

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- CONFERENCE -
- LSMU is supporting Traditional Owners to attend the 2009 International Sea Turtle Symposium in Brisbane.
- GARMA—Project Officers to present at the Garma Festival.
- AWARD—
NAILSMA Dugong and Turtle Project nominated as Banksia Award finalist.

INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:

- Project Update 2
- Tag returns Posters 3
- Iama Update 4
- Training 5
- Garma Festival 5
- Wugalgal Update 6

Torres Strait Regional Authority & NAILSMA

Dugong and Turtle Project

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Australian Government



Bardi Jawi Ranger Exchange and Hunting Workshop

In early June 2008, Mr. Terrence Whap from Mabuiag Island and Mr. Charles David from Iama (Yam) Island participated in a North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) exchange to Kooljiman (One Arm Point) in the north west Kimberley.



Terrence talks with Bardi Jawi Traditional Owner. Photo by Mr. Charles David.

Mr. Whap and Mr. David attended to share their experiences about developing Dugong and Turtle Management Plans with the Bardi Jawi Traditional Owners of Kooljiman. Both Terrence and Charles gave presentations at a hunting workshop. They talked about the use of traditional knowledge and cultural hunting protocols as the basis for dugong and turtle management.

In his presentation, Charles said that the plan was based on cultural protocols, and that when a plan is created, it must begin with the Elders because they know the protocols and have the knowledge. They also

shared with the Bardi Jawi the methods they used to develop their management plans.

Mr. David said that the Bardi Jawi exchange was a cultural and spiritual experience and that in regards to the NAILSMA project, information was shared and utilised in co-management of the traditional fishery. He thanked the Bardi Jawi for sharing their experience and achievements in their Ranger program, and said that what he learnt there will help him work towards establishing a Ranger program here on Iama. The cultural and traditional approach is very similar between Torres Strait and the Bardi Jawi towards management of their natural resources.

Mr Rod Kennett from NAILSMA who assisted in organising the exchange, said that it was one of the best investments of the NAILSMA dugong and turtle project. Mr. Kennett was very impressed with the presentations given by the Goemulgau and Iamalgal representatives, the understanding they had of



Mr. Terrence Whap is interviewed with Ranger Kevin George. Photo by Mr. Charles David.

planning and the experience that they provided to the Bardi Jawi traditional owners.

Mr. David's presentation was so well received that Bardi Jawi elders at the hunting workshop expressed a desire to start documenting their concerns for dugong and turtle and developing their own solutions based on traditional knowledge.



Green turtle spots in the tanks at Ardyaloon Hatchery. Photo by Mr. Charles David..

The NAILSMA exchanges are an important part of the dugong and turtle project allowing Traditional Owners to establish working networks of Rangers and fisheries managers. The exchanges allow sharing of skills and knowledge from an indigenous perspective.

Mr. David and Mr. Whap also had the opportunity to visit the Ardyaloon Hatchery that is run by Bardi Jawi Traditional Owners. The hatchery held a number of green turtles, barramundi, clam shell and other reef fish species. The experience was an eye opening one for Mr David given his aquaculture aspirations for a number of Torres Strait Islands.

Mr. Charles David and Mr. Terrence Whap at One Arm Point, WA. Photo by Rod Kennett.



Dugong and Turtle Project – Update



lama Project Officer Mr. Charles David working with AFMA Dugong and Turtle Fisheries Officer Ms. Samantha Emerick developing Ranger work plans. Photo by Moses Wailu.

Traditional Owners see themselves, along with continued culturally appropriate hunting, as central to the success of this process

The TSRA's Land and Sea Management Unit (LSMU) is coordinating the involvement of eight Torres Strait islands in a Dugong and Marine Turtle Project. The cross regional project funded by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust aims to empower Indigenous Australians to become more involved in dugong and marine turtle management.

The project is coordinated by the North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAISMA) and has five regional partners from the Kimberley to the Torres Strait, TSRA being one of these partners.

The primary aim of the Torres Strait component of the project is the development of community based Dugong and Marine Turtle Management Plans. The planning process, involving eight islands has been underway for over 2 years. Through the employment of Traditional Owners on each of the participating islands, the project has been able to develop eight draft Dugong and Turtle Management Plans.

The planning process has collated Traditional Owner concerns for Dugong and Turtle Management and through the use of participatory planning has developed a range of solutions to address these concerns. Because they have been developed by Traditional Owners and are founded on cultural protocols the solutions are

culturally appropriate, and aim to assist in reinforcing cultural values into island communities. These plans utilise a combination of Indigenous and non-Indigenous management systems that are believed to be a good starting point to achieve and maintain sustainability in the dugong and turtle populations.



