



Conservation Coalition Debunks Coral Sea Heritage Park *Myths*

CAIRNS (29 April 2009): A coalition of conservation groups today debunked several myths regarding the proposed Coral Sea Heritage Park.

“The proposed park is in a remote area that is visited by only the few anglers with the means to head out far into the open ocean,” said Mr. Steve Ryan, Marine Campaigner, Cairns and Far North Environment Centre. “A small number of recreational fishers have been misleading in their claims about the proposal leading to the end of fishing along the coastline. This is totally incorrect.”

The proposal for a Coral Sea Heritage Park was publicly released last September. If declared, the Park would extend from the eastern boundary of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP) out to Australia’s maritime border with Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and New Caledonia. The proposal calls on the Federal Government to highly protect this deep ocean area.

“Some misinformation about the Coral Sea Heritage Park proposal has unnecessarily caused concern in Cairns. We believe that once people are better informed, they will see the potential locally for being the gateway to the world’s largest marine park.” said Ms. Imogen Zethoven, Coral Sea Campaign Director, Pew Environment Group.

“The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has confirmed that fishing in the GBR Marine Park will continue as usual, regardless of what happens with the Coral Sea Heritage Park,” said Ms Amy Hankinson, National Liaison Officer, Australian Conservation Foundation.

“This proposal is about honouring the natural, military and civic heritage values of Australia’s remote Coral Sea, where Australians fought heroically in a Battle that turned the tide of WWII in the Pacific, and where precious marine wildlife now abounds,” said Ms. Nicola Temple, Coral Sea Campaigner, Australian Marine Conservation Society.

The groups – the Australian Conservation Foundation, Australian Marine Conservation Society, Queensland Conservation Council, the Pew Environment Group and Cairns and Far North Environment Centre – made the following clarifications about inaccuracies that have been aired in recent discussions about the park proposal:

- Recreational fishing along the coastline and in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP) will not be affected at all by the proposed Coral Sea Heritage Park. It’s business as usual in the GBR Marine Park.
- There is no link between the Coral Sea Heritage Park and the GBRMP zoning plan review which will occur sometime after 2011 (the Federal Environment Minister must decide the date).
- Most charter fishing occurs inside the GBRMP, between Cairns and Lizard Island, along the Ribbon Reefs. Charter fishing inside the GBRMP will not be affected by the Coral Sea proposal.
- The Coral Sea Heritage Park is totally compatible with, and will help secure, a vibrant tropical coast charter fishing industry operating in the GBRMP.
- The Cairns economy will benefit from the Coral Sea Heritage Park as it will create new tourism opportunities and new jobs in Cairns. The proposal is good for Cairns.
- Commercial fishing in the Coral Sea would cease under the proposal, which can only be good for game fishing in the GBRMP.

“99.9 percent of the world’s oceans are open to fishing,” said Ms. Zethoven. “With our oceans under increasing pressure, governments need to set aside a few large areas that can be kept as “safe havens” for marine life, so our children and their children can appreciate unspoilt places in the future.”

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For a full copy of the 70-page report that describes the natural and maritime heritage value of the Coral Sea, see:
http://www.globaloceanlegacy.org/resources/CoralSea_Web_100808.pdf

For a copy of the Coral Sea Heritage Park Myths Busted! See: www.cafnec.org.au

The Australian Coral Sea Heritage Park initiative has the support of a broad range of agencies, non-governmental groups, and civic leaders including:

- Vice Admiral (Rtd) David Shackleton AO (Chief of Navy 1999-2002)
- Vice Admiral (Rtd) Chris Ritchie AO (Chief of Navy 2002-2005)
- A group of six professors of marine science led by Professor Terry Hughes, Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, recent winner of the international Darwin Medal
- Battle for Australia Commemoration National Council