

The Representative Areas Program – Rezoning the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

A new Zoning Plan for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (the Marine Park) came into effect on 1 July 2004. The proportion of the Marine Park protected by 'no-take' zones (known locally as 'green' zones) was increased from less than 5% to more than 33%, and now protects representative examples of each of the broad habitat types.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) is the principal adviser to the Australian Government on the care and development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The Great Barrier Reef sustains a wide range of economic activities that support coastal communities and regional economies. It is a critical global resource, and the uniqueness of the Great Barrier Reef was recognised in 1981 when it was inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Prior to the Representative Areas Program, there were concerns that the levels of protection were inadequate to ensure that the Great Barrier Reef remained a healthy, productive and resilient ecosystem now and into the future.

Between 1999 and 2004, the GBRMPA undertook a complex planning and consultative program to develop the new zoning for the Marine Park. The primary aim of the program was to better protect the range of biodiversity in the Great Barrier Reef, by increasing the extent of no-take areas, ensuring they included 'representative' examples of all the different habitat types (hence the name, the Representative Areas Program or RAP). Whilst increasing the protection of biodiversity, a further aim was to minimise negative and maximise positive impacts on the existing users of the Marine Park. Both these aims were achieved by a comprehensive program of scientific input, community involvement and innovation.

Key achievements of the Representative Areas Program include:

- Development of a visionary new Zoning Plan for the Marine Park providing a sustainable framework for the conservation and use of the resources of the Great Barrier Reef, now and into the future.
- Protection of 33.3% (114,530 km²) of the Marine Park within the world's largest network of highly protected areas.
- Creation of a network of highly protected areas that is representative of all 70 bioregions (habitats) within the Marine Park.
- Most comprehensive process of community involvement and participatory planning for any environmental issue in Australia's history.
- Wide recognition of the multi-award winning Representative Areas Program, which has been internationally hailed as 'world's best practice'.

The approach taken in the Representative Areas Program is now recognised as one of the most comprehensive, innovative and exciting global advances in marine conservation and the systematic protection of marine biodiversity in recent decades. The new regulatory framework will bring great benefits to the conservation of the entire Great Barrier Reef ecosystem as well as providing benefits for all users and industries dependent on the Great Barrier Reef. It will significantly enhance the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef and assist industry to achieve increased levels of environmental and financial sustainability. Most importantly, it will ensure the Great Barrier Reef remains GREAT for future generations.

More information about the Representative Areas Program can be found at the following websites:

For the general index webpage for the new zoning, go to the GBRMPA Home Page (www.gbrmpa.gov.au) and look for 'New Zoning' or 'Representative Areas'; or go direct to:
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/index.html

Aspects of the zoning which may be of interest include:

- A 2-page poster outlining the entire **RAP process** (*Note this PDF is large*), see http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/rap/rap/pdf/rap_overview_brochure.pdf
- The map of **70 bioregions** (30 reef bioregions and 40 non-reef bioregions); this was one of the 'cornerstones' of the RAP process when used in conjunction with all the operating principles: http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/documents/bioregions_2001_06.pdf
- The eleven **Biophysical Operating Principles** applied when developing the zoning: http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/documents/tech_sheet_06.pdf
- The four **Social, Economic, and Cultural Operating Principles** applied when developing the zoning: http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/documents/tech_sheet_07.pdf
- **Frequently asked questions** about the new zoning (*eg How will the new zoning be enforced? Can I carry fish through a green zone?*) http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/documents/zoning_faq.pdf
- A poster showing '**connectivity**' and an example of the dependence by one species (Red Emperor) on different habitat types; this poster was immensely useful when engaging the public; <http://abc.net.au/science/bluehighway/>.
- The RAP planning process used a variety of planning tools including 'MARXAN' <http://www.ecology.uq.edu.au/marxan.htm> and TRADER (Australian Institute of Marine Science, Dr Glenn De'ath). These helped to apply the key operating principles, and in conjunction with other GIS-based spatial analysis tools, were vital to the systematic integration of biophysical, social and economic values. Various conference papers outlining the use of analytical approaches and the lessons learnt are at: http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/zoning_publications.html#history
 - ♣ See paper '**Use of spatial analysis and GIS**' for an outline of the spatial tools used;
 - ♣ See paper '**An ecosystem planning approach**' (espec. pp.10-12) for lessons learnt about use of analytical approaches.

