

North Marine Parks Advisory Committee

Meeting #6 Communique

24 November 2021 - Videoconference

Attendance:

Members

Frances Verrier (Acting Chair)
Ricky Archer
Carol Conacher
Robert Fish
Jason Fowler
John Glaister
Jackie Gould
Ian Knuckey
Christine Lamont (apology)
David Ciaravolo (apology)
Jade Ritchie (apology)
Rachel Baird (apology)
Peter Cox (apology)
Robert Pender (resignation)

Observers

Stan Lui (Torres Strait Regional Authority)
Darren Roy (QLD Government)
Liesl Wilson (NT Government)

Secretariat (Parks Australia)

Lou Fava
Coco Cullen-Knox

2018-22, and preparing for the Consolidation Phase of management from 2022-26.

The Committee welcomed a presentation from the Northern Territory Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet, which provided an overview of Aboriginal land and native title in the marine environment, including implications of the Blue Mud Bay Decision, and Beds and Banks Claims.

Other topics discussed included: progress implementing the Ghost Nets Initiative and an update from the Northern Territory Government on the Marra People's Limmen Bight Healthy Country planning process.

Highlights of the management actions and achievements for each of the programs in the North Marine Parks Network over the last six months were shared with the Committee and are listed below.

Communication, Education and Awareness

A workshop and plenary session about managing Sea Country in Northern Australian Marine Parks had been planned for the Territory Natural Resource Management Conference, which had to be cancelled due to COVID-pandemic restrictions.

The sessions will now be held in 2022, providing an opportunity to highlight partnerships with Traditional Owners and ranger groups in managing the North Marine Parks Network. Discussions will focus on key areas for future collaborations such as the management of ghost nets, natural and cultural values, and monitoring and research in the offshore marine environment.

About the Committee and Meeting #6

The North Marine Parks Advisory Committee provides advice to the Director of National Parks on the implementation of the [North Marine Parks Network Management Plan](#).

Meeting 6 was held via a videoconference on Wednesday 24 November 2021, from 12pm-2pm AEDT.

A key focus for Meeting #6 was reflecting on the successes and opportunities from the *Foundational Phase Implementation Plan* of

Science

The Committee was updated on research and monitoring projects in the North Marine Parks Network.

- In October 2021, 200 sites were sampled in Limmen Marine Park by li-Anthawirriyarra rangers with James Cook and Charles Darwin Universities. This seagrass mapping and benthic survey was funded through Our Marine Parks Grants Round 2. No sites were deeper than 20 metres, making Limmen the shallowest Australian Marine Park.
- Habitat and biodiversity surveys have commenced in Special Purpose Trawl zones of Wessel, Arafura and Oceanic Shoals Marine Parks.
- A collaborative seagrass mapping survey is being supported by Parks Australia and the Torres Strait Regional Authority in West Cape York Marine Park. James Cook University will be joined by Traditional Owners and Indigenous rangers from the region to conduct field surveys in December 2021. This research also includes a pilot biodiversity survey.

Indigenous Engagement

A number of Indigenous ranger training and monitoring projects are underway in the North Network.

- Bawinanga Rangers have begun sea country monitoring with the deployment of sea temperature loggers in September 2021 in Arnhem Marine Park.
- The Indigenous ranger training and monitoring project between Parks Australia, AIMS and the Thamarrurr Rangers at Joseph Bonaparte Gulf is due to complete the final phase of fieldwork by June 2022.
- Ongoing discussions with the Torres Strait Regional Authority and Ipima Ikaya Aboriginal Corporation have supported Indigenous ranger participation in the December seagrass and biodiversity surveys in West Cape York Marine Park.

Tourism and Visitor Experience

Tourism in the North Marine Parks Network remains relatively low in comparison to other regions, although activity in this area may increase as COVID-pandemic restrictions ease in 2022.

Authorisations and Assessments

Twenty-one authorisations have been issued since July 2018. These include activities involving actions by or under the direction of the Commonwealth and Commonwealth agencies (1); research and monitoring (15), structures and works (1); commercial media (1) and commercial tourism (3).

Park Protection and Management

Parks Australia continues to work cooperatively with AFMA on the recovery of ghost nets from Australian Marine Parks under a Memorandum of Understanding.

A successful GPS trial has resulted in the tracking and recovery of a large net near Badu Island, about 80km east of West Cape York Marine Park.

As part of the Ghost Nets Initiative, marine debris clean-ups are being piloted by three Indigenous ranger groups in the Gulf of Carpentaria, including Dhimurru rangers near Wessel Marine Park. A new training package is being trialled at these clean-ups.

Compliance

Nine compliance incidents occurred in the North Network for the April to September 2021 period.

The compliance team have a hotline for reporting illegal activities: 1800 852 975 or marine.compliance@environment.gov.au

Next meeting

The next Committee meeting is planned for Darwin (if COVID restrictions allow) in May 2022.

For more information about the North Marine Parks Network or the Committee:

Visit parksaustralia.gov.au/north

Email marineparks@environment.gov.au