



Newsletter
**Moreton Island Protection
Committee Inc.**

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Rage against the Fish Cage

Sunday 9th February, Suttons Beach, Redcliffe.

10am to 2pm Live entertainment and BBQ Invite friends for a beach picnic & protest

Those who attended the last land based protest at Wellington Point enjoyed the chance to gather and express their opposition to the fish cages as a group. Media will of course be invited to attend and so we urge MIPC members and their friends to come along. This event may become a focus for the community response to the EIS which is expected to be released in early February. The EIS has been prepared by the proponents, SunAqua and thus will present a determined case for the projects approval. By having a large gathering on the 9th February, we can make it clear to government that the community's response to the EIS must be taken seriously. If the EIS has been released speakers will critically review the EIS.

Panel of Experts to review EIS

QCC has assembled a panel of Scientific experts who will assess the EIS. Included on the panel are Dr Hale (Dolphins, Uni of Qld), Dr Costanzo (Marine Biologist, Sunshine Coast Uni), Dr Udy (Marine Botanist, Uni of Qld) Roy Sonnenburg (Ornithology), Dr Skilleter (Marine mammals, Uni of Qld), Dr John Tinsel, (Griffith University Natural Resource economist) and Dr Lanyon (Zoology, Uni of Qld)

Submission Writing Workshops

If you are unsure of how to write a submission responding to the EIS then attend a workshop being organised by QCC. Locations include Wynnm/Many, Redcliffe, Brisbane City and Redlands - Ph 3221 0188

MIPC donates \$1000 for QCC Officer

The campaign has been stunningly successful in bringing the SunAqua sea cage proposal to the attention of the public and politicians. This is a difficult issue to promote in the media as the issues raised by sea cages are complex. Both the media and the opponents are to be congratulated on their success in informing the public and politicians. Central to the success of the campaign has been the co-ordination of the groups who are opposed to the fish cages in Moreton Bay: conservationists, seafood processors, tourist operators, resort owners and marine researchers.

Crucial to the success of the campaign to date has been the input of paid workers. These conservation and media workers have also volunteered large amounts of their own time, and so are very good value. The month following the release of the EIS - expected early February - is crucial to the success of our campaign to oppose the sea cages and so now is the time to help with funding the valuable work being done by paid officers. Recognizing this, MIPC at the January executive meeting pledged to donate \$1000 towards continued employment of a QCC project officer. As MIPC is not recognized to receive tax deductible donations, we ask those who would like to benefit from tax deductible status for their donation to donate directly to QCC. If wishing to donate then request a form on the MIPC message machine 3321 1463, or contact QCC direct on 3221 0188.

MORETON ISLAND
PROTECTION COMMITTEE INC
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Statement of Aims

1. To promote the preservation of Moreton Island as a natural area to be managed for public recreation and enjoyment, provided always that the recreational uses are consistent with conservation aims.

2. To foster the conservation of the vegetation, fauna and natural features of Moreton.

3. To facilitate public awareness and appreciation of Moreton Island as a natural area and encourage support for its preservation and management in accordance with these objects.

4. To co-operate with, or promote co-operation by any means with and among persons, trusts, corporations, firms, associations, institutions, governments, instrumentalities or government, municipal authorities and other bodies in the Commonwealth or its Territories or elsewhere for the purpose of carrying out any object of the organisation.

5. To oppose any development or usage of Moreton Island which is contrary to the preservation and good management of the island in accordance with these objects.

6. Generally, to take such lawful action as it considers necessary or appropriate in the interests of promoting the preservation and good management of Moreton Island in accordance with these objects.

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Moreton Island Protection Committee or its members. Contributions to this newsletter are welcome, but the editors accept no responsibility for alterations made to articles.

Printed by

Rex Leo Ph: 3878 5248

Editor: Alan Gennings

MIPC phone

The MIPC phone operates only as a message machine. Executive members are rostered to respond to your messages. It helps if you leave your request so the best person to deal with your request can respond. Please also leave your name and whether the number you leave is a home or work number. Information about upcoming events is also posted on the answering machine greeting, so this is a good place to confirm details of an event.

Management Plan

Rumours had placed the management plan at the Minister's office since March 2002. However whilst attempting to confirm this in December 2002, **the plan was located still with the Department of Environment being prepared for submission to the Minister's office.** Most of our efforts have been directed towards the Fish Cage campaign and so we have not been able to further pursue progress of the Management Plan.