Mr. Terrence Whap, Goemulgau (Mabuiag) Project Officer facilitates a planning meeting at Mabuiag. Photo by Mr. Lachlan Sutherland.

Traditional Owners see themselves, along with the continued culturally appropriate hunting of dugong and turtle as central to the success of this process.

Traditional Owners believe that a key to the success of these plans will be establishment of island based Ranger programs that will work with Elders to implement the plans as well as undertake community awareness, education, monitoring and research activities.

TSRA has facilitated involvement in the project of a wide variety of government and non-government organisations

Recently the TSRA coordinated a stakeholder consultation process, where six of the eight draft plans were distributed to 16 stakeholders. The response to the consultation was positive, with a number of Australian ministers congratulating the Traditional Owners on the plans and offering support for their implementation. Importantly, Jenny Macklin, Minister for Indigenous Affairs insisted that the implementation of the plans is a valuable employment opportunity and urged the Australian Environment and Fisheries Ministers to support the process.

During May 2008, Traditional Owners from the eight participating islands met with a number of key government and non-government people to discuss the outcomes of the consultation. The meeting aimed to discuss and consider both government and Indigenous perspectives on the plans. The meeting secured in-principle support of the plans based on a set of agreed actions that included some plan amendment. Discussions were led by a number of Elders who provided guidance to the meeting groups. Government agency staff and Traditional Owners agreed that the community based approach taken by the project was successful and that all groups coming together in this way was a success.



Goemulgau traditional hunters developing the Mabuiag Management Plan. Photo by Mr. Lachlan Sutherland.



Dugong and Turtle Project—Update cont.

As at early June 2008, the TSRA and Island Project Officers had completed many of the agreed actions resulting from the May meeting. An intensive planning session has just been completed on Thursday Island to amend plan objectives and actions and develop the first yearly work plans. These work plans form the basis and provide the steps needed to established the Island based Ranger programs as well as role out initial awareness raising and monitoring programs.

The TSRA project staff and Island Project Officers will be coordinating a series of island meetings in June and early July 2008 to finalise the plans. This will involve Traditional Owner sign off and endorsement. The plans will then be provided again to relevant stakeholders for their support.

The TSRA is concurrently developing a funding application to the Australian Government’s Working on Country program. The program has been established to provide wages to Indigenous Rangers to undertake land and sea management activities, such as dugong and turtle management.



Flatback turtle nesting at Crabb Island. Photo by Mr. Shaun Seymour.

This funding application aims to employ three full time Rangers on each of the participating islands of Boigu, Badu, Mabuiag, Mer, Erub, Moa, Iama as well as

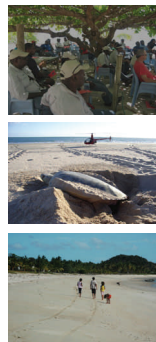
within Kaiwalagal over an initial five year period. The application is due by 11 August 2008 and to be successful, will require in-principle support of the Dugong and Turtle Management Plans by relevant government organizations.

The Ranger program will commence by implementing the Dugong and Turtle Management Plans but also broaden as skills and capacity increase to undertake a broader range of natural and cultural resource management activities.

Full implementation of the Dugong and Turtle Management Plans will take many years. The strong partnerships that have and are being formed between island Project Officers and government and non-government organisations will be essential for their successful implementation.



The TSRA is developing a funding application to support land and sea Rangers in Torres Strait.



Turtle tag returns posters—Call for tags

Turtle tagging is one way that turtle populations can be monitored. The information collected from turtle tagging provides a clearer picture of how fast turtles grow, how often they nest, where they ravel and where they nest. Tagging information also provides an idea of where turtle live when they are not breeding. These places are referred to as turtle feeding grounds.

One of the most important parts of the turtle tagging process is tag returns. Thousands of tags are applied to turtles around the world each year. It is the work of the people who find these turtles and or return the tags who help

gather the important information about the lives of these animals.



Mr. Frank Loban with the Endangered turtle t-shirt.

If you find a tag on a turtle caught during hunting you can return the tag to the TSRA LSMU. We have a range of sizes of the popular Endangered Turtle t-shirts available as a reward. LSMU will also send you the information about the turtle when it was tagged.

When you send in the tag it is important you provide information about the turtle such as: what the turtle was doing when it was found, where it was caught and the length of the turtles shell. The more information you can provide the better.

