



This communique is prepared at the end of each month to provide key stakeholders with information relating to the 'Reef recovery to improve Whitsundays tourism' project progress, consultation and activities.

Reef recovery to improve Whitsundays tourism

30 May 2018

Signed Agreement

The successful applicants under the joint Australian and Queensland Government's \$2 million Tourism Recovery Fund grant program were announced on 23 March 2018. Reef Ecologic received funding for the 'Reef recovery to improve Whitsundays tourism' project. On May 4 we signed an agreement with the State of Queensland, Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games to facilitate recovery by helping to repair, rebuild and create new tourism experiences and infrastructure.

Consultation

A key component of this project is for the community and key stakeholders to be involved and empowered. Over the month of May we have participated in face to face meetings with the Whitsundays Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC), Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), the Whitsundays Regional Council, Tourism Whitsundays and a number of tourism industry representatives. We have consulted a number of other tourism and community representatives by email and phone. Reef Ecologic are planning on monthly visits to the Whitsundays throughout the duration of the project and welcome the opportunity to discuss any elements of the project with interested parties.

Site Assessments

On 20th and 21st May Reef Ecologic conducted site assessments at 11 locations in Bowen and the Whitsunday Islands Group. Terrestrial assessments were conducted in Bowen to support, underwater or inter-tidal.



Figure 1: Horseshoe Bay, Bowen with rock (left) highlighted as a potential base for intertidal artwork.

THE NGARO PEOPLE OF THE WHITSUNDAYS

The Ngaro people have long been closely connected to the islands, reefs and oceans surrounding the Whitsundays. Their habitation of the region is dated back round 18,000yrs ago with some of Australia's oldest rock art present in Nara Inlet (Hook Island).

The **Ngaro Sea Trail**, a unique blend of seaways and picturesque walks across Whitsunday, South Molle and Hook islands, has been developed in recognition of this strong connection to country. More information on the Ngaro can be found [here](#) and more information on the Ngaro Sea Trail can be found [here](#).

public art and educational installations. In the Hook, Hayman and Whitsunday Islands we assessed eight locations both above and below the water for potential art and educational installations as well as suitability for reef restoration activities. We have used a broad range of socio-economic and ecological criteria to assess each site for its suitability as part of the project.

In Bowen we identified the amphitheatre like appearance of Horseshoe Bay offers substantial aesthetic qualities that may be enhanced with terrestrial or intertidal artwork on the rocks on the foreshore (Figure 1). In the Whitsundays we conducted both in-water and above water assessments looking at benthic cover, fish communities, aesthetics for public artwork and potential for reef restoration activities. A number of sites (Langford, Blue Pearl Bay and Cairn Beach by Hook Passage) appeared suitable for terrestrial or intertidal art installations or educational/interactive

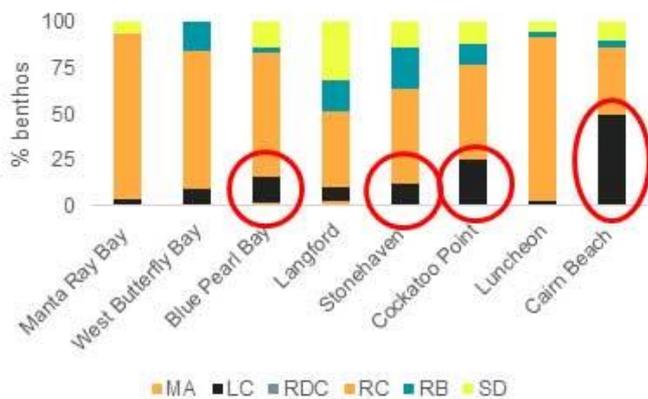


Figure 2: Benthic assessment results for 8 sites in the Whitsundays

infrastructure.

Benthic assessments showed four sites (Blue Pearl Bay, Stonehaven, Cockatoo Point, Cairn Beach) with higher than 10% coral cover (Figure 2). Besides Blue Pearl Bay, these sites showed sufficient species diversity to support an active underwater art/reef restoration project. These sites could provide a source of corals for coral gardening reef restoration activities proposed in Blue Pearl and Manta Ray Bay. ([Link to video](#))

Upcoming activities

Target locations for specific activities will be based on our site assessments and further consultation. Once finalised we plan to extend a 'call to artists' for artistic ideas to be contracted as part of the project components. Additionally, permit applications to GBRMPA for artistic installations and reef restoration activities will be submitted. An indicative timeline is below.



For further information please see www.reefecologic.org or phone Adam Smith on 0418726584

Proposed activities and milestones in June

- 13-14 June – meetings and field trip (weather dependent)
- Late June – Call to artists (linked to World Ocean Day)
- Late June- Permit application to GBRMPA for reef restoration