



REEF CHECK AUSTRALIA

GREAT BARRIER REEF MONITORING | PROJECT FACTSHEET

MAY 2009

Reef Check Australia's (RCA) longest running flagship monitoring project involves highly-trained community volunteers in meaningful scientific research.

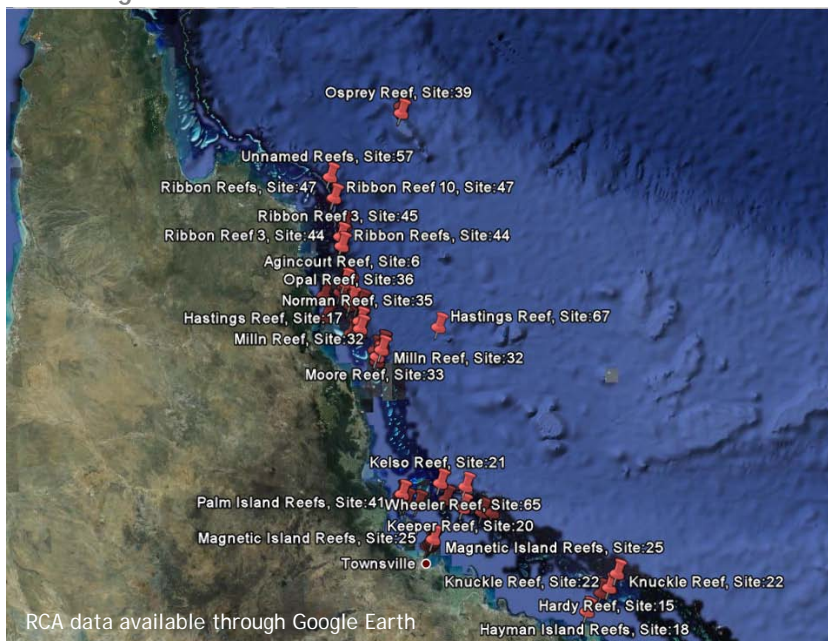
Since the project's inception in 2001, over 150 volunteers have been trained, 271 surveys have been completed and 76 individual dive sites surveyed. The resultant long-term baseline data is invaluable for Marine Park managers to inform resource management plans.

The program is a vital supplement to the ongoing world-class work of the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS). Through its unique volunteer monitoring, RCA is able to reach sites that AIMS cannot within their program scope.



The data collected through the GBR program is made available through our database to managers for their use in formulating and supporting resource management plans, such as zoning. Data is also freely available to the public through a Google Earth layer file downloadable from our website.

Reaching the reefs



The Great Barrier Reef is often referred to as the largest living marine system in the world. Covering 350,000 km² and containing approximately 2,900 reefs, this extensive reef ecosystem extends more than 2,300 km along the Queensland coast. RCA survey sites spread from Osprey Reef in the Coral Sea, all the way down to Arlie Beach and the Whitsundays.

Our ongoing funding commitment makes provision for annual surveys of 25 key dive sites on the GBR. RCA operates on significantly lower budgets than the main government monitoring program, due to the enthusiastic commitment of our volunteer surveyors and the generous support of dive operators.

In return, and as part of an ongoing drive to raise awareness of the importance of coral reef protection, RCA also provides engaging and informative communications materials for participating dive operators to give to their customers. These materials provide tourists and operators with more information on coral reefs, the impacts (including climate change) that threaten them and what Reef Check does to combat these impacts.

This helps to engage other passengers present on the operator vessels whilst the RCA survey teams are conducting their monitoring.



Supporters

In-kind supporters include the Australian Marine Park Tourism Operators, individual tourism businesses on the Queensland coast and the time of numerous enthusiastic volunteers.

Initially, this project was part-funded by small individual Commonwealth Envirofund Grants between 2003 and 2005. Since 2006/2007, this project has been financially supported by two organisations: The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and The Marine Tropical Science Research Facility, administered through the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre.

The surveys for this project have been organised by volunteers on six-month placements with Reef Check Australia. Often these volunteers travel from overseas for the opportunity to gain experience on the Great Barrier Reef, attracted by the prestigious reputation of Reef Check programs internationally. These volunteers provide their own living expenses and gain experience in project management, team leadership and coral reef monitoring. With increased costs of the standard of living, it is becoming increasingly difficult for these volunteers to afford to support themselves so we aim to gather some funds to help support them.

Our ongoing aim is to acquire long-term funding to sustain this project in order to expand the number of dive sites surveyed and to further develop interpretation materials that help to engage tourists in Reef Check Australia projects.