study, or studies, in all the Aboriginal communities adjacent to the Marine Park, aimed at determining how the Aboriginal communities perceive the GBRMP; and to provide guidelines on how best the GBRMPA/QNPWS can present their aims and aspirations to those communities, so as to prevent confrontationist situations from developing (9.1/122; 9.5/131).

This study's objectives and research design were not aimed at determining how the two Aboriginal communities perceive the GBRMP. Such a study, or studies, would be especially valuable in the other Aboriginal communities such as Palm Island and Yarrabah to avoid the problems that occurred at Hopevale. Such research could form the basis of a policy for interaction between the Authority and Aboriginal user groups of the GBRMP.

10.11 If Coastwatch flights are to be used for monitoring GBRMP permit conditions, then the Coastwatch observers should be encouraged to record the race of occupants of dinghies and runabouts in the areas adjacent to Aboriginal Trust Areas, and hunting/fishing areas (7.0/112).

Coastwatch flights are increasingly being used to monitor Marine Park usage and zone infringements in addition to safety and quarantine surveillance. If these flights are to be used to check on dugong hunting permit infringements, the Coastwatch observers should be consistent in recording the race of occupants of dinghies (and/or the presence of harpoons) in areas adjacent to Aboriginal Trust Areas and dugong hunting areas.

10.12 That future ethnobiological studies in Aboriginal communities consider adopting a research strategy concentrating on specific topics in a geographically-broad range of communities (6.0/108).

The greatest value of Aboriginal marine knowledge to biologists would be through concentrating on particular topics, acquiring comparative ethnobiological information, in conjunction with anthropologists, from a number of communities, and combining these with conventional biological research techniques. With the cooperation of anthropologists, biologists with specialised knowledge would be able to acquire considerable data within a short time period. This type of research strategy would be more productive and cost effective than generalised studies in single communities.

10.13 That a copy of this report be sent to the Hopevale and Lockhart River Community Councils for review and comments as soon as possible.

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