



Impacts and Achievements of the MTSRF

Copy of abstract and presentation given at the
2010 Annual Conference of the
Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF)
http://www.rrrc.org.au/news/2010_conference.html

Showcasing the Australian Government's investment
in the MTSRF for improved sustainability of the
North Queensland region, and Australia

18-20 May 2010
Pullman Reef Hotel & Casino
Cairns, North Queensland



Abstract

[MTSRF Project Number 1.1.2](#)

Trends in Coral Reef Health on the Great Barrier Reef assessed from data collected by community monitoring programs

Marie-Lise Schläppy, Paul Markey and Clive Wilkinson
Reef Check Australia

Reef Check Australia is an environmental not-for-profit organisation that engages the general public in monitoring the health of Australia's coral reefs. Since 2001, more than 150 trained community volunteers have monitored 76 key dive sites on the Great Barrier Reef and in southeast Queensland, and with the support of dive tourist operators, have completed more than 300 surveys. Reef Check Australia's new online database also allows searching for abundance of key invertebrates and fishes. The data can be searched for key impacts such as crown-of-thorns starfish, *Drupella* snails and bleaching and is available for anyone to use. Trends in coral reef health measured as percent coral cover using the Reef Check method will be presented for the 2010 survey season at key dive sites on the Great Barrier Reef and south-east Queensland.



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts



Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility

Trends in Coral Reef Health on the Great Barrier Reef

Assessed from Data Collected by a Community Monitoring Program

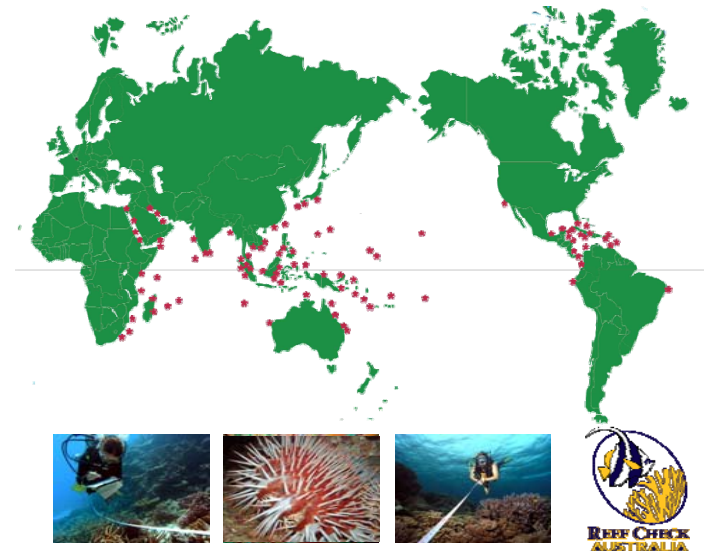


Jo Roberts, Marie-Lise Schläppy,
Paul Markey, Clive Wilkinson



What is Reef Check Australia?

- Established in 2001 as part of global volunteer network to monitor and report on reef health, and campaign for coral reef conservation.
- Aim is to protect and help rehabilitate Australian reefs through a successful recipe of:
 - 1) community education, to raise awareness of key issues
 - 2) scientific research, to collect data to contribute to solutions.



Achievements over 4 years

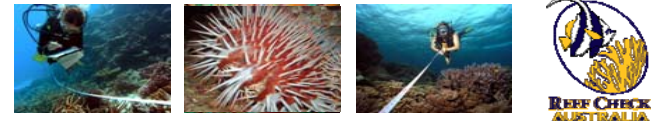
- 227 surveys at 73 dive sites.
- 160+ volunteers trained
- Data online via RCA database & e-Atlas
- Extensive communications
- Dive Operator Partnerships
- Reef IQ Education & SEQ Program



Trends in GBR Coral Reef Health

Our survey data show:

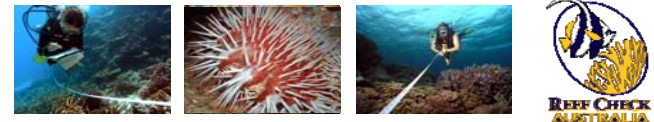
- percent coral cover on most reefs either consistently increasing (21%) or fluctuating (55%) since 1st RCA surveys
- coral cover on 17% of reefs is largely stable;
- minority of reefs (07%) have declined in coral cover.



Trends in GBR Coral Reef Health

Summary of data of coral cover at surveyed dive sites

- cover predominantly fluctuated or increased
- rather than remained stable or decreased.