How you can help!

Write a **personal** letter expressing **your** opposition to the proposed fish cages. **Handwritten letters are especially valuable as they show the letter is personal and not just a form letter with your signature.**

Public servants have noted in ministerial briefs regarding the public response to the Sun Aqua proposal, have noted that many letters received have been form letters rather than personal letters. Personal letters demonstrate a greater personal commitment to the issue and are thus more effective in influencing politicians.

Authenticity of petitioners to the Queensland Parliament are verified against addresses on the electoral role, so please include your electoral role address if your postal address is different to your electoral address.

For your personal letter you may wish to follow the format suggested below,

Dear Hon

I am opposed to the proposal for Sun Aqua Pty Ltd to site a caged aquaculture project in Moreton Bay. I request that your department act to stop the Sun Aqua proposal and any further proposals for fish farming in Moreton Bay.

You may also wish to state why you object-

The aquaculture will increase pollution in Moreton Bay.

The project will damage dugong habitat and seagrass

The project will attract sharks.

The project will impact on the cleanest part of Moreton Bay.

Addresses to write to include;

The Premier

Hon Peter Beattie, PO Box 185,
Albert St, Brisbane 4002

The Department of The Department of Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading

Hon Merri Rose,
GPO Box 1141, Brisbane 4001

The Department of Primary Industries and Rural Communities

Hon Henry Palaszczuk,
GPO Box 46, Brisbane 4001

The Department of Environment

The Hon Dean Wells,
GPO Box 155,
Albert St, Brisbane 4002

The Department of State Development

Hon Tom Barton,
PO Box 168, Albert St,
Brisbane 4002

FOI request received.

Requested documents relating to the SunAqua proposal to the Department of State Development were received in December. The documents are currently being assessed and acted on.

“You don’t know what you’ve got till its (*almost*) gone”

Following the publication in November 2002 of the results of field surveys in the vicinity of the Fish Cage site we now know some critical habitats that occur in the vicinity.

The proposed fish cage prompted the question, ‘What type of habitats occur at the proposed fish cage site?’ The only way to answer the question was to conduct a survey over the area.

Articles below written using material from “*Deep seagrass and coral habitats found in eastern Moreton Bay*” November 2002 by James Udy and Daniel Levy. (Marine Biologists, University of Queensland)

Sea grasses found in deep water.

A recent survey of benthic habitats near Moreton Island discovered the seagrasses *Halophila spinulosa* and *Halophila ovalis* growing at depths of up to 12 metres in the vicinity of the proposed fish cages.

Sea grasses require sunlight to photosynthesise, and so species living in deep water require clear water so the sunlight can penetrate to the bottom.

Deep water sea grasses in Moreton Bay are living close to their minimum light requirements and so any reduction in water clarity will result in these deep water sea grasses dying out.

At a depth of 12 metres *Halophila spinulosa* and *Halophila ovalis* are living at their minimum light requirements.

Fish cages can decrease water clarity by

- 1) increased nutrient levels increasing phytoplankton density in the upper parts of the water column.
- 2) particulate effluent from the sea cages (fish faeces, uneaten food and organic matter from biofouled cages)

Dugongs diving deeper than expected.

Recent research has demonstrated that dugong regularly dive to between 15 and 20m and remain at these depths for up to 3 minutes, indicating they may be feeding on seagrass meadows even deeper than those reported above. Dugong feed on the intertidal seagrass meadows on Moreton, Amity and Maroon Banks during high tide. The deep seagrass habitats that are poorly surveyed may provide important feeding grounds for the dugong during low tide. This is consistent with recent work that suggests the deep seagrass meadows in the Great Barrier Reef are important sources of food for the dugong herds along the Queensland coast.

Dugongs are vulnerable to any reduction in their food source as they are it seems only just able to get by. Their food is difficult to digest and has a low energy content and so like the Panda, dugongs are vulnerable to environmental change.

New habitat for *Cyclosensis cyclolites*.

Mixed habitats of the coral *Cyclosensis cyclolites* and the seagrass *H. Spinulosa* and *H. Ovalis* were also found at several location in water depths of approximately 8 metres. This is the first time that this species of coral has been mapped in this region of the bay, yet it is known to occur in other regions of Moreton Bay. *C. cyclolites* is a circular to dome shaped coral that is normally pale green to cream in colour and is often associated with unconsolidated sediments (eg. sand, rubble). These corals have symbiotic algae in their cells which require light to photosynthesise. Like seagrasses, they rely on the high water clarity in this area of Moreton Bay to survive.

