

MARINE TURTLE EXPERT PANEL SUMMARY OF MEETING NO.15

- Date:** 25th September 2010
- Location:** Dynon's Plaza, 905 Hay Street, Perth – Level 2 Jansz Room
- Subject:** Gorgon Marine Turtle Expert Panel (MTEP) – Meeting #15
- Attendees:** All Panel members other than those for whom apologies are noted.
- Apologies:** Dr Scott Whiting, Mr David Humphreys, Dr Mark Hamann
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Update on Project Progress

Chevron Australia showed the latest project progress video and recent site photos to the MTEP. The following were key points of discussion:

- The Barrow Island Fly Camp now holds 600 people, while the Marine Construction Support Vessel is running at capacity, with 400 people. There are 1200 people in total on Barrow Island.
- There are approximately 70 vessels on contract and operating in the Barrow Island Port.
- Due to bedding capacity there has been some challenges securing accommodation for turtle taggers but this has been managed through strong management support.

Long Term Marine Turtle Management Plan (LTMTMP) Implementation

Strandings Database

Chevron Australia advised that the current recording of strandings, including skeletal remains, was opportunistic. MTEP supports the work done in developing a strandings database and discussed how the strandings records could be used in conjunction with track census data to provide some measure of change over time.

Hatchling mortality management trigger clarification

The Panel discussed the need for clarification around possible mass mortality events involving hatchlings that could be proposal-attributed. Currently the Long Term Marine Turtle Management Plan (LTMTMP) Section 10.4.4.2 excludes hatchlings from the trigger level responses in the Plan but includes the requirement to investigate the cause or causes of proposal-related incidents involving hatchlings on a case by case basis.

It was agreed that groups of hatchlings should be the unit of measurement for proposal-related incidents involving hatchlings. The Panel also noted that hatchling mortality/injury is reportable to both Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC) as part of the usual protocols for reporting such incidents.

Chevron Australia undertook to develop or revise Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and/or flow charts to clarify management response mechanisms for hatchling events, and advise the MTEP accordingly.

Lighting

The Panel received an update on progress in the use of the SkyCam for monitoring light horizons during construction. It was noted light emissions were recorded coming from construction site activities, despite the lighting controls contained in the Lighting Basis of Design and LTMTMP being implemented. The Panel discussed the need for contingency plans in the event that

hatchlings from the coming nesting season were affected by on-island construction and/or vessel lighting.

The Panel recommended that Chevron Australia develop a Standard Operating Procedure and/or flow chart for hatchlings to be implemented in the event of potential misorientation/disorientation and mortality from the effects of artificial light horizons.

In the event that lighting effects from construction activities on Barrow Island and surrounding waters may significantly affect the behaviour of hatchlings (increased misorientation, disorientation and predation) in the coming nesting season 2010/11, MTEP recommends that Chevron review plans and response options for such an eventuality, including collection methods (e.g. beach netting, enclosures) and release of hatchlings at other appropriate beaches.

In relation to the potential effects of artificial lighting on adult nesting females, it was suggested that observations be made on return tracks for possible lighting effects on behaviour. However, it was noted that it would be difficult to determine a return track that indicated misorientation due to lighting effects.

Status of turtle programs for 2010/2011 season

The Panel was advised of green turtles nesting immediately adjacent to the HDD construction site on the west coast of Barrow Island, and the likelihood of misorientation/disorientation of hatchlings on emergence due to artificial lighting. The Panel discussed various options to deal with this likely effect on hatchlings, which included:

- Close construction activities for the period of hatchling emergence
- Cage and collect hatchlings on emergence for release on beach not affected by artificial light (would require 24 hour presence of staff during likely emergence time)
- Relocate clutch to safe suitable beach for incubation (would need to be done after four weeks from egg laying)

Marine Turtle Expert Panel Members

The Gorgon Marine Turtle Expert Panel comprises the following Panel Members:

Panel Member's Role	Panel Member	Panel Member's Alternate
Independent Chairperson	Mr Simon Woodley	
Independent Expert	Dr Mark Hamann	
Independent Expert	Dr Scott Whiting	
Independent Expert	Dr Col Limpus	
Agency Subject Matter Expert - DEWHA	Dr Kirstin Dobbs	
Agency Subject Matter Expert - DEC	Mr Keith Morris	Mr Kevin Crane
Proponent Representative	Mr Russell Lagdon	Dr Julia Martin
Proponent Representative	Dr Dorian Moro	Dr Stephanie Turner
Proponent Representative	Dr Kellie Pendoley	