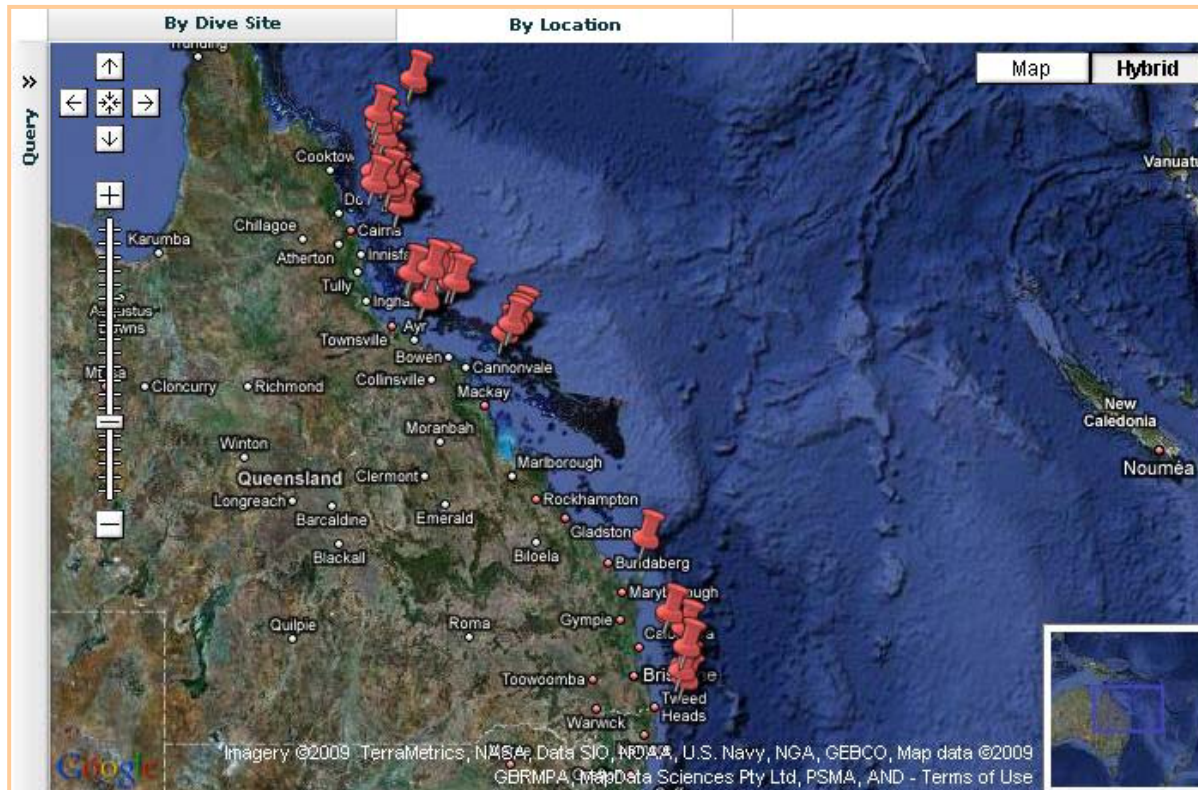
2010 GBR Survey Season

- Comparing coral cover 2009 to 2010
 - 38% of sites showed increased cover,
 - 20% showed a decrease
 - 42% remained stable
- During these surveys two major coral cyclones
 - Olga and Ului caused noticeable damage to reefs surveyed by RCA

2010 GBR Survey Season

- Coral bleaching and coral disease present on 40% and 51% of dive sites respectively
 - but low numbers of incidences

Reef Check Australia Database



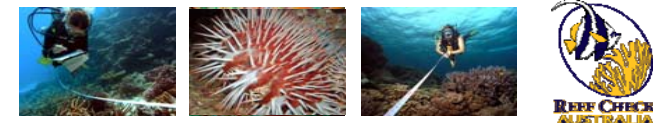
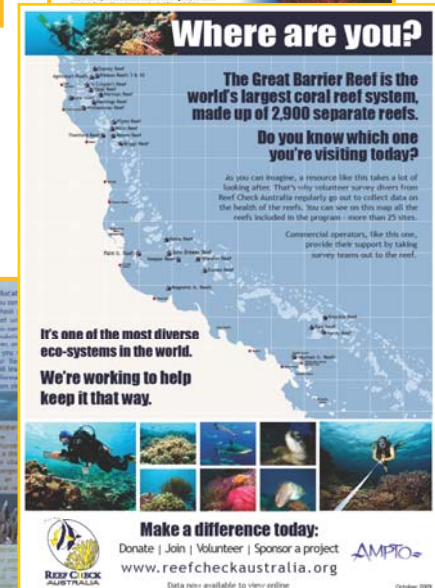
Unique data set

- Linked to Google Earth, available online to public
- Inputting and reporting capabilities
- Different interfaces for different users

www.reefcheckaustralia.org

Communications 2007-2010

- Quarterly Newsletter
- TV CSA on SBS & 9
- Operator Materials
- Posters
- 2 Photography Competitions
- 2 Children TV Programs
- Numerous articles & media releases
- New website





- Comprehensive set of 'Reef IQ' education materials available online

- Reef Check online game available for kids and adults

- Reef Check Palm Island project with Bwgcolman School

Other Projects — Reef IQ



SEQ Monitoring Program



- New program started in 2007 with permanent staff member in 2009.
- 28 sites surveyed in 2009.



AWARDS

- Townsville 2009 Community Group Award Winner
- Banksia Finalist 2009
- QLD Multimedia Awards Winner 2009
- Healthy Waterway Finalist 2010



Thanks to all our supporters, sponsors & volunteers



Australian Government

**Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority**



Australian Government

**Department of the Environment,
Water, Heritage and the Arts**

Please see www.reefcheckaustralia.org
for full list of supporters