

## Noosa Oyster Reef Restoration Project

### Technical Advisory Group Meeting – MINUTES

**Date – Thursday, 10 March 2022**

**Time – 10.00 am – 12:00 noon.**

**Location – Teams**

**Facilitators** – Craig Bohm (TNC), Megan Connell (TNC)

**TAG Attendees:** Simon Walker (ESP), Rebecca Schofield (DAF), Nikki Moore (DAF), Stephen Wesche (DAF), Gary Crozier (MSQ), Shaun Walsh (NSC), Simon Branigan (TNC), Leo Jensen for Kim Rawlings (NSC), Simon Reeves (TNC), Gary Crozier (MSQ).

### Agenda

| Topic   | Lead                    | Time allocation |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Welcome to Country / Acknowledgement of Country | Kabi Kabi or Craig Bohm | 5 minutes       |
| Introductions and agenda review                 | Craig Bohm              | 5 minutes       |
| Summary of project achievements                 | Craig Bohm              | 10 minutes      |
| Timeline of project                             | Craig Bohm              | 10 minutes      |
| Reef Builder around Australia                   | Simon Reeves            | 20 minutes      |
| Reef Builder- what does this mean for Noosa?    | Craig Bohm              | 5 minutes       |
| Monitoring key points                           | Simon Reeves            | 5 minutes       |
| 6 monthly partnership report                    | Shaun Walsh             | 5 minutes       |
| Tea Break                                       | All                     | 15 minutes      |
| Noosa Seagrass distribution report              | Simon Walker            | 15 minutes      |
| Construction overview                           | Craig Bohm              | 10 minutes      |
| Construction engagement plan                    | Megan Connell           | 5 minutes       |
| Community engagement highlights                 | Megan Connell           | 10 mins         |
| 6 monthly report and next steps                 | Craig Bohm              | 10 minutes      |
| Other business                                  | All                     | 30 minutes      |
| Meeting close                                   |                         | 12.00 noon      |

## Welcome to Country

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Noosa Shire Council (NSC) and this technical advisory group acknowledges the Gubbi Gubbi (Kabi Kabi) as the Traditional Custodians of the places in which we work. We also honour the deep cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection the Kabi Kabi people share with their lands and waters.

## Introductions and agenda review

The Nature Conservancy's Craig Bohm welcomed new contributors to the Technical Advisory Group and facilitated a round table of introductions. There were no apologies from standing members.

## Summary of project achievements

- Submission of all permit applications to government including development of a detailed project restoration plan. Permits requested include:
  - Owners Consent – to allow certain developments to occur on public land (permit secured from the Department of Resources)
  - Resource Allocation Authority (RAA) - to undertake restoration activities in the Noosa Fish Habitat Area (currently under negotiation with Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF)
  - General Fisheries Permit - to collect and spawn adult oysters from the Noosa River (permit received)
  - General Fisheries Permit - for handling and translocation of live oysters during the oyster reseed activity (permit agreed and drafted by not yet issued)
  - Development Approval - under the Queensland Planning Act 2016 and related acts, regulations (nearing finalisation pending the outcome of discussions between TNC and government related to liability and indemnity)
- Preparation for construction work including:
  - Identification and site visit with TNC's preferred specialist construction contractor (M&J Marine Services)
  - Review of all regional quarries and selection of a referred quarry (Boral - Moi Pocket)
  - Confirmation of the construction load out site in consultation with Noosa Council Staff. The site is at the end of Hilton Esplanade, which will be managed in accordance with a special site management plan and in accordance with the requirements of a Roads and Footpaths Permit to be requested from Noosa Council.
- Completion of a detailed construction engagement plan in consultation with Noosa Council staff. The plan includes:
  - Strategic communications for residents near to the load out site and the constructions sites
  - General communications to the community about the reef building process and timeframes
  - Public notices, temporary signage designs and QR code linked to online information.
- Continued to partner with three local restaurants as part of Noosa's Shuck Don't Chuck shell recycling project. The restaurants are:
  - Noosa Yacht and Rowing Club
  - Noosa Harbour Fish Market
  - Grenny's Noosa by the River

These restaurants continue to supply oyster shell with collection facilitated by the Resource Recovery Australia facility. The project has diverted more than 10 tonnes of oyster shell from entering local landfills.

