NERP Tropical Ecosystems Hub Project Factsheet

Marine wildlife management in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area

Project leaders: Dr Mark Hamann & Professor Helene Marsh (JCU)

Project summary

Marine mammals (dugongs and dolphins) and turtles are facing threats from human activities such as fishing, pollution and coastal development. This project will use monitoring, genetics, satellite tracking and remote sensing techniques to determine the distribution and status of inshore dolphins in the northern Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA); estimate the size of the dugong population along the GBRWHA coast; and better understand the role of green turtles and dugongs in coastal ecosystems. The project will also work with Traditional Owners to improve conservation of these species of conservation concern and high cultural value.

Why this research is needed

Managers of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park need information about the current status and trends of marine species of conservation concern and how human activities such as fishing and coastal development affect populations of these species so they can be effectively managed.

Research-user focus

The project will deliver outcomes that are useful to a range of stakeholder and landholder organizations including State and Australian Government bodies, Traditional Owners, coastal developers, the tourism and fishing sectors and conservation planners/managers. Specific research-users include the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and the Queensland Departments of Environment and Heritage Protection and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Project Partners:

Australian Government | Australian Institute of Marine Science | James Cook University Australia

The significance of the GBR for dugongs and turtles was one of the reasons for its World Heritage listing.

The GBR has a globally significant population of Hawksbill turtles, and through the NERP we aim to improve knowledge of their status.

Photos: JCU

Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the project include the following:

- Improved information about the population status of inshore dolphins, dugongs and marine turtles.
- Improved stakeholder understanding of the threats to these species and how these threats vary from place to place.
- Improved understanding of Traditional Owner issues relating to the management of the Great Barrier Reef; such as the sustainability of the traditional use of species of conservation concern.
- Improved understanding of non-Indigenous participants about traditional ecological knowledge and cultural aspects of marine wildlife management.

Find this project at www.nerptropical.edu.au
Theme 1: Assessing ecosystem condition and trend
Program 1: Historical and current condition of the GBR
Project: 1.2

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