

Protecting the Great Barrier Reef

Welcome

Welcome to the Protecting the Great Barrier Reef e-newsletter which replaces the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program newsletter. The newsletter features 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

UNESCO decision

In September, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee decided not to place the Great Barrier Reef on the List of World Heritage in Danger. This demonstrates the Queensland Government's commitment to protecting the Reef, including increased investment and action, is working.

The Committee has requested a progress report be submitted by 1 February 2024 for consideration at its next meeting.

The Queensland Government will continue to work with the Australian Government to take strong action to further protect the Reef ahead of the next World Heritage Committee meeting. This includes investing in improving water quality, taking decisive action on climate change and supporting a transition to more sustainable fishing practices.



Reef health update

Image: courtesy of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Australian Government

The summer months of the year are often a critical time for the Great Barrier Reef. In September, the Bureau of Meteorology formally declared an El Niño event, which typically brings hot, dry weather over summer and an increased chance of marine heatwaves and coral bleaching.

The [Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority](#) (Reef Authority), in partnership with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, continually monitors the health of the Reef throughout the year, in addition to other management activities including compliance and crown-of-thorns starfish control.

The [Eye on the Reef](#) program, managed by the Reef Authority is another way that tourism operators, visitors and members of the public can help monitor Reef health.

You can stay updated on the health of the Reef by signing up to the Reef Authority's Reef Health enews [here](#).



Broker groups help kick-start Reef Credit projects

Following an open procurement process, the Queensland Government has awarded contracts to two broker groups as part of its \$10 million commitment to help kick-start Queensland's emerging Reef Credit market.

The [Reef Credit Scheme](#) provides opportunities for farmers and landholders in Reef regions to earn additional income by generating and selling Reef Credits (in a similar way to carbon credits), by taking action on their land to reduce nutrient and sediment run-off flowing to the Reef.

Palladium and GreenCollar are working with landholders to implement projects on grazing and sugarcane properties and help secure potential buyers for the generated Reef Credits.



Konomie Island Environmental Education Centre becomes carbon negative

In September, Konomie Island, near Yeppoon, became [one of the only carbon negative islands in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park](#).

The official opening of a 99kW off grid power system at Konomie Island Environmental Education Centre is the largest renewable energy system to be installed at a Queensland state school site.

The state-of-the-art \$1.3 million system includes 258 Australian made solar panels, 36 lithium phosphate batteries, a wind turbine, and a backup generator for emergencies.

The off-grid system, together with the sea grass beds grown and replenished by the school staff, makes the Konomie Island Environmental Education Centre carbon negative.

The investment is part of the Department of Education's commitment to supporting the Queensland Government's targets to reduce emissions and complements other projects such as the installation of more than 200,000 solar panels across 900+ state schools throughout Queensland.



Funding boost to protect turtles

Image: courtesy of the Great Barrier Marine Park Authority, Australian Government

The Australian and Queensland governments are teaming up to invest \$2.8 million to help protect threatened marine turtles in the Great Barrier Reef.

Of the six species of marine turtles found in the Great Barrier Reef, half are endangered, and half are critically endangered.

This investment will fund projects to support the protection of turtle eggs and turtle hatchlings from threats like feral animals, habitat loss and marine debris.

Feral animals like pigs and foxes are the main predators of turtle eggs and hatchlings. This funding will support innovative ideas such as the use of thermal imaging and drones to control feral pigs.

Projects will be undertaken in and around the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, including in western Cape York. Projects will be managed by the Queensland Government and delivered through grants. You can read more [here](#).



Three new streambank projects announced to safeguard the Reef

Three new water quality projects to safeguard the health of the iconic Great Barrier Reef have been announced, with a [funding boost](#) from the Australian Government of \$6.4 million.

The Streambank Remediation Program, an initiative of the Queensland Government, has been boosted by this co-investment, taking the total number of remediation projects to six. This funding will help further reduce sediment run-off from eroded streambanks, which is a key threat to Reef water quality.

It will also accelerate progress toward the Australian and Queensland governments' joint objectives for protecting the Great Barrier Reef.

The three new projects are located in the Mackay-Whitsunday, Burnett Mary and Burdekin catchments in northeast Queensland. They will reduce the amount of sediment entering the Reef ecosystem and build resilience to threats, including climate change and natural disasters.

The new remediation activities will involve Traditional Owners and First Nations groups and include revegetation, installation of fencing, streambank reprofiling and pile fields to hold banks in place.

Producer updates

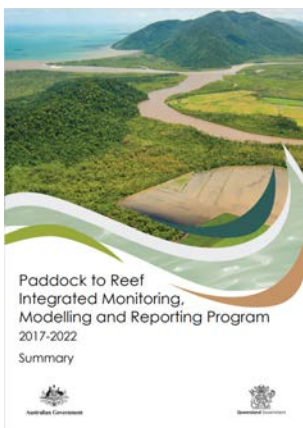


From Tablelands to tabletops

The innovative [Atherton Tablelands Integrated Collaboration project](#) recently announced by the Queensland Government is set to enhance soil and land management practices, improve water quality for the Reef and help secure the Far North's future food supply.

