

# PHILIPPINES

## Tubbataha Reef Marine National Park



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### II.1 Introduction

**Year of Inscription** 1993

#### Organisation Responsible for the Report

- Tubbataha Protected Area Management Board (TPAMB)  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor Basaya building, Puerto Princesa, Palawan  
Philippines
- WWF Philippines  
43 Wescom Rd., Puerto Princesa, Palawan  
Philippines

### II.2 Statement of Significance

**Inscription Criteria** N ii, iii, iv

#### Statement of Significance

- Proposed as follows:  
“Tubbataha is an excellent example of a coral atoll (the only one in the Philippines); is an important source of larvae for the greater Sulu Sea area; and a significant natural habitat for *in situ* marine & seabird biodiversity conservation, providing [an] opportunity to better understand marine processes.”

*“The multi-sectorial TPAMB has been effective in managing the property as evidenced by improved compliance by the private sector and Filipino fishermen in general.”*

#### Status of Site Boundaries

- The ‘Tubbataha Protected Area Bill’ is pending in the Philippine Congress for the extension of the park from 33,200 ha. to 87,655 ha. with the inclusion of the Jessie Beazley Reef in the northwest of TRMNP.

### II.3 Statement of Authenticity/Integrity

#### Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- The WH value is considered to have been maintained.
- Cultural artefacts have been found in the Tubbataha reefs which are currently awaiting scientific study.

### II.4 Management

#### Administrative and Management Arrangements

- The multi-sectoral Tubbataha Protected Area Management Board (TPAMB), which holds quarterly meetings, is composed of 15 members drawn from national, provincial & municipal levels.
- An Executive Committee made up of the Philippine Navy; Philippine Coast Guard; Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSDS); Provincial Environment & Natural Resources Office; Dept. of Environment & Natural Resources (PENRO); Saguda Palawan; and WWF-Philippines meets once a month to decide on matters of operation and endorse TPAMB programmes.
- The Tubbataha Management Office (TMO) executes all decisions of the TPAMB & its Executive Committee and is charged with the day-to-day affairs of the Marine Park.
  - Strategies stipulated in the management plan (currently under review) have been implemented since 1996 and include: (i) effective patrols; (ii) creation of the TPAMB; (iii) community development in the Cagayancillo Islands; (iv) development of a long-term management scheme; and (v) expansion of the marine park boundaries.
- Relevant ‘Republic Acts’ include the: (i) Local Government Code (1991); (ii) National Integrated Protected Areas System Act (1992); (iii) Strategic Environmental Plan for Palawan (1992); (iv) Philippines Fisheries Code (1998); and (v) Wildlife Resources Conservation & Protection Act (2001).

#### Present State of Conservation

- “No major anthropogenic perturbations have occurred in the area in the last 7 years.”
- “Coral cover decreased due to the El Niño in 1998 but maintained to present. Fish biomass increased.”
- The multi-sectoral TPAMB “has been effective in managing the property as evidenced by improved compliance by the private sector and Filipino fishermen in general.”

- “Too much leniency against foreign nationals (poachers) may attract more incursions.” The national government has been petitioned for stricter handling of Chinese poaching cases.

### Staffing and Training Needs

- The TMO employs 1 manager, 2 rangers & 1 technical assistant. 5 Philippine navy & coast guard personnel are also attached to the office.
- Staffing level is considered inadequate for the implementation of the revised management plan.
- Training needs are identified for: (i) environmental awareness for military personnel; (ii) equipment maintenance; (iii) site exchange for rangers; and (iv) conflict resolution techniques.

### Financial Situation

- Total funding for 2001 was US\$115,000 coming from WWF, the Philippine Navy & Coast Guard.
- Funding is considered inadequate for 2002-2003 while the annual contribution of US\$80,000 from WWF-Philippines remains in place.
- A list of about 20 research programmes was attached contributing about US\$36,000 for 1 research officer, 5 assistants & 4 boat crew.
- International assistance has been received from UNACOM for a scuba compressor; GEF-UNDP; the Government of Japan; Marine Centre of Japan; Henry Foundation; Packard Foundation; and WWF-US
- \* International Assistance from WHF as follows: (i) 1996, US\$20,000 Preparatory Assistance; (ii) 1997, US\$30,000 Training; US\$20,000 Technical Co-operation for conservation project; (iii) 1998, US\$30,000 Training on WH property management.

