



# Oceans Action Bulletin

An Update from the National Oceans Office

4 February 2005

This Bulletin keeps you up to date on recent progress in implementing *Australia's Oceans Policy* and regional marine planning. For further information or to unsubscribe from this Bulletin, please email [rani.milne@oceans.gov.au](mailto:rani.milne@oceans.gov.au)

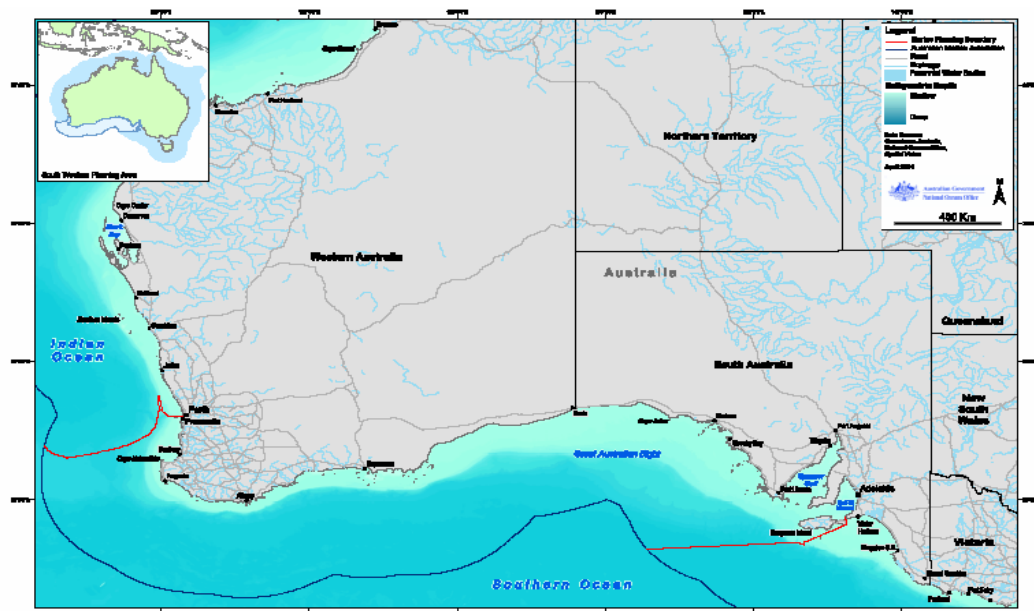
## South-west now focus of third regional marine plan

Preparations are well under way behind the scenes for Australia's third regional marine plan, centred on the ocean waters off the south-west of the continent.

The South-west Marine Region is a unique and beautiful part of Australia's marine territory and the South-west Plan will cover more than one million square kilometres of ocean water off the states of South Australia and Western Australia, between Kangaroo Island in the east and Fremantle in the west, out to 200 nautical miles.

The National Oceans Office is taking the lead for the Australian Government in negotiations with both State Governments. Readers of the Oceans Action Bulletin can expect to hear a lot more about this Plan over coming months, including the close cooperation between governments to integrate planning processes.

The Australian Government has appointed two regional officers to take the Plan forward. On the ground in Perth will be Jessica Meeuwig, who most recently worked for the WA Department of Conservation and Land Management. Patricia von Baumgarten, well known to many readers for her role with the SA Department of the Environment and Heritage, will take on the position in Adelaide. See biographies of both appointees below.



**The South-west Marine Region can be seen bounded by the red lines, which mark its eastern and western boundaries and the blue line, representing the seaward extremity at the 200 nautical mile limit.**

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As a Canadian, **Jessica Meeuwig** says her professional career has largely reflected a deep-seated desire to flee snow, a desire that brought her to Western Australia three years ago. Prior to joining the National Oceans Office, she worked with the WA Department of Conservation and Land Management on the proposals for a new marine conservation reserve in the south-west of the State. Jessica has a technical background as a marine ecologist and an interest in the role that communities play in achieving marine conservation outcomes. She has also worked in the international NGO sector on marine conservation and fisheries projects in the Philippines,

Vietnam and the Caribbean.

**Patricia von Baumgarten** was born in Brazil, where she developed a very strong personal link with coastal and marine environments. Her teenage years as a surfer led her to complete a degree in Oceanography. She has also completed a law degree with a focus on public and environmental law and a MSc degree in Tropical Coastal Management. Patricia spent the last five years working for the South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) as a marine adviser. She led the development of DEH marine programs including Marine Protected Areas, Marine Planning, Estuaries and Marine Species of Conservation. She played a significant role at State level advising on national matters such as the South-east Regional Marine Plan, Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Integrated Oceans Management.



Patricia has had extensive experience working with community and government sectors, and her experience includes undertaking and chairing public consultation processes such as the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary, policy for SARMPA and a statewide policy for South Australian estuaries.

## **Uncovering the secrets of the Great Barrier Reef sea floor**

A major project investigating seafloor habitats in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park has gathered more than 11 000 samples for identification.

While some parts of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, such as coral reefs, are relatively well understood, less is known about the number and type of organisms that live in deeper parts of the world's largest marine protected area. From 2003–2006, the Great Barrier Reef Seabed Biodiversity Project is mapping sea floor habitats and their associated life across the length and breadth of the Marine Park.

Information collected during the project will help managers conserve important habitats and rare biodiversity, and help ensure that fisheries within the Park are ecologically sustainable.

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Mapping of seabed biodiversity in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is well underway, and most of the field work has been completed ahead of schedule. Scientists have so far visited over 1200 of 1500 proposed sites yielding over 11 000 samples to be sorted. The scientists have engaged a range of sampling techniques including acoustic mapping, towed video, baited remote underwater video stations (BRUVs), sleds that collect samples from the sea floor, and scientific trawls. This combination of sound, video and physical sampling ensures that a complete picture of the biodiversity of the seabed is uncovered. Sorting and identification of crustaceans (prawns and lobsters), fishes and marine plants is underway at laboratories. When this work is complete, it is expected that many new species will be identified. This information will provide a baseline for ongoing assessment of the health of the reef.

The project is funded by the CRC Reef Research Centre, the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and the National Oceans Office. The Office has contributed \$80,000 to allow testing of acoustic methods for seabed sampling. The aim is to develop methods that reduce the need for sampling that disturbs the seafloor. The project is co-funded by the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), CSIRO, the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and the Queensland Museum.

The project involves scientists from the Australian Institute of Marine Science, CRC Reef Research Centre, CSIRO Marine Research, CSIRO Mathematical and Information Sciences, the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and the Queensland Museum.

More information about the project can be obtained from its website – <http://www.reef.crc.org.au/resprogram/programC/seabed/index.htm>

## **New research publications available on web**



Information sharing is an important part of developing manageable oceans planning. The National Oceans Office is making resource material available to the public so that everyone may gain a better understanding of the processes that make up oceans research.

Two resource reports have been posted to the website. The first report, *A Socio-economic Overview of the Northern Planning Area*, analyses important socio-economic statistics. The second report, *A Stocktake of Environmental, Socio-economic and Governance Performance Assessment Systems in use by Australian Governments*, provides

information on some of the performance assessment systems currently in use within the Australian government.

The reports are available in PDF format on the publications page of our website: <http://www.oceans.gov.au/publications.jsp>

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