



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Heritage

Oceans Action Bulletin

**An Update from the Marine Division of the
Department of the Environment and Heritage**

10 February 2006

This Bulletin updates you on Australian Government activities in the marine environment. Please forward to any interested parties. For further information or to unsubscribe from this Bulletin, please email samantha.meyer@oceans.gov.au

Review of Great Barrier Reef Structural Adjustment Package

Tenders have been called to undertake a review of the structural adjustment package developed following the rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP).

The rezoning increased the area of the GBRMP closed to commercial fishing from 4 percent to 33 percent.

The Australian Government developed a structural adjustment package to assist fishermen, fishery related businesses, employees and communities impacted by the rezoning. A key objective of the package was to manage any displaced fishing effort that has unsustainable ecological or economic impacts in the most cost-effective manner. The key mechanism for achieving this goal was through a licence buyout.



The package guidelines stipulate that there be a review of the licence buyout and the Department of the Environment and Heritage invites tenders to undertake such a review, to examine whether it effectively accounted for the scale and distribution of displaced fishing effort.

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All tenders must be lodged by 2pm (AEST) on 23 February 2006, marked with the tender number 109/2005DEH and should be delivered to:

Tender Box, Department of the Environment and Heritage Reception
John Gorton Building
King Edward Terrace
PARKES ACT 2601

Tender documentation can be obtained from <http://tenders.gov.au> For more information, contact Jennifer Hoy on 02 6274 2769 or by email jennifer.hoy@deh.gov.au

Department of the Environment and Heritage – Marine Division:

Phone (03) 6221 5000 ♦ Email: office@oceans.gov.au ♦ Web: www.oceans.gov.au

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Have your say on future management of the spectacular Mermaid Reef

You are invited to provide comment on a proposal to prepare a new draft management plan for the Mermaid Reef Marine National Nature Reserve.

Mermaid Reef Marine National Nature Reserve is a Commonwealth reserve under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. It is located approximately 300 kilometres west-northwest of Broome and, along with Clerke Reef and Imperieuse Reef, forms part of a system of three reefs known as the Rowley Shoals.

The management plan in operation for this Reserve will cease to have effect on 16 May 2007.

The Department of the Environment and Heritage, on behalf of the Director of National Parks, proposes to prepare a draft of the 2007 - 2014 management plan for the Mermaid Reef Reserve, and public comment is now invited on this proposal.



Mermaid Reef © DEH

Please send comments in writing by the closing date of Thursday 9 March 2006 to:

Naomi Wolfe
Marine Protected Area Management Section
Department of the Environment and Heritage
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601
Fax: (02) 6274 1771
or Email: mpa@deh.gov.au

Further information about the Mermaid Reef Marine National Nature Reserve, including a copy of the current 2000-2007 management plan and a 'Have Your Say' brochure setting out key issues on which you may like to provide comment, is available online at <http://www.deh.gov.au/coasts/mpa/mermaid/>.

Hard copies of the above documents can also be requested from the Community Information Unit on free call 1800 803 772. For more information, contact Naomi Wolfe on 02 6274 2262.

Experts assess coral bleaching in Great Barrier Reef

Leading Australian coral reef experts have inspected coral bleaching in the southern section of the Great Barrier Reef.

A team from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has assessed corals off the Keppel Islands near Rockhampton. Experts from the University of Queensland and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service assisted with the survey.

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The team recently visited ten sites around the Keppel Islands and found that more than 75 per cent of corals were bleached at most sites. While this is certainly not as widespread or significant as the mass bleaching that occurred four years ago in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, any further increases in temperatures could lead to more bleaching throughout the reef.

When water temperature increases, corals become stressed and lose the microscopic algae that lives within their tissue, causing them to turn bright white.

A bleached coral is still alive, and close inspection can reveal the nearly transparent tissue and tentacles that cover the skeleton.

Much of the corals' energy and colour comes from the algae. If hot conditions persist, bleached corals are unable to regain their algae. This can lead to starvation and death.



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Dr Paul Marshall, Manager of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Climate Change Response Unit, said water temperatures in the southern reef had remained unusually high since early December 2005, triggering the recent coral bleaching.

"Sea temperatures increased by one to one-and-a-half degrees (celcius) above the January average causing severe patches of coral bleaching off Heron and Keppel Islands," Dr Marshall said.

Scientists also reported bleaching near Lady Elliot Island and offshore from Airlie Beach.

A Fact Sheet on coral bleaching is available from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority web site at www.gbrmpa.gov.au

Australia at forefront of environmental research

An expert reference group has been established to advise the Australian Government on the delivery of its \$100 million Commonwealth Environment and Research Facilities (CERF) programme.

Announced this month by Australian Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, the group will be chaired by WWF-Australia Chief Executive Officer Greg Bourne.

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As the Government's key environment research program, CERF is designed to encourage and assist with research into current and emerging environmental issues facing Australia, bridge knowledge gaps and contribute to the development of environmental policy.

"Through CERF, the Australian Government is supporting our scientists' world-class environmental research and enhancing collaboration across the full range of scientific disciplines," Senator Campbell said.

"With expertise in environmental research, sustainability, economics and social issues, reference group members will help maximise the CERF program and keep Australia at the forefront of sustainable environmental management."

The main roles of the reference group will be to review all CERF proposals and advise on funding priorities, potential improvements, and future program directions.

CERF Reference Group members include:

- Chairman – Greg Bourne, WWF-Australia
- Professor Angela Arthington, Australian School of Environmental Studies, Griffith University
- Professor David Bowman, Key Centre for Tropical Wildlife Management, Charles Darwin University
- Andrew Campbell, Land and Water Australia
- Professor Adrienne Clarke, School of Botany, University of Melbourne
- Professor Peter Davies, Centre for Excellence in Natural Resource Management, University of Western Australia
- Professor Steven Halls, School of Environmental Science, Murdoch University
- Dr Graham Harris, University of Tasmania
- Professor Alfred Huang, International Graduate School of Management, University of South Australia
- Professor Ted Lefroy, Centre for Environment, University of Tasmania
- Professor Bruce Mapstone, Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre
- Dr Deborah Peterson, Productivity Commission

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