

Protecting the Great Barrier Reef

Welcome

Welcome to the new Protecting the Great Barrier Reef e-newsletter which replaces the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program newsletter. The newsletter will feature all of the work the Queensland Government is doing alongside our partners to protect the Reef.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and encourage you to share it with your friends and colleagues who can subscribe [here](#). If you would like to unsubscribe or provide feedback on the newsletter, please email officeofthegbr@des.qld.gov.au.

What's new



Our Reef Our Wonder

The Great Barrier Reef is an awe-inspiring natural wonder, cherished for its beauty and value; but it is under pressure from multiple threats. That's why the Queensland Government is committing large-scale funds and working closely with First Nations people, partners, landholders, industries and communities to protect it.

The new [Queensland Government Great Barrier Reef web portal](#) brings together all the work being done to conserve the Reef including actions on the water and in the catchment. It also features stories from our partners and people who are making a difference on the ground.

Find out more information about the status of the Reef, the threats it's facing, what is being done to protect it and how you can take action. Protecting the Reef takes a team effort, and everyone can help.



UNESCO recommendation on the Great Barrier Reef

UNESCO's recommendation to the World Heritage Committee to not place the Great Barrier Reef on the List of World Heritage in Danger at this time demonstrates the Australian and Queensland governments' actions to protect the Reef are working.

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee regularly reviews the state of conservation of all properties on the World Heritage List. Concerns had been raised about the Reef in response to the declining long-term outlook in the face of climate change, together with insufficient progress towards meeting the water quality targets.

The draft decision (outlined in [Document WHC/23/45.COM/7B](#)) will be considered and amended or confirmed at the next meeting of the World Heritage Committee, which is set for 10-25 September this year.

The Queensland Government is continuing to invest in improving water quality and building the Reef's resilience to the impacts of climate change. It has committed a record-level of investment of more than \$1 billion since 2015 towards [actions](#) that directly protect the Reef and continues to work with the Australian Government on complementary on-ground delivery of projects and programs.



Funding to stem sediment pollution

Queensland Government funding of \$6 million has been provided for three projects to repair and remediate streambanks along rivers and waterways.

A loss of vegetation can expose streambanks to erosion with the resulting excess sediment flowing into local waterways leading to the Great Barrier Reef. Streambank erosion can also cause loss of ecological habitat, infrastructure and productive farming land.

Sediment smothers corals, seagrasses and other plants, affecting their growth and survival as well as the survival of turtles, dugongs, fish and other animals that depend on them for food and shelter.

Works through the [Streambank Remediation Program](#) will include revegetation, fencing, bank reprofiling and installing pile fields.

The three successful contractors are:

- [Terrain NRM](#): Herbert River and Stone River in the Herbert catchment
- Neilly Group: Little Bowen River in the Burdekin catchment
- [Fitzroy Basin Association](#): Six Mile Creek, near Raglan in the Fitzroy catchment.



Reducing fishing impacts

The Australian and Queensland governments have committed [\\$160 million](#) to support fishers to significantly reduce net fishing and other high risk fishing activities impacting the Reef, ensuring the Great Barrier Reef is gillnet free by mid-2027.

This will directly improve Reef health by reducing bycatch and preventing accidental netting of threatened Reef species including dugongs, turtles and dolphins. Hammerhead sharks will also become a no-take species for commercial fishers.

A Future Fisheries Taskforce, chaired by John Tanzer, has been established to provide advice to the Queensland Government on the transition to more sustainable fishing methods. This includes developing industry assistance packages for those impacted by the phasing out of gillnet fishing, which will be implemented alongside a separate mitigation package for the Great Sandy Marine Park rezoning.

For more information or to provide a submission, please visit the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' [eHub portal](#). Submissions close at **5pm on Monday, 28 August 2023**.



Reef island purchases protect critical koala and turtle habitat

The Queensland Government has purchased the leases for [St Bees Island and Long Island Broad Sound](#) as part of the government's \$262.5 million to expand and create new protected areas.

