

Tour operators fume over Great Barrier Reef dumping plan

February 1 2014



Australian Institute of Marine Science handout photo taken on October 2, 2012 shows coral reef at Halfway Island in Australia's Great Barrier Reef

Furious tourism operators on the Great Barrier Reef on Saturday threatened legal action after approval was given to dump of up to three million cubic metres of dredge waste in park waters.

Association of Marine Park Tour Operators president Colin McKenzie, the peak industry lobby group covering tourism in the World Heritage-listed reef region, accused the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority of pandering to politicians.

"Leadership of the Authority needs to be replaced. If they won't do their job of preserving the environment out there then they should have people there that will," he told Fairfax radio.

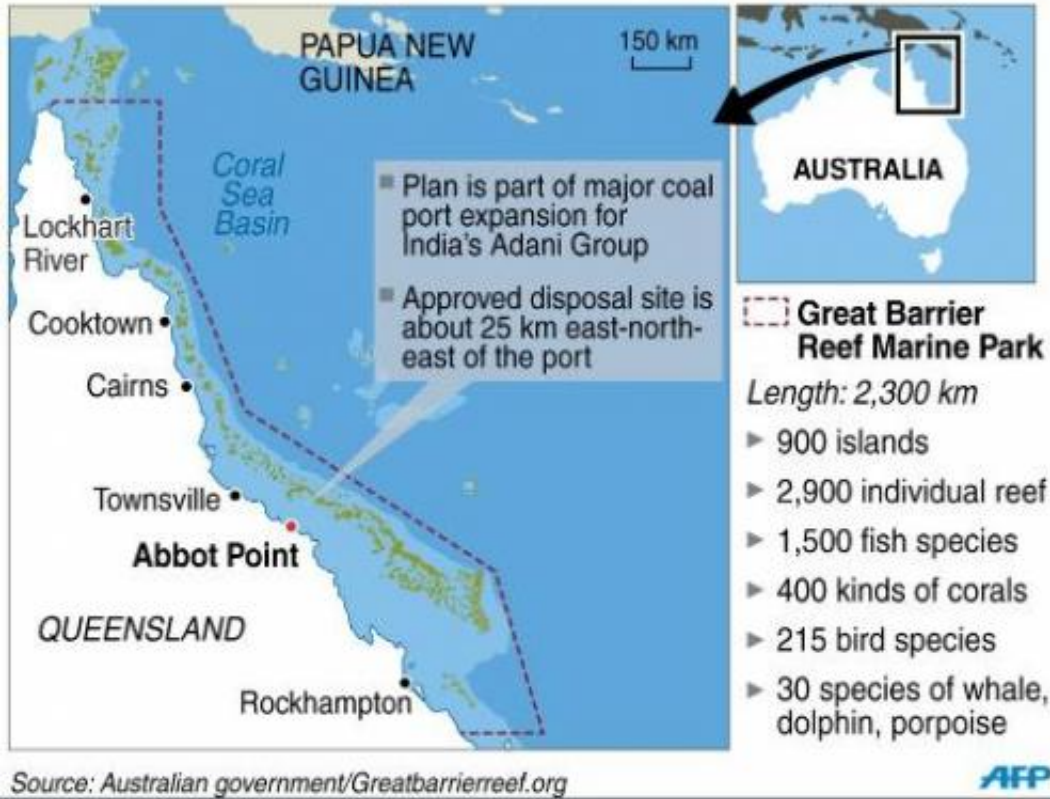
"These guys are just pandering to the politicians. The GBRMPA should do what it is actually being paid to do—which is provide for the protection and conservation of the reef."

The GBRMPA, tasked with managing and protecting the reef area, on Friday approved a decision by the government in December to allow a major coal port expansion for India's Adani Group on the reef coast, under strict environmental conditions.

It will see Adani dredge three million cubic metres of material from the seabed to allow freighters to dock at the port in Abbot Point, lifting the facility's capacity by 70 percent to make it one of the world's largest coal ports.

Dredge dumping plan in Barrier Reef

Australia's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has approved plans to dump up to three million cubic metres of dredge waste in park waters



Graphic on the dredge dumping plan in the Great Barrier Reef marine park

The waste will be dumped in the [marine park](#), in an area GBRMPA said does not contain reefs or seagrass beds.

"Well, let me tell you, 220 scientists wrote to the GBRMPA saying 'do not grant this' because it will be bad for the reef," said McKenzie.

"They (the Authority) are not looking at scientific fact, they are not looking at protection of the reef—they are just doing what their political masters want."

In granting the approval, GBRMPA, whose board is currently under investigation for its links to the mining industry, said that allowing the project to proceed would help contain development to existing ports.

Chairman Russell Reichelt added that the strict environmental conditions imposed on the project by the government would help protect the reef.

Conservationists are not convinced, claiming the dredging will smother corals and seagrasses and expose them to poisons and elevated levels of nutrients.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation canvassed several tour operators and said they were all looking at [legal action](#), with McKenzie vowing the fight was not over.

"We will take it to (Environment Minister Greg) Hunt, we will appeal this to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, we will take it to court if we have to," he said.

"I think the GBRMPA is in breach of their own act and that will be how we are trying to challenge this."

The [reef](#) is already facing pressures from climate change, land-based pollution and crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks and is facing a World Heritage downgrade from UNESCO this year.

UNESCO is concerned about rampant coastal development proposed in the region, particularly port, gas and coal operations, with the body expected to discuss the issue at a meeting in June.

© 2014 AFP

Citation: Tour operators fume over Great Barrier Reef dumping plan (2014, February 1)

retrieved 24 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2014-02-fume-great-barrier-reef-dumping.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.