- Facilitated the washing and bagging of cured oyster shell at the Doonan Resource Recovery Centre between October and December 2021. The activity included:
  - Participation of 18 volunteers who contributed over 160 hours of labour

- On site presentations to two school groups and one community group (coordinated with Noosa Council staff)
- Washing and bagging of over 10 tonnes of oyster shell
- Packing of 7 pallets with 5kg bags of oyster shell and delivery of these to the Bribie Island Research Centre ready for setting with oyster spat
- Washing, drying, and bagging of a further 5 pallets of oyster shell, for direct use in reef base construction
- Continued to partner with Noosa Integrated Catchment Association (NICA) to deliver oyster gardening and water quality monitoring.
- Approximately 20 interested oyster gardeners from waterfront properties, and additional volunteers interested in participating (those that do not have a suitable jetty but are keen to participate). Three information workshops have been held, as well as letterbox drops and face to face engagement with over 400 households fronting the river.
- Developed Noosa's Rock Oyster Gardening Manual for local our local Oyster Gardeners.
- Continued to partner with Noosa Environmental Education Hub (EEhub) to deliver the Noosa Senior Schools engagement project with local schools. School activities are in preparation including two activities focused on First Nations and their relationship to oysters and the Noosa River planned post flooding recovery.
- Continued to partner with Noosa Biosphere Community Association (NBCA) to deliver the Junior Schools engagement project. The project has developed a large banner showing local connections to the Noosa River, stunning oyster hand puppets for use in school events, pottery oyster babies and delivered its first live performance in Kin Kin State School.
- Developed and distribute special project information sheets on biosecurity, rock oysters, reef design and sites and frequently asked questions and answers (Q&A sheet).
- Developed the Spring 2021 and Summer 2021 editions of the Noosa Oyster Chronicle news circular. Direct circulation of each edition was to over 100 locally engaged stakeholders on the Noosa mailing list.
- Reached 32,289 people through mainstream media and 3,884 people through social media. Key actions included ABC local radio interview where Megan shared information on the Noosa project as part of International Women and Girls in Science Day.
- Entered into contract negotiations with the DAF for the Bribie Island Research Centre to support oyster seeding. Oyster seeding will take place in early Spring 2022 following construction of the oyster reef patches.
- Entered into contract negotiations with International Coastal Management, specialist coastal engineer consultants, to oversee and accredit the construction of the oyster reef patches.
- Responded to an inquiry to Noosa Council regarding the project's risk management approach to QX and Winter Mortality diseases, which are endemic diseases of oysters in river systems of eastern Australia.

## ReefBuilder

TNC Restoration Scientist (Australia Program), Simon Reeves, presented the TAG with an insight into the ReefBuilder management system and projects underway around Australia.

In January 2021, TNC launched the Australia-wide Reef Builder initiative. The initiative aims to bring shellfish reef ecosystems back from the brink of extinction across Australia— for the benefit of both people and nature. The initiative is a partnership between the Australian Government and TNC.

## ReefBuilder – what does this mean for Noosa?

For Noosa, Reef Builder resulted in a cash injection of an additional \$1.2m for reef building on top of the already \$1.2m already committed to the project from TNC and the Thomas Foundation and the \$1.2m committed by Noosa Council.

The additional Reef Builder funds means the project can restore oyster reefs at all 4 restoration sites thus more than meeting TNC's contract obligations.

## Noosa seagrass distribution report

Simon Walker from Ecological Service Professionals Pty Ltd provided the TAG with a brief overview of the Seagrass Distribution study (provided) and answered questions from the TAG.

\*Comment of thanks by DAF (NM) noted that the results are disappointing, especially considering that the current flood event will once again affect the seagrass. Long term declines of seagrass in the Maroochy River system are also of growing concern to DAF.

## Timeline of the project

TNC is:

- Finalising the scope of build based on financial analysis and negotiations with construction contractor and quarry.

The reef build is planned to occur at all 4 restoration sites in one build to save time, considerable cost and to reduce impacts on Noosa residents. The build will occur over winter (subject to permits) and subsequent seeding of the oyster reef patches with oyster spat (set on oyster shells) planned for Spring 2022. At this time the oyster spat will grow fastest and be more resilient to local predators than if set during winter.

