

ZONING in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park



Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

Keeping the Reef great

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is one of the richest and most diverse natural areas on Earth.

As the world's largest coral reef ecosystem, it is a precious global resource and needs to be protected for the benefit of its many users and visitors.

Activities such as shipping, commercial fishing, recreational boating and fishing, diving, aquaculture, research and tourism are all allowed in the Great Barrier Reef.

Zoning in the Marine Park allows these important activities to continue but ensures they are managed - and limited where necessary - to protect the Reef's plants, animals and habitats.

Why use zoning?

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority introduced the current Zoning Plan in 2004.

The Plan is helping secure a better future for the 344 000km² natural wonderland while supporting the vital social and economic benefits gained from Reef-related tourism and recreation, commercial activities and fishing.

Zoning was developed following extensive research and the most comprehensive community consultation processes undertaken on an Australian environment issue (31 500 public submissions were received and taken into account).

What is zoning?

Zoning is like a town planning scheme – it defines what activities can occur in which locations.

There are eight different types of zones and they apply to the entire 344 000km² of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The major zones are:

- General Use (Light Blue) - allows for all reasonable uses
- Conservation Park (Yellow) - allows for limited fishing, trolling, crabbing, collecting and in some cases spear fishing
- Protection (Dark Blue) - prohibits trawling
- Marine National Park (Green) - this is the largest no-take zone (it prohibits all fishing and collecting).

Other zones include Preservation (Pink), Scientific Research (Orange) and Buffer (Olive Green), which make up less than five per cent of the Marine Park.

our great barrier reef
let's keep it great





What are the benefits of Green (no-take) Zones?

Globally, no-take areas have been found to:

- Protect spawning areas and nursery grounds
- Minimise damage to important habitats
- Provide a refuge for protected species, such as turtles and dugongs
- Boost species numbers, which helps the food web as a whole
- Increase the abundance of fish
- Build the resilience of the reef against threats such as climate change and water pollution.

Is zoning effective?

There are a number of programmes looking at the effects of zoning. Early indications are that zoning is working and preliminary research shows fish numbers are increasing.

Research conducted the Australian Institute of Marine Science, on off-shore reefs from Cairns to Gladstone, found coral trout is now about 50 per cent more abundant in no-take Green Zones.

James Cook University research in the Whitsunday Islands found numbers of both coral trout and stripey sea perch were more than 1.7 times higher.

Why is this so important?

Bigger fish have more and stronger babies. For females of some reef fish species, an increase in length of one third can lead to 200 times more egg production.

This is important for replenishing depleted fish stocks and is essential to the biological well-being of the Reef and the industries dependent on it remaining healthy.

More fish in closed areas also make it more likely that increased fish populations will "spill over" into other zones.

Don't forget your zoning map when boating and fishing!

Free zoning guides and maps are widely available.

They can be found in bait and tackle shops, visitor information centres, ship chandlers, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service offices and Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol offices.

Boaties can also contact the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on 1800 990 177 for a free map.

