



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**

**14 October 2005**

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](mailto:samantha.meyer@oceans.gov.au)

### **Australia's Marine Planning Program Pushes Ahead with New Focus**

Australia's world-leading program of marine planning and management will be brought directly under federal environment law to provide a clearer focus on conservation and sustainable management of the marine environment and offer greater certainty for industry.

Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, announced the Government would bring its program of regional marine planning under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the *EPBC Act*).

The initiative will see Marine Bioregional Plans, including a system of Marine



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Protected Areas, established over Australia's 14 million square kilometre ocean jurisdiction.

Senator Campbell said that the *EPBC Act* is one of the most comprehensive pieces of environment protection legislation anywhere in the world and this initiative will add new drive to the implementation of *Australia's Oceans Policy*.

"The new process will streamline marine planning and management and provide the additional guidance and consistency that has been sought by industry and other users of the marine environment," Senator Campbell said.

Under the new approach, Marine Bioregional Plans will be established under section 176 of the *EPBC Act*, acting as a key guidance document for the Minister, sectoral managers and industry about the pertinent conservation issues and priorities in each marine region.

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The plans will draw on Australia's growing marine science and socioeconomic information base to provide a detailed picture of each marine region. The plans will describe each region's key habitats, plants and animals; natural processes; human uses and benefits; and threats to the long-term ecological sustainability of the region.

Senator Campbell said the Government would soon brief stakeholders to explain the new approach.

*Further background on Australia's Oceans Policy and marine planning is available online at [http://www.oceans.gov.au/the\\_oceans\\_policy\\_overview.jsp](http://www.oceans.gov.au/the_oceans_policy_overview.jsp)*

*Further information on the Australian Government's Marine Protected Areas program is available at <http://www.deh.gov.au/coasts/mpa/index.html>*

### **Call for Public Comment on Draft Terms of Reference for the Torres Strait Turtle and Dugong Fisheries**

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) has started preparation of the Torres Strait Turtle and Dugong fisheries assessment report for the purposes of strategic approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Assessments of these fisheries will be based on fishery specific terms of reference.

AFMA invites comments/submissions on the draft terms of reference, which can be downloaded from the AFMA website at [www.afma.gov.au](http://www.afma.gov.au) or by contacting Mr Jim Prescott on 07 4069 1307 or emailing [jim.prescott@afma.gov.au](mailto:jim.prescott@afma.gov.au). Submissions close on 21 October 2005, and should be sent to:

Cate Coddington  
Environment policy section  
AFMA  
Box 7051  
Canberra mail centre ACT 2610  
Fax 02 6272 5167 or Email – [cate.coddington@afma.gov.au](mailto:cate.coddington@afma.gov.au)

### **Marine Species Data Website Launched**

A newly launched website allows users to search for information documenting the distribution of thousands of marine species in the Australian region.

The Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) is a key information tool supporting the Census of Marine Life (CoML), a growing network of researchers in 45 nations engaged in a 10-year initiative to assess and explain the diversity, distribution, and abundance of life in the oceans – past, present, and future.

The new website allows users to search for information on the distribution of marine species globally, and provides information for data custodians on how to link their resources in to the OBIS network. The site can be accessed at <http://www.obis.org.au>

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The site is administered by OBIS Australia, which aims to advance the goals of OBIS in the Australian region, as one of a growing network of Regional OBIS Nodes. Specifically, the goals of OBIS Australia are:

- to foster the on-line provision of marine species data from the Australian region into the OBIS international data network
- to provide an access point to the international OBIS data network that provides enhanced functionality targeted to the needs of regional data users.

OBIS Australia is an Australian Government partnership between the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH), through the National Oceans Office, and CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research. It is also supported in its start-up phase by funding from the U.S. Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

### **IMPAC Update**

This month the inaugural International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC1) will be held in Victoria. It is hoped that this will be the first in an ongoing global series, providing a forum for continuous improvement in methods of establishing and managing marine protected areas (MPAs).



The Congress aims to involve government agencies, communities, non-government organisations, research organisations and people whose business are associated with MPAs. DEH is a major sponsor of IMPAC1 and is assisting with organisation and administration.

DEH staff will present on issues associated with the development and monitoring of MPAs, including the challenges of stakeholder processes and compliance issues, as well as the science that underpins their development. Poster presentations will also look at issues of integrated spatial management, performance assessment frameworks, managing socio-economic change and improved governance to protect high seas biodiversity.

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A special area of the IMPAC venue, called the Community Lagoon, has been allocated for Indigenous and local community delegates to meet informally and make presentations or conduct other events during lunch times or evenings throughout the Congress. All delegates with an interest in Indigenous or local community issues relating to Marine Protected Areas are invited to visit the Community Lagoon anytime.

On the Tuesday night (25 October) as part of the Community Lagoon there will be an informal discussion involving Indigenous and local community delegates talking about their participation in marine conservation and management.

Funding for the Community Lagoon has been provided by the IMPAC Committee. Coordination of the Community Lagoon is by members of the IUCN's Theme on Indigenous and Local Communities and Equity in Protected Areas (TILCEPA) and staff of DEH (National Oceans Office).

### **Minister's Award for Coastal Custodians**

Nominations for the \$5000 Minister's Award for Coastal Custodians 2005 are open for another four weeks.

Minister for the Environment and Heritage Senator Ian Campbell said the national winner would be announced during Coastcare Week in early December 2005.

More details about the Minister's Award including eligibility criteria can be found at [http://www.oceans.gov.au/Coastal\\_custodians\\_2005.jsp](http://www.oceans.gov.au/Coastal_custodians_2005.jsp)

Entries close on Friday, 11 November 2005.

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