

THE REEF WATCHER

August 2002, Special Edition



LATEST REEF WATCH DEVELOPMENTS...

As many of you will be aware, Reef Watch has been dealing with some major issues over recent months. We have now reached a point where it's time to decide how we're going to deal with these issues. As these decisions will have serious implications for how Reef Watch operates in the future, we are keen to involve as many people as possible in this process.

This newsletter is the first part of that process, providing you with an update on recent developments, a discussion of some of our options from here, and possible implications of those options.

The second part of the process will be Reef Watch's ***Future Directions Forum***, where the decision making will happen. I encourage all of you with an interest in Reef Watch or marine monitoring generally to come along to the forum and have your say.

REEF WATCH FUTURE DIRECTIONS FORUM

Thursday the 22nd of August at 6:30pm,
Conservation Centre
120 Wakefield St. Adelaide.
Please RSVP to Chris Ball
Ph: 8223 5155 or
Email: info@reefwatch.asn.au

SCIENTIFIC DIVING STANDARD

In April this year the Australian Standard for Scientific Diving came into force. Advice received from Workplace Services and the Environmental Defenders Office has been that Reef Watch is obliged to operate in accordance with this Standard. Amongst other things, this would necessitate us employing a Diving Officer and Dive Coordinator, both of whom require Commercial Diving qualifications. It would also require all Reef Watch divers to have an annual dive medical.

The combination of the introduction of the Australian Standard and the current situation with public liability insurance, means that Reef Watch's role must be to support the research efforts of recreational divers and snorkellers, rather than take a lead role. Essentially this means that Reef Watch will no longer be able to organise monitoring dives. The emphasis will instead be on working with dive clubs and interested individuals who wish to undertake monitoring.

Under this scenario, Reef Watch's role would include:

Providing training for divers and snorkellers in monitoring techniques and species identification through –

- Workshops;
- Training sessions for dive clubs and others;
- Developing training resources;
- Providing monitoring kits;
- Receiving and collating data;
- Analysing and reporting on the findings;
- Undertaking community education and awareness activities regarding the importance and health of reefs; and
- Maintaining and developing the Reef Watch website.

The Reef Watch coordinator would therefore have a strong focus on active liaison, encouragement, and support, for dive clubs to undertake monitoring dives at an “adopted” reef, as part of their regular dive schedule. This could potentially result in a number of reefs being monitored on a regular basis.

Involvement of individual divers and snorkellers could be done through a combination of community education and awareness, the provision of training, and the development of a monitoring dive register on the Reef Watch website. The latter would allow people planning to go on monitoring dives to provide information on where and when they're going to dive. Others interested in monitoring dives could then take part in those dives.

In both of the above, data could be either inputted directly into the database via the website by the divers or forwarded to Reef Watch for inputting.

INTERTIDAL SURVEYS

For some time now the Reef Watch Steering Committee has been considering the possibility of expanding its monitoring activities into intertidal surveys. This would enable a broader range of people to become involved in marine monitoring, and would provide additional data not currently available.

An intertidal survey methodology and manual would need to be developed if it was decided to proceed with this option.

Reef Watcher is published by the Reef Watch Program of the Conservation Council of SA Inc. The views expressed in Reef Watcher are not necessarily those of Reef Watch, the Conservation Council, or the members of the Reef Watch Steering Committee.

If you have any news, stories, anecdotes, etc. which may of interest to Reef Watcher readers please forward to Chris Ball by fax to (08) 8232 4782, by email to info@reefwatch.asn.au or by post to 120 Wakefield St, Adelaide 5000.

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Reef Watch Community Monitoring Program

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