St Bees Island, 35 kilometres north-east of Mackay is a home for koalas and flatback turtles, while Long Island in the Southern Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is also a known rookery for flatback turtles.

The purchases will ensure these important Reef habitats and the threatened species they support are conserved into the future.

This Queensland Government investment complements the Australian Government's recent funding to support [restoration and revegetation projects on Lady Elliot Island and Pine Islet](#) on the Great Barrier Reef.



Raine Island beacon restored

One of Queensland's oldest convict-built structures, and an iconic landmark on the Great Barrier Reef, the Raine Island beacon has recently been restored.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) rangers worked alongside the Wuthathi and Meriam (Ugar, Mer, Erub) Traditional Owner groups to complete these works.

The beacon, which was originally built in 1844 to help seafarers navigate a notorious shipwreck area, holds national historical and cultural significance, with around 900 carved or painted inscriptions, including First Nations people's names.

The restoration took five visits, twelve tonnes of material and equipment and 10,000 litres of water. It also included specialist stonemasonry to repair major vertical cracks that had been caused by lightning strikes.

The \$1.13 million project, which included a \$347,468 grant through the Australian Government's COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund, was delivered by the [Reef Joint Field Management Program](#).

The Program is a partnership between the QPWS and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and delivers field operations within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

[Learn more](#) about the beacon in Raine Island National Park (Scientific).



Reef regional report cards make a splash

It's been a busy few months for the Reef regional waterway partnerships with the release of all five regional report cards. The reports cover monitoring undertaken between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022.

The [2022 Gladstone Harbour Report Card](#) was released in February, followed by the [2023 Fitzroy Basin Report Card](#) in April and in July, the [Mackay-Whitsunday-Isaac 2022 Report Card](#), [Townsville Dry Tropics Waterways Report Card 2023](#) and the [Wet Tropics Waterways Report Card 2023](#).

[Regional report cards](#) are an important way for Reef communities to work together to better understand and track the health of their local waterways. Healthy waterways deliver many benefits for local communities and are vital to the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

The Queensland Government is providing \$1.25 million for the partnerships this year, as part of a \$3.75 million commitment over three years.

Project updates



Managing urban run-off to the Reef

As stewards of the Great Barrier Reef, all land use sectors in the Reef catchment have a responsibility to improve the quality of water flowing to the Reef. This means applying current best practice or above, in how water and run-off is managed.

The [Urban Water Stewardship Framework](#) (UWSF) is a benchmarking tool originally developed by the Department of Environment and Science to help

local councils in the Reef catchment assess and report on their urban water management practices.

Since being piloted in 2019, the UWSF has been applied twice in the Great Barrier Reef catchment over the past two years, with 13 local councils participating in the assessment process.

The data collected through the framework is also used as a reporting metric for four of the five Reef regional report card partnerships. The fifth partnership is expected to implement the UWSF later this year.

The department is also working with Healthy Land and Water to engage South-east Queensland (SEQ) councils to pilot the framework. This is in addition to the current Environmental Health Monitoring Program report card which has been operating across SEQ for more than 20 years. Several local councils have already indicated their interest.



Statutory review of the Reef protection regulations – calling producers

A [statutory review](#) of the Reef protection regulations commenced in February 2023. The Department of Environment and Science has engaged an independent contractor, Ernst and Young (EY), to engage with peak agricultural, conservation and regional natural resource management organisations, partners and producers to hear first-hand about:

- experiences with implementing the regulations, including any implementation issues and potential solutions
- whether people think the regulations have had an impact on farming practices.

EY has put a call out for producers to participate in this process. If you are a sugarcane grower, beef cattle grazer or banana producer in the Great Barrier Reef catchment and wish to participate, please contact EY on EY.ReefRegsReview@au.ey.com. You can read more [here](#).



Reef Assist 2.0 continues to reap rewards

In addition to the six Reef Assist 2.0 projects announced back in November 2022, another four projects are underway in the Burdekin and Wet Tropics regions.