### Access to IT

- 1 Acer Celeron Laptop & 3 Pentium PC desktops.
- Internet & GIS with ArcInfo/Arcview software.

### Visitor Management

- Statistics show only 692 & 642 visitors (in about 60 vessels) to the reef in 2001 and 2002.
- Visitors stay on dive boats. The TPAMB provide concrete mooring buoys (in need of embedding).
- Entry fees issued in Puerto Princesa City are as follows: US\$ 50 per vessel; US\$ 50 per foreign guest; US\$ 25 for locals/expats.
- Photo exhibits are organised in schools, alongside the dissemination of leaflets, videos & posters.

## II.5 Factors Affecting the Property

### Threats and Risks

- Poaching,
- Cement sinker buoys dragged to reef edge,
- Damage from El Niño events,
- Peace & order problems threat to tourism.

### Counteractive Plans

- An emergency plan exists for possible terrorist attacks on tourists, and medical/diving incidents.
- Improvement is desirable in: (i) strengthening litigation & prosecution; (ii) improved mooring system; and (iii) peace & order.

## II.6 Monitoring

### Monitoring Arrangements

- Since 1997, monitoring of marine resources within TRNMP has been conducted annually by WWF-Philippines between April-September.
- The current revision of the management plan for the park has identified “ecosystem research and monitoring” as one of its priority areas.

### Monitoring Indicators

- Indicators include: (i) coral cover; (ii) fish biomass; and (iii) visitor numbers.

## II.7 Conclusions and Recommended Actions

### Conclusions and Proposed Actions

- WH status has allowed TRMNP to benefit from international schemes on marine parks & the IUCN-WCPA Management Effectiveness Initiative.
- “The passage of the Tubbataha Protected Area Bill will provide for more stringent punitive measures for encroachment into Park waters. It will further strengthen the institution for management and provide annual funding allocation for management.”
- WHF assistance may be required for fixed mooring buoys, law enforcement & conflict resolution.

### \* State of Conservation Reports

1997 Bureau CONF.204/2B The Committee recalled that the Chairperson had approved US\$ 20,000 in 1996 for the implementation of a project entitled 'Protection and Information and Education Campaign for the Conservation of Tubbataha Reef Marine Park'. The Project Management Team (PMT) comprising of individuals from the Marine Sciences Research Institute of the Philippines, the Protected Areas & Wildlife Bureau of the Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources, and the UNESCO National Commission, visited Palawan in March 1997 to consult with representatives of the Provincial Government, the Provincial Environmental & Natural Resources Office (PENRO), and the Naval Forces.

The UNESCO National Commission subsequently submitted a report to the Centre highlighting the following conclusions: (i) the protection of Tubbataha Reef directly affects the people of the Cagayancillo Municipality who have in the past had resentment for being left out conservation initiatives. In response, the PMT was facilitating training of the local people to enhance their participation in patrolling, data collection, monitoring impacts of recreational activities, and exploring possibilities for developing community-based tourism ventures. (ii) Given the remote location of the site in the Sulu Sea, Park staff frequently opted to be transferred to other parts of the country; hence training in protection and patrolling was of limited benefit.

The creation of an inter-sectoral group comprising of naval personnel and representatives of PENRO, in combination with the continuing education of local communities, was considered to be an optimal approach. Funding for food, fuel and the salary of members of the patrolling teams was expected to be met by the respective Government agencies. Training in role clarification was also foreseen as part of the WH-Funded project in order to resolve leadership conflicts between naval and civilian personnel who were expected to constitute the patrolling teams. A local NGO was further supporting the information and education component of the project. The Marine Parks Centre & the Environment Agency of Japan had also contributed to the production of a brochure on Tubbataha in English which would be translated into three local languages. In addition, a Presidential Task Force for Tubbataha Reef has brought together all actors interested in the conservation of the WH site with a national symposium for the finalisation of a Master Plan scheduled for March 1997.

The Bureau took note of the information provided and encouraged the Project Management Team (PMT) to provide the Centre with a copy of the Master Plan for Tubbataha Reef.