



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

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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

Marine Protected Areas to benefit from \$220 million fisheries package

A network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Australia's South-east Marine Region will be integrated with the fisheries management changes in the region as part of a \$220 million national fisheries structural adjustment programme, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell announced this week.

Senator Campbell said urgent changes were being introduced in the management of key Commonwealth fisheries in the region and these were being integrated with the development of an MPA network to ensure sustainable use of the marine environment.

"The industry should not face uncertainty, so the Australian Government will offer one combined assistance package for fisheries to adjust to the changes," Senator Campbell said.

"The package comprises a \$150 million fishing concession buy-out across a number of fisheries, including several operating in the South-east Marine Region, plus several complementary elements that will be delivered nationally."

The other measures will include funding for business advice, fisheries management fee relief and assistance for land-based businesses most directly affected in regional ports.

"The Government's actions will protect examples of the unique marine environment from within an area of ocean of about two million square kilometres off Tasmania, Victoria, southern New South Wales and eastern South Australia," Senator Campbell said. The Government will finalise the south-east MPA network by the end of March 2006, and the MPAs will be declared as marine reserves under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Structural adjustment assistance would be open to both Australian and State Government licensed fishermen whose fishing effort would be displaced by the declaration of Commonwealth MPAs.

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“The Government will release a draft MPA network for the south-east shortly and continue consultations with key stakeholder groups early in 2006,” Senator Campbell said.

“The consultation will allow the MPA boundaries to be refined to ensure we are getting the best possible conservation outcomes while minimising unnecessary impacts on industry.”

He said the need to accelerate MPA development in the south-east to accommodate the fisheries management changes had altered the MPA development process, but that the guidelines for MPA identification would remain the same.

“The March deadline for finalising MPAs is necessary to ensure affected fishermen are able to participate in the fisheries management concession buy-out with full knowledge of their future operating environment,” Senator Campbell said.

MPA development in other regions will occur as part of the updated regional marine planning process, with the provisions of adjustment assistance to address the impacts of displaced fishing to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

More information about the structural adjustment package is available at <http://www.afma.gov.au/information/newsroom/announcement.htm>

Australia joins CoML All Program Meeting

Representatives from all over the world attended the second Census of Marine Life (CoML) All Program Meeting in Germany this month.

The Frankfurt meeting attracted around 300 delegates and was a valuable forum highlighting the success of CoML activities to date and identifying future directions.

Presentations were given on the 14 Census field programs, which now cover all facets of oceans research including microbes, Antarctic, deep sea and thermal vents.



Attendees at CoML All Program meeting in Frankfurt. Photograph courtesy of Senkenberg

During the meeting, branch head of the National Oceans Office and chair of CoML Australia, Ian Cresswell, gave a presentation on Australia’s progress toward achieving the aims of the Census.

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Australia Contributes to International Marine Data network

Following the CoML meeting, Australia's contribution to a cutting edge international marine data project was highlighted at an Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) meeting. Australia's OBIS Regional Node Manager, Alicja Mosbauer, attended the meeting.

OBIS is the data management tool that underpins the Census of Marine Life.

Also held in Frankfurt, the meeting brought together representatives of the nine recently established OBIS regional nodes, to discuss progress on local implementation of program activities and set direction for the next phase of work. After identifying what data and tools the regional nodes currently have access to, participants agreed that it was very important to increase this amount of data and make it available to OBIS users.

Alicja Mosbauer reported on the development of Australia's OBIS regional website, which was funded by the Alfred P Sloan Foundation. The website will make available datasets on species distribution and is expected to be launched later this year.

More information about the Australian regional OBIS node can be obtained online at <http://www.obis.org.au/>

Australia Takes the Lead at International Oceans Meeting

Australia's world leading position in ocean management was highlighted at The Oceans Policy Summit in Portugal last month.

Organised by the International Ocean Governance Network, the Summit involved more than 200 participants from 53 countries, representing governments, regional organisations, UN agencies, academia, non-governmental organisations and industry.

The theme of the Summit was "Integrated Ocean Policy: National and Regional Experiences, Prospects and Emerging Practices." Its goal was to provide a forum to learn from one another, encourage other nations, and capture emerging good practice, or useful observations on trends and issues.



