



Australian Government



## DUGONG AND TURTLE PROJECT NEWSLETTER

# Torres Strait Regional Authority & NAILSMA

# Dugong and Turtle Project

ISSUE 1

JUNE 2007

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Ghost Net Weaving course to be held on Hammond Island from 16th to 20th of July. For more information please call Miya Isherwood on 4069 2957.
- Mabuig Island Council commences ranger program.
- Ranger exchange between Hammond Island and Mabuig. For more info call Miya Isherwood on 4069 2957.

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## Legal Review Consultancy

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has commenced a legal review consultancy with James Cook University (JCU).

The review will investigate the management regime applying to dugongs and marine turtles in the Torres Strait region. The review will make recommendations as to the most appropriate legislative and management framework to recognise and support the implementation of community-based management plans.

Professor Paul Havemann of JCU is leading the consultancy team and brings much experience working on legal issues regarding indigenous use of marine resources.

JCU has developed a desktop review of legislation and management of dugong and turtle in the Torres Strait fishery. Prof.

Havemann visited Thursday Island in late May to present the preliminary results of the review. During the visit he talked



**Professor Paul Havemann of James Cook University**

to agency officers from Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), Foreign Affairs and Trading (DFAT), TSRA Land & Sea Management Unit (LSMU), TSRA Native Title

Office and a Kaiwalagal Traditional Owner about the consultancy and their perspectives regarding management of dugong and turtle.

Information gathered during the short visit will be used to inform the review further. Prof. Havemann will produce a plain English summary of the review. This is due in mid July.

LSMU then plans to discuss the review with Traditional Owners and Community representatives to identify the most appropriate framework to support community-based implementation of dugong and turtle management plans.

These discussions are planned for July / August. If you, or a representative from your traditional owner group or community are interested in participating in these discussions please call either Frank or Lachlan using the contact details listed on the back page of this newsletter.

## Erub Proposal to save Turtles at Bramble Cay

The Erub community are developing a proposal to address green turtle mortality issues at Bramble Cay.

Currently a cliff face on the cay has been eroded and it was estimated that during last years nesting season around 20-30 nesting turtles were dying after falling over the cliff each week. Erub community propose to

construct a low impact barrier or fence to stop the turtle mortality.

The Erub Project Officer Mr Kenny Bedford is liaising with a number of state government agencies and James Cook University to ensure the community based approach is not only culturally appropriate but incorporates sound technical advice. This

liaison has attracted a great deal of support for Erub's proposal.

If you want to find out more about the Erub community management plan please call Mr Kenny Bedford on 4069 4001.

Erubam le rescuing stranded turtles from cliff face, Maizab Kaur.

Photo by Kenny Bedford





**Mura Badulgal Ranger, Jimmy JK Panuel, doing Ghost Net Project Work. Photo by Sam Muller**

*“Badu community feel there is a need for the management plan. Dugong and turtle are culturally significant to the people of Badu and Mabuiag”*

## Mura Badulgal Dugong and Turtle Management Plan

Badu Project Officer Mr Horace Nona and representatives from the Mura Badulgal Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) hosted project staff from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> of May.

Over the 3 days the results of months of community consultation were entered into a dugong and turtle management plan template.

The draft plan titled “Mura Badulgal Dugong and Turtle Management Plan” includes a number of rules and regulations related to dugong and turtle harvest rules, egg harvest rules, traditional inhabitant visitation guidelines for dugong and turtle harvest and rules for the use of dugong and turtle meat and eggs.

The plan also identifies the need for a specified butchering area, continued ranger program and school program on the island.

Project Officer, Mr Horace Nona said the Badu community feel there is a need for the management plan.

“Dugong and turtle are culturally significant to the people of Badu and Mabuiag,” Mr Nona said.

“Badulgal are worried about hunting because it is easier with the introduction of new methods not used in the past.

“My people are concerned about the depletion of dugong and turtle stocks as well as hunter safety with more new hunters not knowing what they are doing,” said Mr Nona.

The next step is to promote the Plan at community meetings on Badu Island to seek the endorsement from the community.

Once the plan has been endorsed, TSRA and the Badu project officers involved are planning to engage government agencies to discuss how they can assist the implementation of the management plans.

Some planning suggests a permit system being monitored and managed by community rangers.

Agencies may also be requested to assist communities in enforcing their management plan arrangements.

If you wish to find out more about the development of the Mura Badulgal Dugong and Turtle Management Plan please contact Mr Horace Nona through the Mura Badulgal PBC office on 4069 4337.

## NAILSMA Project Partners Meeting

The Regional Facilitator Lachlan Sutherland and Kaurareg Project Officer Mr Pearson Wigness attended a NAILSMA Project Partners Meeting in Darwin 22nd to 24th May.

The meeting brought together Traditional owners, rangers and facilitators from across northern Australia to discuss the dugong and turtle project.

Each region gave updates on project progress, with Mr Pearson Wigness discussing the progress made so far on the Ngurupai (Horn Island) management planning.

