

5.9. COUNCIL GRANTS PROGRAM 2019-20 - GBR LEGACY - VARIANCE IN PROJECT

REPORT AUTHOR	People and Community Services
MANAGER	Lisa Golding, Acting Manager People and Community Services
DEPARTMENT	People and Community Services

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Approves a variation to the GBR Legacy grant funding agreement to allow a change of project from “Biorock Community Reef Restoration Project” to “Humpback Whale Community Research Project”.
2. Delegates authority under Section 257 of the *Local Government Act 2009* to the CEO to finalise all matters in relation to this agreement.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GBR Legacy was awarded funding under Council’s Major Grant Round 2019-20 for the “Biorock Community Reef Restoration Project” to purchase equipment and train Indigenous rangers to scuba dive. GBR Legacy have requested a variation for the funding, with a new project proposed for camera equipment use being a “Humpback Whale Community Research Project.”

BACKGROUND

GBR Legacy was awarded funding under Council’s Major Grant Round 2019-20 for the “Biorock Community Reef Restoration Project.”

Funding of \$10,000 was requested in the initial application, however partial funding of \$6,995 was awarded: “To train Indigenous rangers to scuba dive, and purchase camera equipment for two artificial reef structures to assist with reef restoration, engage the community and enhance tourist experiences.”

The camera equipment has already been purchased at a total cost of \$3,500 (GST inclusive). GBR Legacy have been unable to implement the scuba diving courses for Indigenous rangers as they have been unable to get the minimum number of Rangers needed to run the course, after multiple scheduling attempts.

GBR Legacy requested a variation for the funding, with a new project proposed for equipment use being a “Humpback Whale Community Research Project.”

The project creates a dedicated Humpback Whale Spotting Network that is community-led bringing together tourism operators and crew, citizen scientists, fishermen, boaters and the general public to focus on a natural phenomenon in our region.

It will increase awareness and education for all involved through stories of sightings, data, photos and videos specific to the Great Barrier Reef.

COMMENT

The project will use the camera equipment already purchased with grant funding, online apps and websites and a community approach to collect the data which will be collated by GBR Legacy in Port Douglas. Reports on what is happening with the whales will originate from here.

Information sessions will be held at the end of the whale season with data summaries in the hope to build momentum for the following season.

A project outline is attached with more information on the Humpback Whale Program.

Under Council's Grants Program guidelines, Council has the option to:

- Request a full reimbursement of the grant monies awarded as the funded project is unable to be completed.
- Request a reimbursement excluding funds already expended on the purchase of camera equipment, while acknowledging that Council's funding guidelines exclude the purchase of equipment unless as part of a broader community program.
- Approve the variation to the agreement and allow GBR Legacy to utilise the grant funding on the new project.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that Council approve the variation to the GBR Legacy grant funding agreement to allow change of project from "Biorock Community Reef Restoration Project" to "Humpback Whale Community Research Project".

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications are nil if Council approves the project variation or a financial gain of up to \$6995 if Council requests a reimbursement.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Any risks to the integrity of Council's grant funding program are alleviated by requiring Council approval of any variation to agreements. The Humpback Whale Community Research Project fits within eligible grant guidelines.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: Nil

Environmental: Nil

Social: Nil

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2019-2024 Initiatives:

Theme 1 - Celebrating Our Communities

Douglas Shire Council embraces the diversity of our communities and values the contribution that all people make to the Shire. We recognise that it is a core strength of the region. We acknowledge our past so that it may guide us in the future. We recognise the wrongs done to our Indigenous community and we actively seek to reconcile so that we may all benefit from and enjoy our Shire. We acknowledge early European settlers who forged an agricultural base for our economy and we welcome all new arrivals as part of our broader community.

Goal 4 - *We will promote arts and cultural programs and events that bring vibrancy to the community and compliment the tourist experience.*

Theme 2 - Fostering Sustainable Economic Growth

A robust economy is at the heart of a thriving community and enables investment in environmental protection. While our remoteness is a key attribute, it also presents challenges for attracting new business and investment. We must also meet the challenges of fierce competition in the tourism sector. Council will partner with industry to build, diversify and promote the Douglas economy. Council will design and deliver infrastructure, strategies and services that support the local economy and businesses.

