**Expedition heads to monitor turtle nesting sites on island beaches**

 **MACKAY // FRIDAY 4th January 2019**

A conservation expedition is planned early next week (Monday) to monitor turtle nesting sites on island beaches off Mackay.

With funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program (NLP), Reef Catchments has contracted Wildmob, a local non-profit organisation, to monitor flatback and green turtle nesting sites including Penrith, Bushy and Cockermouth Islands. The information collected will complement the mainland survey data which is collected by Mackay and District Turtle Watch.

Monitoring activities will include surveying turtle tracks, turtle species, number of nests, tagging, checking turtle tags, relocating at-risk nests, number of eggs laid and emergent success of clutches.

Other indicators for turtle nesting success include climactic conditions, erosion extent and beach profile.

Reef Catchments coastal and biodiversity project officer Cass Hayward said: “There has been very little information collected about turtle nesting on Mackay Whitsunday islands since 2001. This project will address key knowledge gaps to give us a better understanding of what’s going on, and what actions we need to take to make sure the nesting is as successful as possible.”

The turtle monitoring expedition is part of a wider Reef Catchments islands project which also aims to regenerate Goldsmith Island through control of invasive weeds, collect marine debris in the Whitsundays with Eco Barge Clean Seas, and collect data on seagrass, an indicator of habitat health.

Community engagement is one of the primary goals of the NLP islands project. All of the expeditions, including turtle monitoring trips, seagrass monitoring events, and marine debris removal trips around the Whitsunday islands are open to the public. If you are interested in participating in any of these activities, or learning more about the project, please contact Reef Catchments.

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