



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

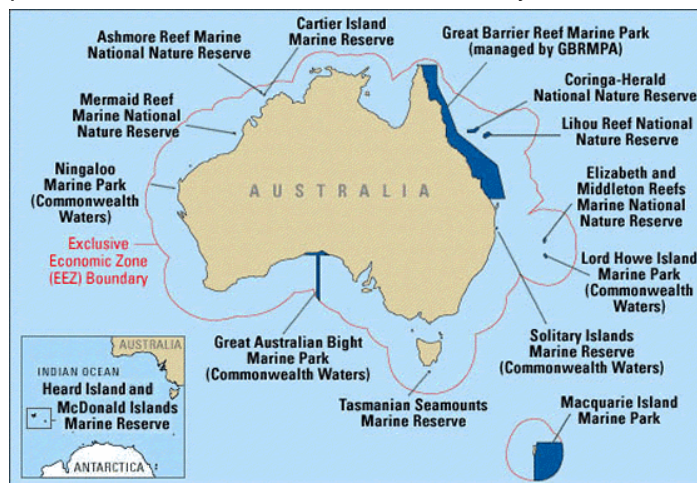
28 October 2005

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

Australia – a World Leader in Marine Protection

Australia is committed to developing a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Australian waters as part of Australia's conservation effort, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, told a conference in Geelong, Victoria this week.

Addressing more than 700 delegates at the first International Marine Protected Areas Congress, Senator Campbell said a network of MPAs representing ocean ecosystems across the nation's 14 million square kilometres of ocean was a crucial part of Australia's commitment to a healthy and sustainable marine environment for future generations.



Australia's Marine Protected Areas Estate

These Marine Protected Areas will protect areas within Australia's ocean jurisdiction that represent important marine habitats, from tropical to temperate waters, from deep ocean floor to the continental shelf.

"It's fitting that the first ever international conference on Marine Protected Areas is to be held in Australia, because we are leading the world in marine management," Senator Campbell said.

Department of the Environment and Heritage – Marine Division:

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

*Healthy oceans: cared for, understood and used wisely for the benefit of
all, now and in the future*

The Australian Government is consulting marine stakeholders and working with the states and the Northern Territory, to put in place a National Representative System of MPAs by 2012, reinforcing Australia's world-leading reputation in marine conservation.

“I’m proud that we have some of the best experts and scientists working with the Australian Government, doing a terrific job in protecting and conserving our oceans.”

Senator Campbell said he was delighted to accept a ‘Gift to the Earth’ award from the WWF on behalf of the Australian Government, in recognition of the Government’s efforts in designing and implementing the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park zoning plan at the conference.

The Minister said the Government’s recent decision to bring Australia’s marine planning program under federal environment law would bring benefits to MPA development by providing a more comprehensive information base for this important conservation work. It would also provide certainty for industry and other marine resource users about their statutory obligations.

In his address to the conference, Senator Campbell called for international support for improvement to marine conservation in international waters – the so-called high seas.

“MPAs are the best way to ensure high seas biodiversity conservation and we will continue to pursue this goal internationally,” Senator Campbell said.

He said another boost to MPA development would come from the completion of a major marine science data gathering exercise – the National Marine Bioregionalisation – released today, which would provide better information upon which to make management decisions.

Australia first committed to the establishment of a system of protected areas at the Convention on Biological Diversity in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

More information on Australia’s MPA development program can be found at: <http://www.deh.gov.au/coasts/mpa/index.html>

DEH staff gave presentations to the Congress 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. More information on these presentations can be found at <http://www.impacongress.org/>

Census of Marine Life links with Great Barrier Reef biodiversity project

The Census of Marine Life (CoML) has joined with an Australian project that is mapping the seabed biodiversity in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The Great Barrier Reef Seabed Biodiversity Project is a three-year venture to examine the unique attributes of this World Heritage-listed area. 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.

Department of the Environment and Heritage – Marine Division:

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

Healthy oceans: cared for, understood and used wisely for the benefit of all, now and in the future

The project was initiated in 2003 by the Cooperative Research Centre for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (CRC Reef Research Centre) and is one of the most comprehensive habitat mapping exercises ever undertaken in Australia. As well as representatives from the CRC Research Centre, the project involves scientists from the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and the Queensland Museum. The Department of the Environment and Heritage, through the National Oceans Office, is contributing \$80,000 to allow testing of acoustic methods for seabed sampling.



Chief investigator Roland Pitcher from CSIRO sorts a sample collected from the seabed. (Image courtesy of AIMS.)

Scientists have so far collected samples at approximately 1500 sites in the Marine Park. The information gathered will help managers to conserve important habitats and rare biodiversity, and to ensure the ecological sustainability of fisheries within the Park. Sampling will also provide scientists with a snapshot of the seabed flora and fauna throughout the Marine Park that can be used as a baseline against which to monitor changes in abundance, diversity and ecological function. This new knowledge can be applied to develop indicators of vulnerability, risk assessments and evaluate the performance of environmental management.

For more information, visit the project website

<http://www.reef.crc.org.au/resprogram/programC/seabed/index.htm>

Minister's Award for Coastal Custodians

Nominations for the \$5000 Minister's Award for Coastal Custodians 2005 are open for only two more 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

Entries close on Friday, 11 November 2005.

Department of the Environment and Heritage – Marine Division:

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

Healthy oceans: cared for, understood and used wisely for the benefit of all, now and in the future