



Australian Government

**Department of the Environment,
Water, Heritage and the Arts**

Executive Summary

of the

East Marine Region

Strategic Regional Assessment Workshop - South

Sydney

18-19 June 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Government is developing a series of Marine Bioregional Plans that will cover all five of Australia's marine regions. The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage, and the Arts (DEWHA) is taking a consultative approach to development of the Bioregional Plan for the East Marine Region (the EMR). This workshop was the second of three to be held in the Region and it provided experts and stakeholders with the opportunity to provide input to inform the identification of key conservation and heritage priorities for the area of the EMR between Bermagui, NSW in the south and the Queensland/NSW border in the north, of the activities and impacts that occur there, and tools to manage them under the proposed Plan. The workshop was attended by a wide range of stakeholders, although not all stakeholder groups were able to attend.

Drawing on the conservation values and activities identified in the East Marine Region Bioregional Profile, released by DEWHA in May 2009, the workshop identified a range of habitats, species and activities that participants considered warrant specific consideration in the development of the EMR Bioregional Plan.

These are summarised below.

Habitats	Species/Species Groups	Activities
Offshore seamounts	Prey species	Commercial fishing
Canyons	Medium pelagic species	Recreational fishing
Shelf edge rocky slope	Large pelagic species	Charter fishing
Temperate (reef) corals and sponges	Demersal finfish	Marine-based tourism
Shelf reefs	Deepwater dogfish	Ports and shipping
Abyssal plains	Orange roughy	Offshore oil and gas
Continental slope	Eastern gemfish	Sea dumping
Water column	School shark	Indigenous activities
	Demersal invertebrates	Recreational boating
	Cetaceans	Defence
	Great white shark	Marine debris
	Grey nurse shark	Research
	Seabirds	
	Sea snakes	
	Marine turtles	

The workshop conducted a broad, qualitative assessment of the relative impact of each activity on each habitat and species/species group. While the workshop did not seek to achieve consensus on issues there were a number of strong themes that emerged:

- There is a need for the review of some of the data contained in the Bioregional Profile to ensure that it reflects the extent and value of activities in the EMR accurately and that the document provides a sound basis for decision making

- The relatively coarse nature of the assessment of impacts of activities on habitats and species, the background of participants and the nature of the process should be recognised in interpreting the outcomes of the workshop
- The assessment did, nevertheless, highlight key areas of uncertainty and provide guidance on the broad activities and species warranting further consideration
- Existing management/regulations, including existing marine protected areas (MPAs) and green zones, need to take into account when determining the nature and extent of new MPAs
- There is a need for the marine planning process to be adaptive over time to large scale shifts resulting from climate change and to new information as it becomes available
- Targeted and comprehensive socio-economic studies need to be conducted when DEWHA announces the Areas for Further Assessment
- Consultation needs to be conducted with sectors not represented or under-represented at the workshop

In assessing the expected outcomes of the workshop, participants were of the view that their individual expectations had been met to quite a high degree. DEWHA acknowledged the success of the workshop and indicated that it has reinforced its view that early stakeholder consultation was a valuable addition to the marine planning process. DEWHA also emphasised that it was committed to providing opportunities for stakeholder engagement at each future step of the process towards developing a Bioregional Plan and MPAs for the East Marine Region.

Acknowledgements

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Disclaimer:

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