Goal 2 - *We will work with partners to promote the Shire as the World's leading sustainable tropical destination and encourage business investment.*

Theme 3 - Leading Environmental Stewardship

Our visitors and residents deeply value the unparalleled environment in which we live. We recognise our responsibility in protecting and preserving our natural world for generations to come. We understand the strong link between the environment and the economy: they are interdependent. Douglas Shire will be at the forefront of environmental protection by developing strategies, setting policies, and working with all stakeholders to become the envy of and to inspire locations across Australia and the World.

Goal 4 - *We will partner with the community to educate and monitor.*

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Funder Council often partly funds services, events or community organisations through grants, donations, subsidies and in-kind support. Council will apply robust governance to ensure that such funding is fair and appropriate.

CONSULTATION

Internal: Nil

External: Nil

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Nil

ATTACHMENTS

1. GBR Legacy - Humpback Whale Program [**5.9.1** - 5 pages]

Revised budget (including your cash and in-kind contributions)

- Blackmagic Cinema Pocket 6K - \$3500
- Sigma 100-400 Lens - \$1265.65
- C-Fast 256GB card for Camera - \$951.20
- Fuel for Vessel over whale season \$80 a day for 30 days - \$2400
- GBR Legacy Research Vessel - \$45,000
- GBR Legacy volunteer time - 960hrs time at sea and an additional 100hrs of land based coordination

TOTAL = \$8116.85**Quote for items to be purchased with the grant**

- See attached

Receipts for items already purchased with the grant

- See attached

Evidence of genuine participant interest in the revised program from various groups you mentioned (and likely participation numbers).

- We have reached out to our volunteer base about the project and have had an overwhelming response. We have also spoken with tourism managers (Calypso) and crew from various vessels and all have showed great interest in this approach.
- Approximately 20 volunteers
- Approximately 8 Tourism operators
- Approximately 25 crew members
- Approximately 4000 tourists aboard vessels where sighting take place
- Approximately 100 recreational boat users
- Approximately 4000 shore residences through social media
- Approximately 40,000 global community through shared school media networks

Project Plan, including start and finish dates; and planned outcomes.

Port Douglas Humpback Whale Monitoring Network

Purpose:

Port Douglas is well known as a Humpback Whale hotspot during the annual migration, yet we virtually know nothing about the population or the individuals that frequent here. This is a major community interest point and a strong visitor attraction not the region.

This project will use existing citizen science programs to track whales during their migration along the coast including Fluke Matcher, Happy Whale, the GBRMPAs EOTR. These will allow us to begin to piece together the population dynamics of the whales that visit this area and provide a reporting mechanism back to the community about this amazing spectacle just on our doorstep.

Who: All GBR Legacy members and volunteers (approx 20 community members) are invited to join us on the water, as well as other volunteers. We will also extend this opportunity to our partners. We want to use volunteers to collate all of the information and collect and upload photos to the various programs.

In addition GBR Legacy will be coordinating the whale monitoring and identification for the various tourism vessels that encounter whales on their daily trips, as well as recreational users that often see whales on outings. This will allow a whole of industry and community response to better understand the humpback whale population in Port Douglas.

End project date September 2021.

Methodology:

May - Setup program. Approach dive companies and crew, to let them know of our plans and to let them know where to send their images. Engage a team of volunteers to head up the program and liaise with the community about project aims and goals. Begin tracking whales up the coast once using other sighting partners. Report all sightings in our region until the whales have all left the area.

Report to the community a weekly summary that we can provide to local media and community groups.

Sightings Program methods:

EOTR (all sightings):

For EOTR, all we need to do is collect information on the location and behaviour of the animals. Any photos can also be uploaded to confirm the sighting.

- Download EOTR App or use website <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/sightings-network/>
- Upload using login:
 - Email: cs-login@gbrlegacy.org
 - Password: GBRLegacy9
- Make all sightings

HappyWhale (all sightings):

- Setup your camera with correct date, time and location settings
- Use fast shutter modes, or burst options to increase chances of getting a good shot
- Keep an eye out for spouts, flukes and dorsal fins. You never know when a whale might pop up.

