



# Oceans Action Bulletin

**An Update from the National Oceans Office**

**4 March 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 [samantha.meyer@oceans.gov.au](mailto:samantha.meyer@oceans.gov.au)

## **Bulletin reaches milestone**

The Oceans Action Bulletin is now sent to more than 600 email boxes every fortnight, making it one of Australia's most widely read news sources for marine related environment issues.

The Bulletin's actual reach is believed to be even wider still with each edition emailed to more than 150 organisations representing marine industry, the conservation sector, Indigenous groups and Government agencies.

## **North Australian survey voyage casts off**

Australia's Marine National Facility RV *Southern Surveyor* has left Cairns on the first leg of an 80-day assessment of seabed habitats in the Gulf of Carpentaria and Arafura Sea.

The National Oceans Office, CSIRO and Geoscience Australia have joined forces for the three-stage marine survey.

On the first leg of the voyage, scientists from CSIRO, Geoscience Australia and Griffith University will sample seabed habitats at prawn fishing grounds near Groote Eylandt, the Sir Edward Pellew Group and Mornington Island.

They will trace the physical and biological processes that sustain 'soft' seabed communities in four different regions and environments, and compare areas subject to different historical levels of prawn trawling.

"This is the first multidisciplinary study of seabed communities and ecosystem processes in trawled and untrawled areas of the Gulf," project leader Dr Rodrigo Bustamante of CSIRO said.

The second leg of this collaborative voyage will focus on hard-bottom habitats and untrawled rocky reefs in the southern gulf and the third will inspect hydrocarbon seeps in the eastern Arafura Sea and their associated biodiversity.

The RV *Southern Surveyor* is fitted with a multi-beam sonar system used to map the sea floor from a depth of 10m to 4000m. The bathymetric maps created by this technique give a detailed three-dimensional representation of the ocean floor.

The progress of the first leg of the 80-day voyage, as well as information about the vessel and the voyagers, can be found at the CSIRO Marine Research website <http://www.marine.csiro.au/research/voyages/0305/index.html>

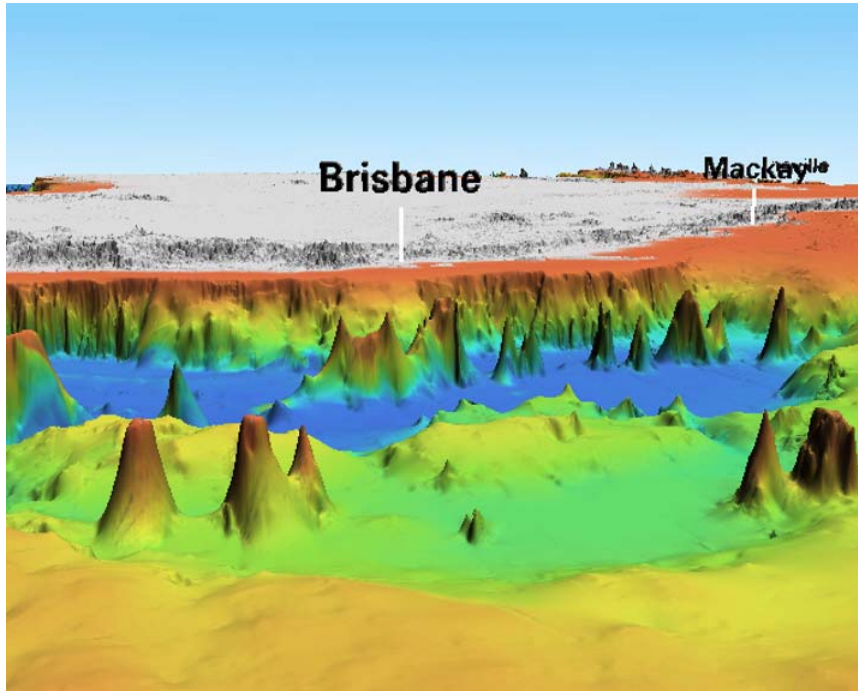
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Swath-mapping equipment on the *Southern Surveyor* gathers data used to produce 3-d images of the seafloor such as this. Here, Brisbane is seen near the coastline on the continental shelf, with the abyssal plain in blue and sea mounts in the foreground.

## An Ocean of Opportunity

The National Oceans Office has begun the search for consultants to participate in two major projects in 2005. The two projects comprise three tenders, which have recently been advertised on the Office's website <http://www.oceans.gov.au>

### *Oceans Portal Project*

The Oceans Portal Project is designed to help enhance national marine data management and public access to marine data. The project is a key action in the recently released South-east Regional Marine Plan.

The Oceans Portal Project is comprised of three parts. The first is the establishment of a marine community committed to sharing data and services via the Internet. This may include government agencies, museums and private organisations. The second component is a Marine Catalogue, through which information will be provided by members of the marine community, and accessed by others. The final component is the Oceans Portal application, which is a tool that allows access to information through the Marine Catalogue.

The current tender invites proposals from software developers to assist in building the Oceans Portal application and the Marine Catalogue.

The tender closes on 9 March, and more information can be obtained from the Office's Chief Information Officer, Kim Finney ([kim.finney@oceans.gov.au](mailto:kim.finney@oceans.gov.au)) or Database Developer, Amit Parashar ([amit.parashar@oceans.gov.au](mailto:amit.parashar@oceans.gov.au)).

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## *South-west Marine Planning Area*

Work has begun to draw together information on the ecosystem and ocean uses in Australia's third regional marine planning area.

The South-west Marine Region 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 has called for tenders to pull together two key sets of information relating to the Region.

The first is a review of ecological information, which will provide a comprehensive picture of the current knowledge of the Region's key ecological characteristics.

The second tender will result in a socio-economic analysis of marine industry in the South-west. This project will include an examination of the historical, current and emerging pattern of marine commercial use in the Region.

Both tenders close on Friday 11 March, and more information can be obtained from Andrew Coleman [andrew.coleman@oceans.gov.au](mailto:andrew.coleman@oceans.gov.au)

## **Registration opens for International Marine Protected Areas Congress**

Registration for the first International Marine Protected Areas Congress is now open. The congress will be held in Geelong, Victoria between from 23-27 October this year.

This global conference will address the World Commission on Protected Areas' Marine goal and primary themes, and will progress discussion on their adoption and implementation in line with resolutions arising from the Durban World Parks Congress.

Several objectives have been identified as outcomes for the congress. These are:

- to embrace the entire global range of marine protected areas including but not limited to in-shore (integrated coastal zone management), reef, deep water, high seas and remote locations
- develop a blueprint for partnerships between MPA managers, fisheries managers, management agencies, Indigenous peoples, local communities and industries reliant on marine resources to ensure that marine ecosystems are sustained into the future
- provide examples or models of best practice approaches for biodiversity and ecological processes through the management of MPAs
- address important or emerging issues affecting or likely to affect the future existence, values qualities and effectiveness of MPAs and to explore innovative approaches and possible solutions to enable effective management of these issues.

IMPAC is sponsored in part through the Department of Environment and Heritage's Marine Division.

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