

# **Workshop: Sandy Beaches – Environmental Management Challenges**

**Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> September  
4.25pm – 4.55pm  
Auditorium, Civic Centre**

**Facilitator:** Daniel Carter (Redlands Shire Council)

## **Background**

Sandy beaches are the geographically dominant shoreline habitat of the open coast in Southern Queensland. Beaches are also the region's prime recreational coastal resource: more people use beaches than any other type of coastal environment in the region. Burgeoning population growth in the coastal strip, increased leisure time, and economic prosperity all place escalating pressures on beaches. Traditionally, management of beaches focused exclusively on physical aspects (i.e. maintenance of sand budgets, erosion control) and on providing or enhancing visitor experiences. Ecological impacts are rarely, if ever, considered explicitly in beach management.

Beaches are, however, not ecological deserts that are resilient to human impacts. In fact, beaches harbour a unique biodiversity and provide critical nesting and foraging habitats for endangered vertebrates such as turtles and birds. Beaches also support a sizeable recreational fishing sector, which in turn depends on healthy beach ecosystems as food supplies. Recent work in the region has shown that some recreational activities (4x4 driving) can have measurable effects on beach invertebrates, but the spectrum of ecological risks and damages is likely to be wider, including more ecological components affected and more types of human uses that are ecologically harmful.

Increasing human pressures on beaches and their likely ecological consequences create new challenges for beach management. Currently there is a lack of basic ecological information (i.e. resource and biodiversity mapping of beaches) for these systems and thresholds of environmentally acceptable use are not known in most cases. Also the economic values of ecosystem services provided by beaches and the social and cultural demands and benefits are not quantified.

## **Discussion**

The main objectives of this workshop are to:

1. Scope the range of environmentally harmful activities that impact on beaches in the region;
2. Provide a forum for practitioners and policy makers involved in coastal/beach management and protection;
3. Identify the main management challenges to protect, maintain, and restore the ecological health of beaches;
4. List major information gaps that currently impede the development of ecological beach management;
5. Identify barriers (institutional, legal, financial) in beach management;
6. Scope opportunities and future collaborations to advance the development of best practice in ecological beach management.

A planned outcome is to gather basic data on some of the issues listed above; to this end, we will provide a questionnaire. All workshop participants will receive feedback on the main findings of the workshop based on the discussions and the questionnaire data.



What was discussed  
(please list the main dot points such as identified issues or threats)

**Issues.**

- Excessive 4x4 Vehicle use.
- Camping
- Fishing
- Scuba diving
- Development / construction
- Lack of compliance
- Limited Beach access – goat tracks
- Illegal uses. Eg parking on sand dunes
- Lack of enforcement
- Weeds
- Sensitivity of the receiving environment
- Community expectation – stakeholder, traditional owners or 30+ year old (demographics)
- Social values
- Concerns of who is responsible – Local Government or State agencies
- Tenure issues – Low water mark, Highest Astronomical Tide zone, Marine Parks
- Beach safety is serious issue

**Desired outcomes.**

- Sustainable Development
- Reduced level of harm – controlling frequency of beach access
- Sensitivity of the receiving environment – monitoring via video to capture the frequency of access
- Consideration of beach type – natural vs modified
- Cap or population control on beaches

**Research.**

- Social values
- Carrying Capacity
- Monitoring change of the beach environment eg: monitoring beach marine biology - sandy beach area.
- Mapping beaches from user perspective
- Beach zonation of uses
- Economic value of 4x4 usage
- Ecological economics
- Beach health
- Beach closures – follow-up to see whether it worked & justifying this action
- Biological loss of beach organisms
- Funding to support further research

**Responsibilities.**

- Onus should be on the perpetrators or law breakers to fund research
- 4WD clubs – “Tread Lightly” organisation
- QPWS
- EPA
- Local Councils Dept. Transport
- Polices have some powers – speed limits?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Local government Authority (Redland council) and Police can initiate enforcement</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Safety.</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Beach safety is serious issue - Do we expect that there will be more deaths? Segregate users. Use of safety flags? Improved speed limits?</li> <li>○ Public safety likely to be a greater driver than ecological considerations</li> <li>○ Dog off leash areas??</li> <li>○ No driving on foredunes</li> <li>○ Management Plan are inadequate</li> <li>○ Public safety education campaign required</li> <li>○ Beach regulation – “No go zones” etc.</li> <li>○ Bann 4wd? Politically (in Qld) is not considered to be palatable. [what are the actual economic value to the island by 4wd. Ie: money spent on / off the island]. Eg: accommodation, fishing competitions, Barge revenue.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Other issues.</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How do we drive change (social). Bring the laws in – will the people accept them??</li> <li>○ Marine Park zonation review to incorporation beach issues.</li> <li>○ Regulation access times. Western Australia has this in place.</li> </ul>	
	Action	Who will undertake this action?
1.	Talk to port authority regarding licence requirements for barge operators.	Redland Shire Council SEQ Catchments Inc.
2.	Funding to support further research	SEQ Catchments Inc.
3.	\$\$ for monitoring, economic evaluation to gather information to inform future decision making	Redland Shire Council SEQ Catchments Inc.
4.	Participate in survey – gather perceptions.	Redland Shire Council Community groups Universities
5.	Raise awareness – so al users are aware of the wider issues and ramifications of recreational pressures.	Redland Shire Council SEQ Catchments Inc.
6.	ID sensitive ecologically sensitive sites so that these site can be protected appropriately before pressure becomes an issue – Shorebird Mapping.	Redland Shire Council SEQ Catchments Inc. Qld Wader study Group.