



5th Western Australian State

# COASTAL CONFERENCE 2009

*Whose Coast Is It?  
adapting for the future*

9B:  
Marine  
monitoring:  
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Orion Room

## Developing Collaborative Partnerships for Monitoring Marine Park Assets in Western Australia

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### Abstract

DEC is in the establishment phase of the development and implementation of a statewide marine monitoring program. The initial focus of the Western Australian Marine Monitoring Program (WAMMP) will be on assessing the effectiveness of DEC's conservation and management programs for the State system of MPAs and threatened marine fauna. The Condition-Pressure-Response (CPR) model, within an active adaptive management framework, provides the conceptual framework for the WAMMP. The implementation model for the WAMMP is a partnership approach between the Marine Monitoring Unit (MMU) of the Marine Science Program and DEC's regions and specialist branches. Further explanation of this approach can be found in DEC's Marine Science Strategy.

Importantly, assistance from external science groups (e.g. universities AIMS, CSIRO, etc) will be sought on a collaborative (preferably), and/or fee-for-service basis. In order to guide this process, this paper outlines the management and reporting requirement of marine park managers, and suggests ways that university programs can engage in the process of monitoring and supplying information for management of ecological assets.

### Introduction

Marine parks and reserves in Western Australia are managed by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). The Marine Parks and Reserves Authority (MPRA) is the independent authority in which marine conservation reserves are legally entrusted on behalf of all Western Australians, and as such the MPRA ensures management objectives and targets articulated in Marine Park management plans are being met.

Apart from its on-going operational responsibilities, DEC is currently in the establishment phase of a statewide marine monitoring program. This program, the Western Australian Marine Monitoring Program (WAMMP), implements monitoring across a range of ecological and social values to enable the delivery of evidence based management of MPAs and threatened marine fauna.

## **WAMMP**

The Western Australian Marine Monitoring Program (WAMMP), is primarily a partnership of Regional Services, Specialist Branches of DEC and the Marine Science Program. The programs main focus is on assessing the effectiveness of DEC's conservation management and operates a Condition-Pressure-Response (CPR) model, within an active adaptive management framework for managing marine values.

Ecological and social values identified within each Marine Park management plan have already been prioritised in the planning of Marine Parks, and the initial focus for monitoring will be the collection of quantitative data relevant to assets identified as key performance indicators (KPI) of each Marine Park. The condition of each KPI will be assessed within the context of specific management targets and both corresponding pressures and management responses will also be measured. Results from monitoring are used to assess management effectiveness and appropriate changes to work plans and activities are made as required.

## **Collaborative Programs**

Although the WAMMP is primarily a partnership between the Regional Offices, DEC Specialist Branches and the Marine Science Program, there is scope for wider collaboration. To enhance the effectiveness of the WAMMP, DEC seeks to strengthen existing and establish new collaborative partnerships with external marine science groups (e.g. universities AIMS, CSIRO, etc) and other state government agencies, which regularly conduct fieldwork in the marine environment.

The intention of this presentation is to encourage the establishment of collaborative partnerships and suggest ways in which groups with an interest can engage in the process of monitoring the status of marine assets and supplying information for management. Initially, we wish to encourage university groups that are already undertaking monitoring or research in WA's Marine Parks to try and align their work program to DEC management needs. In addition, when developing new programs in conjunction with DEC, we will try to develop survey, data management and reporting plans around recognised management objectives and strategies. This collaborative approach will add a new dimension to the way in which universities prepare project proposals and conduct routine work in Marine Parks. The main outcome sought will be a closer alignment of resulting information to the needs of DEC Marine Park managers, and therefore greater assistance in on-going conservation management.

The scope for expansion of this collaborative relationship is broad and can encompass both monitoring and research activity from any science provider interested in marine conservation in WA. The advantages of collaborate approaches are many and varied and include; meeting grant requirements for collaborative partnerships, more efficient use of marine park resources, greater assistance by Marine Park and Marine Science Program staff, and better sharing of information that was often previously inaccessible. In playing a more supportive role in the monitoring of marine park assets students and other collaborators will gain an unprecedented insight into MPA management operations and develop informative and beneficial relationships with DEC staff and departments. The Marine Science Program of DEC which houses the coordinating office of the WAMMP, will ensure that opportunities for collaborative activity and the information that such programs produce are available across the whole marine conservation estate of Western Australia.

## **Conclusion**

As part of its overall strategic plan, the Western Australian Marine Monitoring Program is in the process of ensuring its collaborative partnerships with universities and other institutions involved in marine monitoring in Western Australia's Marine Parks are well supported. Over the next five years WAMMP will encourage the development of new initiatives and better facilitate collaborative partnerships by instituting a more systemised framework for their management. Importantly DEC will ensure a broad use of the resulting information such collaborations produce.

The aim of this initiative is to strengthen links with collaborators and the relevance of current collaborative partnerships. In addition we wish to ensure collaborators receive a greater opportunity for exposure to the practical aspects of current marine protected area management in WA, and play a more relevant role in their general management.

One aim of managing Marine Protected Areas in Western Australia is to ensure they are available for future generations to enjoy. We believe a better focussed, more systematic approach for collaborative monitoring of Marine Park assets will ensure multiple lines of evidence are available for management decision making in Western Australia's Marine Parks.