The project partners discussed the future for the project, with funding due to finish in June 2008.

All partners wanted to see

grass roots ranger groups managing dugong and turtle resources with support from and or in partnership with government agencies.

If you want to find out more information about the rest of the NAILSMA project call Mr Rod Kennett on 08 8946 6271.

# Goemulgal and Western Cluster Meeting



**Goemulgal Dugong and Turtle Meeting 9th—10th May. Photo by Lachlan Sutherland**

Goemulgal traditional owners of Mabuig hosted two evening meetings on the 9th to 10th of May to document their communities management aspirations. They also hosted the first Western Island Cluster meeting with traditional owners from Mabuig, Badu and Moa attending.

Up to 25 traditional owners from Mabuig and Badu islands participated in the community-based management plan meetings. The meetings were held in the evening with a large number of hunters fishing for kiar and staying on the island.

The meetings were coordinated by Mr Terrence Whap, Chair of Goemulgal PBC and

resulted in the draft Goemulgal Dugong and Turtle Management Plan, titled “Mabuyagiw Maluu Ayngu Danan Pathay Thusi”: A Report Document that Protects the Sea Based Traditional Resources for the People of Mabuig.

The overall vision of this plan is “Sustainability of Sea Based Resources and the Reinforcement of Traditional Values, Cultural Protocols and Ethics for the traditional people of Mabuig”.

Mr Terrence Whap said the overall Western Cluster dugong and turtle management meeting was a successful one which gave the opportunity for traditional owners and hunters

to contribute to the plan.”

“People had came out with clear idea and understanding on the importance of community input into the process.

“People were more in support and working towards reinforcing of cultural practices and protocol and not losing the cultural knowledge from Elders.

“I would like to thank the representatives who came from neighbouring islands to participate in the 3-day meeting at Mabuig.” said Mr Whap.

If you want to find out more information about the Mabuig management planning please call Mr Terrence Whap at Mabuig Island Council on 4069 4184.

**“The overall Western Cluster dugong and turtle management meeting was a successful one which gave the opportunity for traditional owners and hunters to contribute to the plan”**



# PZJA Ministers Presentation

The Regional Facilitator of the Dugong and Turtle Project Mr Lachlan Sutherland, was given the opportunity to update the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) on the progress of the project in early April.

Lachlan presented to the Australian Minister for Fisheries, the Honorable Eric Abetz, the Queensland Minister for Fisheries the Honorable Tim Mulherrin and TSRA Chairman Mr Toshie Kris about the support communities involved in the

project need from the PZJA. The presentation highlighted the need to support community-based ranger programs to implement the management plans that the project was developing.

The Ministers received the presentation well but stated that before they commit to ongoing funding of community-based management they want to see management plans developed as part of the project. Once these plans are devel-

oped they said they would consider looking at future support to the process of community-based management of the Dugong and Turtle Fishery.



**Opening slide of the Presentation to the PZJA Ministers**



## Torres Strait Regional Authority Land & Sea Management Unit

### Dugong and Turtle Project Newsletter

PO Box 261

Thursday Island

QLD 4875

Phone: 07 4069 2947

Fax: 07 4069 2967

E-mail: lachlan.sutherland@tsra.gov.au  
frank.loban@tsra.gov.au

The Torres Strait Regional Authority, Land & Sea Management Unit (LSMU) is coordinating the NAILSMA Dugong and Turtle Project in Torres Strait.

The LSMU coordinates the delivery of regional and local level land and sea management initiatives, and supports communities to access additional financial and technical support and information about sustainable management of their environments.

The Unit operates out of the Four Winds Building above Gab Titui Cultural Centre on Thursday Island. For more information about the Unit contact the Manager, Damian Miley on 4069 2957.

Visit our website [www.tsra.gov.au](http://www.tsra.gov.au)

## Project Officer Profile—Moses Wailu, Mer Traditional Owner

Moses Wailu is a project officer employed under the NAILSMA Dugong and Turtle Project. Moses originates from the Piadram clan of Mer.

Moses is very passionate about the sustainable harvest of turtle and dugong. It is fitting that Moses has been selected as the project officer for Mer given his traditional knowledge and status under traditional Meriam law.

As part of his project officer role he has been consulting with the traditional owners of Mer about traditional knowledge as to turtle movements among the Meriam island groups. He has also been counting the hatchlings coming out of the nests, ensuring the turtle eggs are not

predated by chasing away feral animals.



**Moses Wailu, Mer project officer during a recent turtle research training. Photo by Marcus Finn.**

Each morning Moses also counts new turtle tracks on Mer to monitor the numbers of turtle nesting. On two occasions Moses has also conducted information presentations about the biology of turtle and dugong in the company of Frank Loban, Project Liaison Officer.

Moses is also involved in the facilitation and organization of Mer community planning meetings.

If you want to speak to Moses about the project you can contact him at the Mer Island Council on 4069 4231.