Donna Petrachenko (right) chairing a discussion panel

Delegates met for panel discussions on various aspects of integrated ocean policy, including the growing interest in integrated national and regional ocean policies; learning lessons from countries that have made the most progress to date; achieving

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cross-sectoral harmonisation of ocean use and agencies; identifying principles for governance; and implementing an integrated policy.

One panel discussion focused on the work undertaken on integrated oceans management by the Australian and Canadian Governments – acknowledged world leaders in this area. Head of the Marine Division of the Department of the Environment and Heritage, Donna Petrachenko, gave a presentation to this panel on the development of Australia's Oceans Policy. She also outlined the provision of a focused legislative framework for marine planning under Australia's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)*.

Dr Petrachenko also chaired a panel discussion examining issues in implementation of ocean policies, in particular financial, evaluation and stakeholder issues.

The discussions and ideas generated at the Ocean Policy Summit 2005 are expected to provide further momentum for integrated oceans management at the international, regional and national levels. More information can be obtained from the conference website <http://www.globaloceans.org>

More International Protection Urged for Migratory Marine Species

The Australian Government is arguing for strengthened global protection for a number of marine migratory species, at an international forum in Africa this week.

At the Eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), from 20–25 November 2005 in Nairobi, Kenya, the Government is seeking enhanced international protection measures for a range of migratory marine species.

Australian Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, said the Convention on Migratory Species is an important tool for the protection of species such as whales, marine turtles, dugong, sharks and seabirds.



Dugong © GBRMPA

“These migratory marine species have a special cultural, ecological and economic significance for Australia and the Oceania region,” said Senator Campbell.

“The Convention on Migratory Species is an intergovernmental convention with 92 Parties. It aims to protect migratory species across their ranges by developing and implementing regional conservation arrangements,” he said.

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The CMS already protects the great white and whale sharks. This year Australia and the United Kingdom will ask the treaty to extend protection to the highly migratory basking shark.

A report on the outcomes of the meeting will be included in the next edition of the Oceans Action Bulletin.

Coastal Custodians

Nominations closed this month for the Minister's Award for Coastal Custodians. Nominations were received from every state and the Northern Territory.

The winner will be announced during Coastcare week in December.

Video Highlights Great Barrier Reef Research

A brief online video provides an insight into important marine science research currently underway in Australia's biggest marine park.

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 Park, to support multiple conservation and fisheries objectives.



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

The project is being supported by the CRC Reef Research Centre, the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and the Department of the Environment and Heritage (through the National Oceans Office) additional to the resources being contributed by the research partners (the Australian Institute of Marine Science, CSIRO, Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, and the Queensland Museum).

Sled used to collect samples from the seabed. Photo courtesy AIMS.

One of the key outcomes of the project relates to fisheries management. Queensland legislation requires that fisheries resources in the Marine Park are taken in an ecologically sustainable way. The Project will help managers determine whether current impacts on non-target species, benthic habitats and wider ecosystem values, are consistent with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development.

The Project will contribute to the development of quantitative risk assessments for trawl by-catch species.

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Scientists have so far sampled more than 1200 sites in the Marine Park. Taxonomic work is underway in laboratories around Australia and a short film can be viewed online that provides a fascinating insight into the process of species identification.

For more information about the Project, and to view the movie, visit <http://www.reef.crc.org.au/resprogram/programC/seabed/index.htm>

Applications called for Marine and Tropical Science Research in Queensland

The demand for high quality research into North Queensland environmental issues will be addressed after a \$40 million funding boost. Research priorities for the Marine and Tropical Science Research Facility (MTSRF) have been announced, as well as a call for expressions of interest for funding.

The MTSRF is located at James Cook University campuses in Cairns and Townsville and will focus on the environmental challenges facing the Great Barrier Reef, the Torres Strait and tropical rainforests.

The \$40 million will be allocated to research in five key priority areas:

- Understanding the condition and trends of North Queensland's environmental assets;
- Risks and threats to North Queensland's environmental assets;
- Water quality and water resources of reef catchments;
- Catchment and coastal land use planning and management; and
- Sustainable use and management of natural resources.

The MTSRF is a key element of the \$100 million Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities (CERF) program of the Australian Government.

Expressions of interest for funding must be received by 5pm on Friday 16 December 2005.

More information about the funding and the facility is available at <http://www.deh.gov.au/programs/cerf/marine-tropical.html>

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