

Project 3.2.4 Defining, assessing and monitoring Great Barrier Reef aesthetics

Project Summary

A key criteria for inscription of the Great Barrier Reef as a World Heritage Area is Criteria (VII) – exceptional natural beauty & aesthetic importance. This project will work across social and ecological disciplines to identify, for the first time, indicators that will enable managers to measure and monitor aesthetic values for the GBRWHA. The outcomes will enable managers to predict and minimize aesthetic impacts below, at and above the water within the World Heritage Area, support implementation of the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan and improve decision processes relating to approvals, impact assessment, strategic planning, incident response and policy development. The indicators will be additionally tested using Artificial Intelligence via project 3.2.3. The indicators will also be assessed for how closely they represent, or can be linked to, Reef Health. Such links may be integrated into existing Reef Health monitoring.

Problem

Condition and trend of aesthetics values are important to monitor in the Great Barrier Reef if the key values that underpin World Heritage listing and community benefits are to be reported on. Robust and practical indicators of Reef aesthetics are needed for such monitoring, and their link to Reef Health needs to be ascertained if they are to be integrated into ecological monitoring.



A scene from John Brewer Reef. This is relatively healthy reef that is likely to be aesthetically pleasing to most people



Photo: Adam Smith

A scene from Kewick Island. This is relatively unhealthy reef that is unlikely to be aesthetically pleasing to most people

How Research Addresses Problem

Through providing a clear definition, description and packaging of the attributes that determine aesthetic quality in the Great Barrier Reef, and how they relate to Reef health, this project will help Reef managers to:

- Monitor and manage the values of the Reef that underpin Criterion VII;
- Meet World Heritage reporting requirements;
- Achieve key objectives in the Reef 2050 LTSP; and
- Incorporate aesthetic values and related social values into RIMReP to inform decisions relating to Reef management, including approvals, impact assessment, policy development and strategic planning.

Whilst many stakeholders of the Great Barrier Reef will be interested in sustaining the aesthetic values of the World Heritage Area, we will be engaging mostly with government. Engagement with GBRMPA staff and Department of the Environment staff will mean that the Australian Government will be more readily prepared to meet the requirements of the Reef 2050 long-term sustainability plan, which has several actions for 2015-2020 which relate specifically to aesthetic values of the Reef.

Further information

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