



National Environmental
Research Program

TROPICAL ECOSYSTEMS *hub*

NERP Tropical Ecosystems Hub Conference 2013

**Wednesday 8 May 1530-1700
Forum Synopsis**

**Managing natural resources for
future generations**

Convener: Mark Read PhD

Manager Species Conservation, Ecosystem Conservation and
Sustainable Use Group, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority



Australian Government

**Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities**

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Forum: Managing natural resources for future generations

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Managing natural resources for the benefit of future generations is often a delicate act to balance the need to address all threats to ensure long-term viability and resilience; to ensure that any use is ecologically and economically sustainable and that the social benefits of having these elements of biodiversity within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area are recognised and respected.

Underpinning all of this is the need to make decisions based on the best available information. This can come from the well-respected and accepted disciplines of standard research and monitoring programs, but increasingly the information is coming from dependent industries, such as the tourism industry, and the multi-generational knowledge from Traditional Owners and fishers. It is also becoming increasingly obvious that the community wants (and expects) to take a more active role in decisions regarding the management of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and its biodiversity, which can lead to better environmental, social, economic and governance outcomes, particularly at the local level.

Contributing to the challenges of managing natural resources for future generations is that many species migrate or travel over large distances; that habitats or species can be cryptic or difficult to study; are managed by multiple jurisdictions and are exposed to multiple threats, particularly in inshore areas. Meeting some of these challenges can involve taking a more direct approach – intervening; and this management option comes with its own series of policy, operational and philosophical considerations.

The three speakers in this session all contribute in various ways to our understanding of the management of natural resources for future generations.


- Dr Andrew Tobin's research is making a significant contribution to improving our understanding of the life history parameters and distribution, abundance and movements of coastal shark populations.
- Dr Cathy Dichmont and her multi-disciplinary project team are developing by way of a bottom-up process with significant input from local people at a regional level (Mackay and Burdekin); a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) framework to build understanding of the key human uses and drivers of change in the inshore Great Barrier Reef (GBR), and to inform GBR stakeholders of the likely consequences, costs and benefits of particular management decisions that aim to minimise the impacts on biodiversity, particularly from inshore multi-species fisheries.
- Dr Brad Congdon's research is demonstrating the far-ranging foraging behaviour of seabirds that nest on offshore islands, and provides clear examples of connectivity between the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, and the Coral Sea and waters off central New South Wales.

Joining the researchers in a Q and A panel session following the presentations will be representatives of the research user community.

- Mr Lyle Squire Jnr is the Director of Cairns Marine
- Mr Gavin Bassini is a Lama Lama Traditional Owner from Cape York Peninsula
- Mr Paul Aubin is the Director of CAREFISH, a recreational fishing representative group
- Ms Rebecca Williams is the Director of Wildlife Management for DEHP
- Mr Richard Quincey is the Director of the Field Management Group from GBRMPA

Some focus questions for the session are:

- Our best outcome for managing natural resources for future generations is for all users to work together and harness the collective resources available to continue and enhance current conservation and



management and to ensure ecologically sustainable use. However, many of our processes do not facilitate this collaborative approach, such as the approval-by-approval consideration of biodiversity offsets, all operating at different spatial and temporal scales. Should we and can we do this better to improve the long-term outlook for the Reef?

- Despite our best efforts, there still seems to be a disconnect between our current understanding of the threats facing the Reef and its biodiversity and communicating this to some of our key stakeholders. How can we do this better and what other communication methods do we need to consider to improve information uptake and acceptance?
- Often the ideas for how we can reduce our impacts on habitats and species come from people who have spent their lives working on the Reef or Traditional Owners who have the multi-generation connection to country. However, we haven't been particularly good at recognising or respecting these ideas or incorporating these into the decision-making framework. How do we get better at including these ideas as a standard/mandatory component of decision making?
- For some populations that are really under pressure, just how far do we intervene to maximise their resilience into the future?