

Draft Management Plans for Australian Marine Parks

CSIRO Oceans and Atmosphere Feedback

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Overall comments

Rather than try to provide specific comments on each and every CMR, all of which have received detailed consideration over several years, CSIRO Oceans and Atmosphere has taken the approach of highlighting overarching principles of conservation management which apply to Australia's CMR network, and which we believe should receive greater emphasis across the CMR estate.

Adaptive management

Best practice management requires regular assessment of performance against desired trends and/or benchmarks, followed by cycles of revision of management practices and reassessment. The draft management plans do not appear to contain targets or performance measures for any of the proposed marine reserves, and we recommend that these be included in future plans.

Marine science program

CSIRO endorses the proposed actions within the Marine Science Program, in particular the action to establish baselines to support evidence-based decision-making and development of an Australian Marine Parks science strategy.

Zoning

The adoption of the IUCN classification system for zones is international standard and very appropriate. Given that the delineation of zones is subject to a range of considerations, we recommend further scrutiny of opportunities to align zoning with state marine parks. One obvious candidate, for example, is the Ningaloo Marine Reserve, which borders the WA Ningaloo Marine Park. The state MP has IUCN category II zones that abut the border with the Commonwealth MR. Given the very significant recreational fishing effort the region experiences due to the short distances from the coast, it would seem precautionary to continue these IUCN category II zones into the Commonwealth Marine Reserve (CMR) (which is currently category IV). Similar situations might exist in other marine reserves. It would be prudent to establish baselines of fish abundance here and in other marine reserves located near the coast as soon as practicable.

Spatial Design

It may be worth considering whether or not the current reserve system has sufficient contrast for the detection of any changes as a result of management over the coming decades. For example, having areas closed to fishing nearby to other similar habitats that are open to fishing will help facilitate monitoring of the efficacy of CMRs and their management plans. This is especially true in shallower water closer to shore where impacts (including recreational fishing) are likely to be greater.

Trawl Zones

Several large areas that have little or no recent or current history of trawling are proposed to be opened to trawling in the future. Generally initial trawling of previously untrawled areas has the potential to cause the greatest impacts on benthic biota. These areas should be surveyed before and after to facilitate an

understanding of the impacts of trawling within the CMR. This understanding will contribute to improved management of trawl impacts over time, both in CMR trawl zones and other fishing grounds.