STATUTORY DOCUMENTS

- The statutory (legislative) **Zoning Plan** – includes the provisions for each of the 8 types of zone (ranging from *General Use Zone* where all reasonable activities can occur, including trawling and other types of fishing; through to *Marine National Park Zone* (= 'no-take' areas) and to *Preservation Zones* (= scientific reference areas). For each zone, there is a clear objective and a list of what activities can be done 'as of right' (without a permit); and what will require a permit. http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/documents/Zoning_Plan_zoning_provisions.pdf (*note this PDF version does not include the 160 pages of zone boundary descriptions*)
- The Zoning Plan also has provisions for **Special Management Areas** (eg Dugong Protection Areas, Public Appreciation Areas, etc) and Designated Shipping Areas – see Part 4 of the above Zoning Plan or http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/documents/IntroSMAs.pdf
- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park **Regulations** - these include many legal definitions of activities (eg limited collecting; limited research; stowed & secured; etc); criteria for the assessment of all permits; user fees, etc <http://scaleplus.law.gov.au/html/pastereg/0/85/top.htm>

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The RAP included the most comprehensive program of community involvement and participatory planning for any environmental issue in Australia's history, including two statutory phases of public consultation and a huge amount of ongoing public education:

- A series of **technical information sheets** released in May 2002 helped educate the public about the reasons behind RAP and key aspects of the planning program:
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/info_sheets.html
- When the **Draft Zoning Plan** was publicly released in June 2003, the website was:
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/rap/rap/index2.html
- When the **revised Zoning Plan** was delivered to the Federal Parliament in December 2003, the website was:
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/rap/rap/index.html
- Periodic **RAP update brochures** were distributed throughout the planning program:
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/updates.html
- See various conference papers for the public participation process and the lessons learnt:
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/zoning_publications.html#history
 - ♣ See paper '**Addressing communication barriers**' for an outline of the public participation program and some of the ways around 'the barriers';
 - ♣ See paper '**An ecosystem planning approach**' (espec. pp.7-10) for lessons learnt about public participation;
 - ♣ See paper '**Managing, Analysing and Presenting Public Submissions**' for an outline of the processes developed to deal with 31,500 public submissions.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC EVALUATIONS

The primary aim of RAP was to increase the protection of biodiversity, but a further aim was to minimise impacts on the existing users of the Marine Park, including commercial and recreational fishers. Three detailed reports and a summary report were prepared and presented to Parliament:

- An **independent consultant** (PDP Australia P/L) conducted an evaluation of the economic & social evaluation of implementing the RAP:
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/rap/rap/pdf/PDP_Report_23-12-03.pdf
- The **Bureau of Tourism** report assessed the potential impact of RAP on tourism:
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/rap/rap/pdf/BTR_Report_23-12-03.pdf
- The **Bureau of Rural Sciences** report assessed the potential impact on commercial fishing and associated communities:
http://www.affa.gov.au/corporate_docs/publications/pdf/rural_science/social_science/GBRMP.pdf
- **Summary Report** drawing on the information in the above 3 reports:
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/rap/rap/pdf/JUG_SR_09-12-03.pdf

REGULATORY IMPACT STATEMENT

As with any proposed legislation presented to the Federal Parliament, a Regulatory Impact Statement was required to address options, outline the affected parties resulting from the revised Zoning Plan, etc; this RIS was publicly available when the Parliament was assessing the Plan:

http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/rap/rap/pdf/RIS_25-11-03.pdf

STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT

The Australian Government's commitment to structural adjustment (e.g. assistance to address those who were significantly impacted by the new Zoning Plan) was of both social and environmental importance, and contributed to increased community acceptance of the negative impacts due to the rezoning.

<http://www.qraa.qld.gov.au/productitem.jsp?product=305>

IMPLEMENTATION PRODUCTS

Since the new Zoning Plan formally came into effect (1 July 2004), the implementation tasks have included wide dissemination of the new zoning information. Over 620,000 new zoning maps have been distributed free of charge from over 200 Community Access Points along the entire GBR coast (incl. bait & tackle shops, boating suppliers, Government offices, etc).

All products are also available on the web, including a guide to the zones and activities:

http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/documents/IntroActiveGuide.pdf

- **Zoning maps** showing the new zones are at:
http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/zoning_maps.html
 - ♣ **Introductory Guides** (four maps at 1:1 million scale)
 - ♣ **Detailed maps** (18 maps at 1:250,000) including MNPZ zone coordinates
- For interactive ('zoomable') maps and the ability to generate coordinates for a specific zone:
<http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/ArcIMS/website/gbrmpa/viewer.htm>
- All zone coordinates (using each zone's unique identifier number) are available on the web in an Excel spreadsheet. **Electronic zoning information** has been provided to commercial suppliers of electronic charts such as C-map, C-plot, Garmin and the Hydrographic Survey, Australia, and was commercially available from the date the new zoning came into effect.

For further information about the Representative Areas Program, please contact GBRMPA on info@gbrmpa.gov.au or phone 1 800 990 177.