LSMU has also developed turtle tag return posters. These will be distributed to Project Officers throughout Torres Strait.

If you have any questions about turtle tags, speak to your Island’s Dugong and Turtle Project Officer or call the LSMU on 4069 2957.

Iama (Yam) Project Officer Update—by Charles David



Mr. Charles David at Kodakal. Photo by Mr. Lachlan Sutherland.

Projects such as the NAILSMA Dugong and Turtle Project are paving the way for Traditional Owners to implement their management aspirations.



Iama Council vessel to be used as part of the Iamalgal Ranger program. Photo by Mr. Charles David.

The Iamalgal Danghalal a Warual Wakai Waein (Iamalgal Dugong and Turtle Management Plan) is finalised and endorsed by the Iamalgal Traditional Owners. Currently a plan is being devised for a one week turtle tagging project on Wapa (Warrior Reef). The project will be based at Tudu during the week and will be a joint effort between Iamalgal Rangers, James Cook University and Torres Strait Regional Authority's Land and Sea Management Unit (LSMU).

LSMU will be inviting the Dugong and Turtle Project Officers from the other islands in Torres Strait to take part in the week long activity. The project will commence monitoring the Wapa turtle foraging population. Project Officers and Rangers will catch all species of turtle found on the reef and all size classes (kaz, muray, waru). The turtles will be tagged, measured and sex will be determined, including if they are in breeding condition. This will be determined through the use of laparoscopy surgery.

Also underway, is the Sassie Island Unuwa (Hawksbill turtle) Monitoring Project. This project is funded by the Marine Species Protection and Recovery Grants program, coordinated by the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA).

Sassie is renowned as the

world's largest Hawksbill nesting area and is part of the Iamalgal land and sea country. No studies have taken place on the island for decades. The project will collect information on the level of nesting occurring at this island and the success of hatchlings emerging from the beaches. This information will be used to develop a management and monitoring plan for the island, to determine appropriate levels of egg harvest and other management arrangements.

As part of the project the Iamalgal Rangers will be carrying out monitoring on a number of other islands in the Iamalgal sea country and this will determine levels of nesting, predation levels and will give a general indication of the condition of turtle nesting in the region.



Charles David at Iama. Photo by Mr. Lachlan Sutherland

In the development of these projects Iamalgal has established key partnerships between Traditional Owners and DEHWA, AFMA, James Cook University and TSRA's LSMU. It is anticipated that future turtle conservation

projects will emerge from these partnerships.

Since the pearling era, Traditional Owners have been calling for their ecological knowledge and methodologies to be integrated into Torres Strait fisheries management, research and enforcement. Following Eddie Mabo's successful native title claim, traditional Owners have been recognised for their land and sea ownership. Today, projects such as the NAILSMA Dugong and Turtle Project are paving the way for Traditional Owners to implement their management aspirations for the fisheries including a Torres Strait Ranger program.

If funding becomes available The Iama (Yam Island) Ranger program would initially consist of a Senior Ranger and two Rangers. The Ranger duties in the first year will be to enforce the Turtle and Dugong Management Plan, monitor turtle foraging and nesting habitats, monitor and record catch and removing ghost nets.

All information and data collected by the Rangers will be used to improve our turtle and dugong management into the future and continue to ensure sustainability. If you would like to speak to Mr. Charles David about the Iamalgal Plan or turtle projects, please telephone him on (07) 4090 0014.

Project Officer Training—Work Plans and Participatory Planning

In early June 2008, five LSMU Project Officers comprising Mr. Moses Wailu, Mr. Terrence Whap, Mr. John Wigness, MR. Charles David and Mr. Pearson Wigness attended a Management Planning training on Thursday Island. The purpose of the training was that skills be learned and passed on to Project Officers, regarding participatory planning methods. Participatory planning is a process where by a group is assisted to discuss an issue, brainstorm ideas and come up with solutions to fix

or solve the issue. The Project Officers were also trained in the development of work plans and budgets.

The training was provided by Mr. Paul Josif. Paul has had a long standing relationship with Dugong and Turtle Managers in the Torres Strait. Mr. Josif facilitated a regional workshop at Gau-buth on Badu Island in 2006 as well as a Stakeholders workshop this year in May. His good relationship with the Project Officers and TSRA assisted in the training. The Project Officers were able to

refine parts of their Communities' Dugong and Turtle Plans during the training. They also worked together to develop first year work plans for their Ranger groups and come up with performance indicators to measure how successfully their plans are progressing.

This training will not only assist Project Officers in their current roles but will provide them with skills to assist their communities in future planning and Ranger activities.