- Take lots of photos. If it's a humpback, photograph the underside of the tail. For most other species, photograph the dorsal fin area (on it's back) or the head (for unusual species) and any distinct markings or scarring seen on the body.
- Be respectful of wildlife. Follow [whale-friendly viewing guidelines](#).
- Record GPS location
- [Submit your images](#).
- Use the login cs-login@gbrlegacy.org, password : GBRLegacy9
- Please upload all of your whale images. The Happywhale team will determine which are best for ID purposes. NOTE: Please send full resolution images. We prefer JPEGs but also accept RAW files.
- Tell us where you went whale watching and the ship's name. Exact coordinates for each whale sighting are wonderful, but not critical; if your camera has GPS, use it! For some ships, we can get GPS data automatically.
- Your account will be auto-generated with your first submission. We'll be in touch soon with login information as well as any updates on your whales.

Flukematcher (humpbacks only):

- Download Flukematcher to your computer: <https://www.scu.edu.au/media/scueduau/research-centres/marine-ecology-research-centre/Fluke-Matcher-v4.262.zip>
- Setup your camera with correct date, time and location settings
- Use fast shutter modes, or burst options to increase chances of getting a good shot
- Keep an eye out for spouts, flukes and dorsal fins. You never know when a whale might pop up.
- Only use photos of tail flukes
- Rotate images so that tips of flukes are in line
- Crop photos to 3:2 aspect, with fluke filling most of the frame
- Note that if not all of the fluke is shown in the image, it should be cropped with some extra space around it so that you can estimate the position of the missing extremities (i.e. the fluke tips):
- For detailed instructions follow this link: <https://www.scu.edu.au/media/scueduau/research-centres/marine-ecology-research-centre/Fluke-Matcher-User-Manual-Nov-2010-low-resb481.pdf>

Macquarie University:

- Photos of dorsals/flukes/other unique characteristics to be accompanied by the following:
 - Date
 - Location
 - Species
 - ID number
 - Dorsal/Fluke
 - Notes
 - Data collected by
- Information is then to be sent to.....

Legal Requirements:

When you encounter whales or dolphins, either from a vessel, aircraft or in the water:

- You must not kill, take, injure and/or interfere with whales and dolphins - interference includes harassing, chasing and herding
- You must not restrict the path of whales or dolphins
- You must not touch or feed, or attempt to touch or feed, a whale or dolphin
- You must not enter the water within 100 metres of a whale or within 50 metres of a dolphin
- You must not approach closer than 30 metres to a whale or dolphin if you are in the water. If a whale or dolphin approaches you while you are in the water, move slowly, do not touch or swim towards it
- You must minimise noise when closer than 300 metres from a whale or dolphin.

When operating a vessel or aircraft (check safe distances diagram):

- A vessel must not approach closer than 100 metres to a whale, or 50 metres to a dolphin (500m for Migaloo)
- Approach the whale or dolphin only from the rear or by positioning the vessel ahead of the whale or dolphin, and always in a position that is more than 30 degrees to its observed direction of travel
- If the whale or dolphin is a calf, a vessel must not enter within a radius of 300 metres of the whale and 150 metres of the dolphin (i.e. the caution zone)
- If a calf appears causing your vessel to be within the caution zone, you must stop the vessel and turn off the engines or disengage the gears or withdraw your vessel at a constant slow speed
- If your vessel is closer than 300 metres to a whale or 150 metres to a dolphin, it must be operated at a constant slow speed, if closer than 50 metres to a dolphin, the vessel must not change course or speed suddenly
- If there are three vessels within 300 metres of a whale or dolphin, all additional vessels must remain outside a 300 metres radius from the whale or dolphin
- If a whale approaches close to your vessel, take all precautions to avoid a collision, either slow down and steer away from the animal, or place the engines in neutral and let the animal pass
- Prohibited vessels (i.e. jetskis, parasails, hovercraft, hydrofoils, wing-in-ground effect craft and motorised diving aids such as underwater scooters) must not approach closer than 300 metres to a whale or dolphin
- An aircraft must not operate below 1000 feet within a horizontal radius of 300 metres of a whale or dolphin and must not approach a whale or dolphin head on
- In addition, a helicopter must not operate below 1650 feet within a horizontal radius 500 metres of a whale or dolphin
- If you accidentally strike a whale or dolphin you must report it
- When in the Whitsunday Planning Area, there are some additional rules in relation to whales:
 - a vessel must not approach closer than 300 metres to a whale in the Whitsunday Whale Protection Area
 - a helicopter must not approach below 2000 feet or within 1000 metres of a whale.