Deep areas are net accumulators.

The dominant grain size of most sites surveyed was fine to medium sand (0.1325 to 0.5mm). Approximately 90% of the sediment at one site, dominated by the hard coral colonies, consisted of coarse sediment (>0.5 mm). The two deepest sites (>20 metres depth) had a large proportion of mud and silt indicating that these deeper sites experience weak tidal currents, leading to the sedimentation and accumulation of fine particulate matter. Highest sediment nutrient concentrations were also observed in sediments collected from sites deeper than 20 metres, suggesting that this area of the bay is a depositional environment for fine particulate matter and associated nutrients.

The proposed site for fish cages has water depths of 20 metres. Thus particulate effluent from the cages would tend to accumulate in these deep areas, thus adding to the nutrient concentrations. Negative impacts of this increased nutrient load include;

- 1) the invertebrate fauna in the deep water sediments would change
- 2) neighbouring habitats would change as water flowing into surrounding benthic communities would have increased nutrient loads. Increased nutrient levels would result in increased growth of algae on sea grasses which would decrease the amount of light for sea grass photosynthesis. Shading by epiphytic algae could lead to the deep sea grasses’ demise.

Whats on!!! Bookings 3321 1463

Sunday 9 Feb Sutton beach protest.

9 Feb Executive meeting after the protest.

7 - 9 March Blue Lagoon camp

21 - 23 March Blue Lagoon camp

4 - 6 April Blue Lagoon camp

Trips

Members only This year we are asking all participants on trips to become members. Our public liability insurance policy is now over \$800. The trips are now priced on a break even basis and so MIPC is no longer recovering money from trips to put towards phone costs and insurance. To partly remedy this we are requesting that all those on trips are members. MIPC membership is \$10 and \$15 for families.

Trip Costs - Transport to Blue Lagoon only

\$50 Volunteers

\$60 Adults

Children 5 to 14 years are half price.

Friday departure - additional \$6.50 to cover park fees.

Parking at the barge is \$5 per vehicle per night

Includes;

- Barge fare
- 4WD transport to Blue Lagoon
- appropriate National Park fees - \$6.30 per day.

Tents and use of camp kitchen are complimentary.

At this stage there are no 4WD bus tours planned.

Times: In the first half of the year the Moreton Venture does not run on Friday night.

Departures

Friday 8am and Saturday 6am (your choice)

Return 5pm (1pm option dependent on interest)

Provided at Blue Lagoon.

- Marquees tents with stretchers
 - Camp kitchen, with lighting, preparation tables, and some cooking pots.
- Bring your own food.

Volunteer work is being planned for all three weekends. However members who would like to take a break and just enjoy Moreton are welcome on all the trips.

Volunteer Projects

Following the bush fires we will attempt to clear rubbish along the roadsides. Bottles etc normally hidden in vegetation are now easy to find.

Access to locate isolated weeds such as groundsel is now possible. Groundsel located in unburnt areas is important to target now so they cannot set seed to the bare burnt areas where seedlings would now do well. On the ocean side, numbers of groundsel are small so pulling them out is feasible.

I will also be contacting National Parks to co-ordinate support that can be provided by the rangers. There may also be some other projects that they would like included in the program. When we know which projects are being planned we will post details on our answering machine so those interested in a particular project can participate.

Linda Back

Bookings and information 3321 1463

Be prepared to leave a message with contact number, specifying work or home and your request.

MORETON ISLAND PROTECTION COMMITTEE Inc.

Membership form

Name -----

Address -----

----- Post code -----

Phone

Res ----- Wk -----

Payment for memberships in arrears is not required but appreciated. Please allocate

\$----- for ----- years membership in advance

\$----- for arrears; \$ ----- as a donation
Annual fee \$10; Household \$15 Pensioners /Conc. \$5

LIKE TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED?

Then leave a message on 3321 1463 or
mipc@acenet.net.au and we'll advise details of the
next executive meeting.

Email address (PLEASE USE CAPITALS)

.....
I would prefer to receive my newsletter by Email
Yes or No _____

Any comments _____

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