

Chair Report on ISP Meeting 33

1st of November 2019

Project updates

- Projects are on schedule.
- Draft scores and grades have been developed for all components of the 2018-19 Report Card
- Contracts for the 2019-20 Report Card are being progressively organised.
- The ISP Chair reported from the previous MC meeting that the MC had:
 - Approved the appointment of Dr Erin Bohensky to the ISP
 - Provisionally approved staggering the next Economics assessment to the 2021 Report Card so the full suite of Fish Health sampling could be held in 2019-20
 - Accepted the revised coral coring report
 - Approved the concept of a one-day workshop on nutrient loads in 2020, subject to external funding support
 - Requested more time to review the Water and Sediment Quality report
 - Rejected the proposal to change the scoring system for Mud crabs

ISP membership

The ISP canvassed potential replacements for Cathy Dichmont (fish/systems modelling). The ISP Chair will contact the most suitable ones.

Gladstone Ports Corporation sediment tracking program

Gordon Dwane from GPC reported on a stakeholder engagement process that has been run to analyse environmental management choices within the hierarchy of options for sediment management in Gladstone Harbour (Avoid-Reduce-Reuse-Educate). Various options under the Reduce and Reuse strategies have been analysed to assess different strategies for maintenance dredging.

Draft ISP recommendations for Water and Sediment Quality

Most of the data is robust, and there is little change from previous years. The ISP noted that there are some issues with laboratory and field blanks in the water quality data, which reduces confidence in the results of some parameters. It was agreed that Sediment Mercury would be included in this year's Report Card, by assuming that values for observations at the limit of reporting (LOR) are 50% of the LOR value. However, it was agreed that NO_x and Orthophosphate measures would continue to be excluded from the Nutrients section of Water Quality, for the following reasons:

1. Most of the data is below the LOR, meaning that the bulk of the observations are not measured precisely.
2. Scores can only be calculated by making an assumption about what the measure might be (e.g. 50% of the LOR), which is difficult to justify when it involves most of the observations.
3. The WQO differs between zones, so the application of the scoring gives perverse results (e.g. HEV zones get poor scores and MD zones get good scores even though the WQOs are much more stringent for HEV zones).

4. There would be an element of double counting when NOx and Orthophosphate are included, because these are really already measured under Total Nitrogen and Total Phosphorus respectively.
5. It is expected that DES will revisit the WQOs for the Port Curtis region in 2020 or 2021, so it would be preferable to delay inclusion until the WQOs are revised/confirmed (note that NOx and Orthophosphate have not been included to date).

2018-19 Report Card Results

The ISP reviewed all the draft scores and grades for the components of the Report Card, and provided recommendations on the presentation and layout of the results. **The ISP accepted all presented grades and scores generated by the various project teams.**

In relation to the Fish Health Indicator, the ISP recommended that one name of the elements in the Fish Health indicator be changed slightly to avoid confusion (from Visual Fish Condition Index to Fish Visual Assessment):

- Health Assessment Index (HAI)
- Visual Fish Condition (VFC)
 - Fish Visual Assessment (FVA) previously Visual Fish Condition Index (VFCI)
 - Fish Body Condition (FBC)

Report Card confidence ratings

- The ISP agreed to a high confidence rating for the Environmental component, with caveats, as not all indicators receive a high confidence rating.
- This is the first year that ISP has assigned high confidence to the Environmental component, which is largely because there is a full complement of indicators being assessed.
 - Water quality continued to receive a Moderate Confidence rating because of the limited sampling program (only 4 times per annum) and not all sub-indicators are included,
 - Fish Health received only a Moderate Confidence rating because of the novelty of the indicator and this was the first year it was included,
 - All other Environmental indicators were assigned high confidence.
- The ISP agreed that confidence ratings for the other components were to be the same as in 2018 with Social as high, Cultural as moderate and Economic as high.

Recommendation for research highlights

The ISP agreed that research highlights for the 2019 Report Card could be:

- Development of the new Fish Health indicator
- Sampling at reference site for the Mud crab indicator
- Unusual biodiversity sightings identified in the Mangrove sampling
- A map of marine debris sightings identified in the Mangrove sampling

Workshop of nutrients in the Gladstone Harbour

The ISP discussed the design of a nutrients workshop to be held in 2020:

Invitees: ISP, Science Team, external experts, PCIMP, MC, DES

Background data: PCIMP data (trends), DES data, BOM modelling; E-Reef modelling, GHHP harbour models

Location: Potentially Brisbane to achieve cost and time efficiencies

Date: Late February

Key questions to address:

- (a) Does Gladstone Harbour have a high level of nutrients?
- (b) Are we scoring the correct measures in terms of impact on Gladstone Harbour?
- (c) What is the relationship between nutrients and corals?

Meetings for 2020

The ISP will replicate the same pattern of meetings as was held in 2019:

- Meeting 1: Workshop, late February, potentially Brisbane
- Meeting 2: Virtual, late April or early May
- Meeting 3: Virtual, September
- Meeting 4: Gladstone, late October or early November

Other notes

1. The ISP Chair noted that the ISP had to plan a review process for the two fish health projects. This will be a focus of the second ISP meeting of 2020.
2. The ISP discussed how to begin more detailed trend analysis. Due to the complexity and budget limitations, the ISP Chair proposed starting with only nutrients and/or water quality initially. This will be incorporated into the discussion for the Nutrient workshop.
3. The ISP Chair noted that the Mangroves team had provided a very useful list and synopsis of key publications relevant to the issues in Gladstone Harbour. It was agreed that all contractors would be asked to provide something similar in the 2020 reports.