Waier at sunrise. Photo by Mr. Lachlan Sutherland.

Project Officers to present at Garma Festival

Dugong and Turtle project staff and four Project Officers have been invited to present at the Garma Festival. Garma is held each year near Yirrikala in north east Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. It is the largest indigenous festival in Australia and this year the festival theme is Indigenous knowledge.

The project team will travel to Nhulunbuy in early August. They will be presenting on the importance of cultural protocols and traditional ecological knowledge in contemporary fisheries management in the Torres Strait Dugong and Turtle Fisheries. The project team will present during day two of the key forum—Indigenous Knowledge, Caring for Cultural and Country.

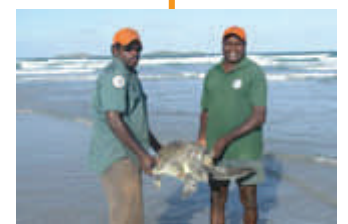
The community based approach to the Dugong and Turtle Project has allowed all

decision making to be made by Traditional Owners that are based on local aspirations and concerns.

A large number of Indigenous organisations will be represented at Garma and this will be a great opportunity for Project Officers to spread the word about dugong and turtle management in the Torres Strait. The Project Officers will also be able to meet with Indigenous Rangers from across Australia and share ideas about developing Ranger programs in our region. Mr. Terrence Whap, Project Officer at Mabuiag is also looking to support a dance group of Mabuiag dancers to take part in the festival. Each night of the festival a bungul (dance) competition is held and the Torres Strait dances would compete against dance groups across the north. This would be a great opportunity for cultural exchange.

The Project Officers will also have the opportunity to spend time with the Dhimurru Rangers, a Ranger group that has been operating at Nhulunbuy for over 15 years. The exchange of information and knowledge will be valuable for future Ranger activities in the Torres Strait.

If you want more information about Garma visit the Yothu Yindi Foundation website at www.yothuyindi.org.au.



Dhimurru Rangers release a turtle. Courtesy of Dhimurru Corporation.

Garma

Festival is held each year near Yirrikala in north east Arnhem Land.



Torres Strait Regional Authority's Land & Sea Management Unit

Dugong and Turtle Project Newsletter

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The Torres Strait Regional Authority, Land & Sea Management Unit (LSMU) is coordinating the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (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 environment.

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, Mr. Damian Miley on 4069 2957.

The TSRA LSMU wishes to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Kaiwalagal region, the Kaurareg people, on whose land we are writing and working from and to the Elders from throughout the Torres Strait.

Project Officer Profile - John Wigness, St Pauls Community

Hi my name is John Wigness and I am a Kaurareg descendent of Muralag (Prince of Wales Is). I live here at Wug (St Paul community), Moa Island. My father's side is of Kaurareg decent and my mother's side is from Yam island. I have been a fisherman most of my life and been working as a Community Fisher Group representative for the Mer and St Pauls communities.



Proposed seagrass monitoring area near sewerage outfall pipe at Woer Ngur. Photo by Mr. Lachlan Sutherland.

I now work as the Dugong and Turtle Project Officer here at St Pauls and have been employed in this position for just over 3 months. The work that I do involves management planning, looking at better sustainability and bringing the plan close to cultural protocols and traditional ways.

This process is being guided by our Elders.

We have had four meetings here on top at Wug, and where we are at now is that we have formed our plan steering committee group. We have met with the Mualgal PBC and Kubin community to talk about what we have done so far and inform them of our communities ideas for a management plan. We also want to work with Mualgal to develop a plan for all of Moa that involves both Kubin and Wug communities.

Wug community practices sustainable dugong and turtle hunting. Our community really wants to get involved in Ranger business to look after the land and sea country around our place. We have experienced environmental impacts from when the 1960's oil spill affected the coastline and marine life around Wug and we would like to work in partnership with other groups to monitor our reef and sea grass areas. Our plan will look at bringing back proper traditional hunting

methods such as paupa thaiyan (drift hunting) and practices such as mina uupi (traditional butchering method) and good pasin (sharing meat between families).

Our plan also recognises the spiritual importance of dugong and turtle to our people and we want to reinforce this respect for these two important animals.

I have been working with other Project Officers in the surrounding regions and look forward to doing more work with them. It is good that our communication is open and on the same level. If you want to contact me to talk about the St Pauls, plan please telephone me on 4069 4124 or fax 4069 4100.

John Wigness
outside St Pauls
Council Office.
Photo by Mr.
Lachlan
Sutherland.

