



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**

16 September 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

Minister's Award for Coastal Custodians

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage Senator Ian Campbell invites nominations from organisations or individuals for the \$5000 Minister's Award for Coastal Custodians.

Entries open today and close on Friday, 11 November 2005. The national winner will be announced during Coastcare Week in early December 2005.

This is the fourth year that the award has been presented. Last year's award was presented to a group of volunteers from Victoria's Gippsland coast, who identified and then eradicated an infestation of introduced marine pest, the northern pacific seastar, from the waters around the town of Inverloch.

The objectives of the award are to encourage a culture of custodianship among Australians for their coastal and marine environments and to foster partnerships and cooperation to this end between individuals, organisations, schools, business and industry.



© DEH / Arthur Mostead

In this way, Australians can work together to preserve the health, integrity and diversity of their coasts and oceans.

Eligibility Criteria

The award is open to Australian individuals and organisations who work to improve the coastal and/or marine environment. Nominations will be judged in consideration of the following criteria:

Department of the Environment and Heritage – Marine Division:

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

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- the development of a practical solution to an identified marine or coastal environmental problem
- an example of innovation in marine or coastal environmental remediation
- an example of community or school-based awareness-raising about a marine or coastal environmental issue
- a pro-active approach to cultural or behavioural change relating to the improvement of the marine or coastal environment
- an example of marine or coastal environment monitoring leading to remediation action
- an example of cooperation between individuals, organisations, institutions, industries or businesses to improve the marine or coastal environment

How to Nominate

To nominate for the Minister's Award for Coastal Custodians, apply in writing with a one-page summary profile (supporting materials may be included) by Friday 11 November 2005 to:

Minister's Award for Coastal Custodians 2005
 c/- Marine Division Public Affairs
 National Oceans Office Branch
 Department of the Environment and Heritage
 GPO Box 2139
 Hobart Tas 7001

Nominations can also be sent electronically to: richard.wilson@oceans.gov.au
 Nominations should include a summary of the achievement and why it is significant. Please also include a return address and contact details.

WA Voyage Maps Australia's Largest Underwater Feature

A month long voyage on the *RV Southern Surveyor* that mapped the sea floor off the Western Australian coast has revealed detail of the Perth Canyon, one of Australia's largest underwater canyon features.

The expedition produced a detailed map of the steep cliffs of the Perth Canyon, which is deeper and longer than the Grand Canyon and is home to a host of fish species. The canyon starts about 20 km west of Rottnest Island and about 350 metres below sea level, and cuts westwards for 200 km before it merges with the deep ocean abyss 4 km below sea level.



Senator Ian Campbell explores the voyage findings with scientists onboard the Southern Surveyor

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Scientists surveyed a 50 km by 100 km section of the canyon during the voyage, using swath mapping technology. The swath mapper sends out multiple sound beams that are reflected back and used to create a detailed contour map of the area.

Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, said the outcomes of the voyages will improve our understanding of the evolution and biogeography of Australia's deep ocean floor fauna. They may also serve as preliminary material in marine planning and development of the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas in Commonwealth waters by the Department of the Environment and Heritage.

"Australia leads the world in offshore marine planning and this is a great opportunity to learn more about our oceans so we can manage them sustainably in the interests of the environment as well as the industries that rely on their health," Senator Campbell said.

"There is much that remains unknown about our deep ocean habitats and its fauna and I have commissioned marine science voyages and other studies to help fill the gaps in our knowledge."

This expedition was the first in a series of exploratory voyages in the area. Further voyages will take place in September and November this year and in June 2006.

IMPAC Update

The Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) is playing an important role in the world's first International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC1), to be held in Victoria next month. In addition to being a major sponsor of the Congress, DEH is assisting with organisation and administration and several staff will make presentations.

To be held in Geelong from 23–27 October 2005, IMPAC1 has been designed to be the first of an ongoing series of global conferences, providing a forum for continuous improvement in establishment and management of marine protected areas (MPAs). The Congress aims to involve government agencies, communities, non-government organisations, research organisations and people whose businesses are associated with MPAs.



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

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frameworks and managing socio-economic change. A DEH representative is also a co-author of a paper on improved governance to protect high seas biodiversity.

Under Australia's Oceans Policy, DEH is implementing a national representative system of MPAs (NRSMPA) through regional marine planning. The initial focus for the NRSMPA in Commonwealth waters has been the South-east Marine Region. More information about MPAs in Commonwealth waters is available at www.deh.gov.au/coasts/mpa.

For more information on the objectives of IMPAC1 and to view the provisional program, visit the congress website www.impacongress.org/.

Threatened Species Receive a Funding Boost

Community groups have received more than \$550,000 in funding for threatened species from the Australian Government. Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, announced the Threatened Species Network Community Grants as part of Threatened Species Day on 7 September.

The grants are part of the Threatened Species Network (TSN) partnership between the Australian Government and the WWF-Australia, formerly known as World Wildlife Fund and will assist 30 projects targeting 180 species around the country.

"Australia has already lost some 50 animal species and more than 60 plant species to extinction. We must do everything we can to protect those under threat from issues such as pests, weeds and pollution," Senator Campbell said.

The mechanism for national environment protection and biodiversity conservation is the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The EPBC Act provides for:

- identification and listing of threatened species and threatened ecological communities
- development of recovery plans for listed species and ecological communities
- recognition of key threatening processes and, where appropriate, reducing these processes through threat abatement plans.

Senator Campbell noted that the funding will help protect a number of marine species currently at risk, including the flatback and olive ridley turtles. One of the projects funded this year is the Western Cape York Turtle Conservation Project. This project will see will the community and Rangers work together to protect flatback and olive ridley turtles from feral pig predation and getting trapped in disused fishing or "ghost" nets. The olive ridley turtle is listed as 'endangered' under the EPBC Act and the flatback turtle is listed as 'vulnerable'.



Flatback Turtle © GBRMPA

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