

Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee

Meeting #3 Communique

13 May 2020, Teleconference

Attendees

Jacqui Doyle (Chair)
Chrissy Warren
Clive Wilkinson
Craig Stephen
Doug Sanderson
Michelle Grady
Morgan Pratchett
Russ Babcock
Ryan Donnelly
Col McKenzie (apology)
Larissa Hale (apology)

Observers

Tina Alderson (Queensland Parks and
Wildlife Service)
Melinda McLean (Torres Strait Regional
Authority)

Committee Meeting Overview

The Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee advises the Director of National Parks on the implementation of the Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan.

Meeting #3 was held by teleconference on Wednesday 13 May 2020. The Chair welcomed the meeting attendees and gave an acknowledgement of country. Kim Farrant (Marine Protected Areas Branch Head) also attended for the first part of the meeting to meet Committee members.

All except two Committee members attended, and also two observers. Parks Australia staff attendees were Martin Russell, Kath Sale, Steffan Howe, Andy Warmbrunn, Stephanie Lemm and Narelle Southam.

An update on management of the Coral Sea Marine Park was provided:

Communication, Education and Awareness Program

A story [Keeping our marine parks 'debris-free'](#) was placed on the Australian Marine Parks website on 3 March 2020.

A Facebook page was posted on 14 February 2020 with an update about green turtles nesting on the sandy cays of the Coral Sea Marine Park.

Kim Farrant provided a Keynote presentation about management of Australian Marine Parks at the Global Eco Asia-Pacific tourism conference in Cairns on 2-4 December 2019.

The short film, based on interviews with Meriam Mer elders and Traditional Owners, is now available on web <https://parksaustralia.gov.au/marine/news/managing-sea-country-in-the-coral-sea/>.

Tourism and Visitor Experience Program

Draft guidelines on the assessment of commercial tourism licence applications for island use was discussed by the Committee.

Indigenous Engagement Program

An Indigenous Engagement and Cultural Heritage Strategy for Australian Marine Parks is being prepared in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.

Work is also underway on how the Director of National Parks can support engagement with traditional owners in specific areas including, authorisations assessments, and marine science. This is intended to support meaningful engagement with interested groups and avoid impacts to cultural values.

Marine Science Program

The Committee was briefed on current research and monitoring projects in the Coral Sea Marine Park.

The Coral Sea Coral Reef Health Project (James Cook University) involved investigating the health of corals and fish communities. Three years of research voyages were completed in March 2020, and the results are being analysed to provide Parks Australia with the overall health of coral reefs, including the level of and impacts from coral bleaching.

The Coral Sea Island Health Project, in collaboration with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, is investigating the health of Coral Sea islands. An assessment of six islands in the Coringa-Herald area was done in December 2019 and is the first of a number of proposed surveys of the more than 56 islands in the Park. A second voyage to the Diamonds Islets and Lihou Reef cays is proposed for 2021.

In November and December 2019, Reef Life Survey undertook surveys at Frederick Reef and Kenn Reef, adding to our understanding of these reefs.

The Research Vessel Falkor ([Schmidt Ocean Institute](#)) has been exploring the deep-sea areas in the Coral Sea Marine Park using multi beam mapping and a remote underwater vehicle. This research will provide information the habitats and species that live in deep water areas down to 2000m.

Assessments and Authorisations Program

Since July 2018, 38 authorisations were issued: media (1), tourism (22), research and monitoring (11), structures and works (1), use of a drone (1), and actions by or under the direction of the Commonwealth and Commonwealth agencies (2).

Parks Protection and Management Program

Field operations in the Park, including the Island Health Project, are being done in collaboration with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Compliance Program

One compliance incident was recorded in the Coral Sea Marine Park in the last quarter (a charter vessel identified by aerial surveillance was found operating without an authorisation in the Park).

Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement framework for Australian Marine Parks

A draft National Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) framework for Australian Marine Parks was provided to the Committee for comment. This outlines the approach to monitoring the health of Australian Marine Parks and explains the process for evaluating the effectiveness of management actions in delivering the outcomes outlined in management plans. The Committee will be consulted further on MERI.

Next Meeting

The next Committee meeting is proposed to occur in Cairns in November 2020.

For more information about the Coral Sea Marine Park or the Committee:

Visit parksaustralia.gov.au/coralsea

Email marineparks@environment.gov.au