The projects are being delivered by NQ Dry Tropics, Johnstone Region Landcare Group Inc., Wet Tropics Management Authority and Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation. They focus on the revegetation of degraded landscapes, erosion control, weed management and the restoration of habitat for several threatened species including the southern cassowary, Bennett's tree-kangaroo and the spotted-tailed quoll. An additional project is currently being negotiated for the Burnett Mary region.

The \$33.5 million [Reef Assist program](#) is funded through the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program and delivers priority environmental projects while creating meaningful jobs and training for Queenslanders in the Great Barrier Reef catchment.



FutureBeef program supports the beef industry

The FutureBeef program has been renewed for four years ensuring the northern Australian beef industry continues to get the support it needs.

The \$3.66 million program is a partnership involving the Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australian governments, Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) and the Australian Government through the MLA Donor

Company.

Backed by world-leading research and development, [FutureBeef](#) is a one-stop shop that provides beef producers with the information they need to improve the resilience, profitability and sustainability of their businesses.

Grants and funding



Funding for industry experts to help sugarcane growers

Industry experts are invited to apply for a share in funding under a new \$3.6 million Sugarcane Practice Change Program that will help sugarcane growers improve their use of nitrogen and phosphorus on their farm.

Successful applicants will provide agronomic advice and support to help cane growers undertake actions to improve their nutrient use efficiency and address yield constraints to reduce nutrient loads in water flowing to the Great Barrier Reef.

The call for suppliers is open now until **Friday, 29 September**. For more information, including details on the eligibility criteria, please visit [QTender](#) – DES1231311.



Land Restoration Fund's Carbon Farming Advice Scheme: Round 3 funding now open

Eligible landholders who are keen to investigate the potential for carbon farming and co-benefit generation on their property can access up to \$10,000 worth of advice from Approved Advisers through Carbon Farming Advice Scheme (CFAS). Total scheme funding of \$700,000 is available for this round.

Applications for funding are now open and close in December 2023, or when funding is exhausted.

The CFAS program is jointly delivered by the Land Restoration Fund and the Queensland Rural Industry and Development Authority (QRIDA).

If you are a Queensland landholder, check your eligibility and find out how to apply by [visiting the QRIDA website](#).



Community groups receive funding to take climate action

Around 19 community groups across the Great Barrier Reef catchment received funding in the latest round of the Queensland Government's [Community Sustainability Action grant program](#).

In total, 68 organisations across Queensland shared in more than \$3.4 million in funding for projects that help to reduce emissions and energy costs and build local resilience to climate change.

The latest round of funding provided grants of up to \$100,000 to assist community groups to purchase and install renewable energy systems, such as solar panels and batteries, and energy efficient replacement items, including lighting, whitegoods, and hot water systems.

Climate change is one of the biggest threats to the Great Barrier Reef. Read more about the Queensland Government's actions to address [climate change](#).



Engaging Science Grants recipients help the Reef

The Queensland Government recently announced the recipients for the [Engaging Science Grants program](#) with nine of the 41 recipients undertaking projects or events that will ultimately help protect the Great Barrier Reef.

The projects range from using artificial intelligence technology to study

changes in the Great Barrier Reef to mentoring programs to encourage the next generation of marine biologists.

The recipients share in more than \$700,000 in funding through the program, which is designed to increase participation in science-based activities and engagement between scientists and the community.

You can find the full list of recipients [here](#).

Events



Improving understanding of coastal farming systems

A wide range of trials have been established in sugarcane growing areas of Queensland to demonstrate methods of improving farming systems. Run by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), the trials include mixed species fallow management, subsurface mill mud application, nutrient management, a sugarcane post legume application tool, and an innovative highrise-subsurface fertiliser applicator.

DAF agronomists and extension officers have attended events and shed meetings in the Reef catchments and held more than 100 one-on-one face-to-face meetings with growers to discuss and advise on nutrient rates, using drones to monitor crops, installing agricultural water treatment systems, efficient nozzle selection, and controlling invasive aquatic grass.

To find out more about improving farming systems in the Great Barrier Reef catchment, visit www.qld.gov.au/FarminginReefCatchments or call 13 25 23.

Contact us

For more information about any of these projects, email officeoftheGBR@des.qld.gov.au

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