- Finalising contract negotiations for construction, oyster seeding and monitoring (subject to issuance of permits).
- Developing a request to Noosa Council for a Roads and Footpaths Closure Permit (for the load out site).
- Preparing interpretive signage for the Tewanin demonstration site.
- Preparing for baseline monitoring prior to construction commencement.
- Supporting community partnership programs involving junior and senior students continuing with activities scheduled for term 1 and 2, 2022.
- Supporting a PhD student from Griffith University who is studying the diversity of oysters and their settling patterns in the Noosa River.
- Finalising a grant to Noosa Parks Association who is undertaking a baseline scientific study of sedimentation patterns in the Noosa River.

\* Comment from DAF (NM) - need for at least 4 years of monitoring post-construction. This should be adequately reflected in the timeline for the project.

\*Comment from DAF (SW) on the need to plan for a second seeding event.

## Permits and construction overview

TNC has:

- Submitted all permit applications to government including development of a detailed project restoration plan. Permits requested include:
  - Owners Consent – to allow certain developments to occur on public land (permit secured from the Department of Resources)

- Resource Allocation Authority (RAA) - to undertake restoration activities in the Noosa Fish Habitat Area (currently under negotiation with Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF))
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  - Development Approval - under the Queensland Planning Act 2016 and related acts, regulations (nearing finalisation pending the outcome of discussions between TNC and government related to liability and indemnity)
- Prepared for construction work including:
    - Identification and site visit with TNC's preferred specialist construction contractor (M&J Marine Services)
    - Review of all regional quarries and selection of a referred quarry (Boral - Moi Pocket)
    - Confirmation of the construction load out site in consultation with Noosa Council Staff. The site is at the end of Hilton Esplanade, which will be managed in accordance with a special site management plan and in accordance with the requirements of a Roads and Footpaths Permit to be requested from Noosa Council.

\*MSQ (GC) noted that MSQ will need to see a marine execution plan regarding the construction activities and use of craft / barges in the river.

### Construction engagement plan

TNC reported that they are:

- Finalising community information packages related to the reef build. Information packages include letters to residents adjacent to Weyba Creek (Noosa Sound) sites, as well as those affected by the load out site at Hilton Esplanade. This is part of the community engagement plan.
- Preparing temporary signage for the load out site and Tewantin foreshore
- Preparing a Newspaper notice
- Developing content for Noosa Council's Works in Progress webpage in liaison with council

### Monitoring Key Points

- TNC reported that they have appointed an independent restoration monitoring contractor (Ecological Service Professionals) and that baseline restoration monitoring will commence in Autumn 2022, just prior to the expected construction phase commencing.

### Community Engagement highlights

TNC reported back on recent engagement activities including:

- Oyster shell washing
- Oyster gardening
- Junior schools' program
- Senior schools' program

\*DAF (SW) noted the possible increase in fouling in the vicinity of the oyster gardens and suggested a full dry out regularly to reduce fouling of algae as part of oyster farming protocols. TNC noted this with thanks and offered to provide DAF with TNC's oyster gardening guide.

\*DAF (RS) noted that once seeded, the cultch is considered aquaculture product. When placing aquaculture product onto reef it must be well secured. TNC reported that the engineers supported the hand placement of seeded cultch into the rock voids and that this would minimise the risk of displacement of cultch from site. This technique is described in the technical specification for the reef build (Submission Annex 14 - Engineering Drawings NROR-2021). TNC would also continue to liaise with DAF on this matter.

### **6 monthly report and next steps.**

TNC introduced the 6 monthly annual report that had been distributed to TAG members out of session. Unfortunately, government firewalls blocked TAG members receiving the report, and other related documents, so this was rectified during the meeting.

\*Council requests that the ReefBuilder presentation and ReefBuilder Report be attached to the 6-month report at submission.

\*Council will provide feedback to TNC next Wednesday (16 March). Finalised report needs to be back to Council by 25 March.

TNC provided a summary of the project next steps:

1. Pursue approvals and permits
  2. Implement restoration works
  3. Continue community engagement
  4. Implement Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (MER) system
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