The five-year project will support horticultural land managers in the Tablelands transition to more sustainable farming practices and will eventually see the development of a regional food hub in Cairns. The food hub will support a circular economy approach to food production, in addition to facilitating research and development, employment upskilling, and knowledge sharing and learning.

Delivered in partnership with the Queensland Government and not-for-profit organisation Sustainable Table, the collaboration will see both organisations contribute \$1.5 million each in funding, with Sustainable Table also committing up to \$500,000 of in-kind support.



Paddock to Reef program updates

The [Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program](#) (Paddock to Reef program) provides the framework for evaluating and reporting progress towards Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan targets through the Reef water quality report card.

In September, the [Paddock to Reef Data Portal](#) was released with the portal providing access to modelling data and allowing users to create custom outputs and submit data requests.

The [Great Barrier Reef Catchment Monitoring Program 2020–2021](#) report is also now available.



Reef regulations: Update to Farm Nitrogen and Phosphorus Budget Guide

The Farm Nitrogen and Phosphorus Budget Guide (N&P Budget Guide) under the Reef protection regulations was updated in October.

[Version 2.1 of the N&P Budget Guide](#) now includes guidance on the management of standover cane, which is sugarcane that is left unharvested at the end of the harvest season.

For more information on the Reef protection regulations for sugarcane growers in the Great Barrier Reef catchment, please find [here](#).



Graziers reduce sediment run-off through the Grazing Resilience and Sustainable Solutions program

Graziers in the Burdekin, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions prevented a projected 20,700 tonnes of sediment entering the Great Barrier Reef through phase one of the [Grazing Resilience and Sustainable Solutions](#) (GRASS) program.

Over three years, 449 action plans for land management were developed covering 2.92 million hectares. The action plans guided improved management on 720,890 hectares of poor and degraded land.

Work included remediating gullies, erecting fences and installing new infrastructure such as watering points. The work was worth \$4.35 million with graziers contributing over \$2.65 million in cash and in-kind, leveraging the Queensland Government incentives investment of just over \$1.7 million.

Phase two of GRASS runs until 2026 and will support at least another 420 graziers to develop action plans.

GRASS is funded through the Queensland Government's Queensland Reef Water Quality Program and delivered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Fitzroy Basin Association, Burnett Mary Regional Group, and NQ Dry Tropics.

Project updates



Critically endangered grey nurse shark research

A [10-year study](#) has revealed that the slow birthrate and night-time wanderings of pregnant grey nurse sharks outside of no-take marine protected areas, are putting the species at greater risk of extinction.

The study, led by Queensland National Parks Senior Conservation Officer Dr Carley Kilpatrick and Dr Ross Dwyer of University of the Sunshine Coast, tracked 34 grey nurse sharks migrating between the Great Barrier Reef and southern New South Wales.

The sharks were found to regularly visit no-take marine protected areas, including popular scuba diving spots such as Wolf Rock in the Great Sandy Marine Park—the only known gestation site for the east coast population.

With only about 400 breeding animals left in the wild, a more widely spaced network of small marine protected areas positioned at locations where the sharks predictably aggregate could help conserve populations.

[Read more here](#) about the grey nurse shark, one of Australia's most endangered and iconic marine species.



Future Fishing Taskforce: sustainability a key consideration

As part of Queensland's transition to more sustainable fishing methods, the Future Fishing Taskforce was established to advise government on this initiative.

A key function of the Taskforce has been developing management measures to address effort shift and industry assistance packages for those impacted by the phasing out of gillnet fishing within the Great Barrier Reef as well as a separate mitigation package for the Great Sandy Marine Park rezoning.

The Taskforce has met 10 times and provided its recommendations to government. The work of the Taskforce has been informed by meetings and submissions from the community. Detailed submissions were received from the recreational, conservation and commercial sectors and Traditional Owners.

More information and communiques from Taskforce meetings can be found at [here](#).



Riparian revegetation harvests win for Reef

Image: Group visit to North Johnstone River (supplied by DAF)

In just three years, a dense riparian vegetation community in the Wet Tropics has been established to stabilise creek banks, shade out weeds and provide habitat.

A group of 26 people recently took part in a field trip to see the sites on Giddens Creek and the North Johnstone River.

The group learnt how restoring riparian revegetation along creek banks can reduce the need for constant weed spraying and reduce the use of herbicides.

The field trip included a visit to a constructed treatment wetland in Mourilyan to learn how wetlands can be designed and used to reduce dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN) in groundwater and lead to improved reef water quality.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) worked with Johnstone Region Landcare to organise the field trip and promote understanding about the importance of vegetation on waterways and healthy wetlands.

Grants and funding



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.

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



Accelerating grazing best practices – tenders now open

Applications are open for the [Queensland Government's \\$4 million Grazing Practice Change Program](#). The program will provide expert advice and services to graziers to boost production, profitability and farm sustainability while improving the quality of water in local waterways and the Reef ecosystem.

Funding of up to \$1 million is available for organisations with expert knowledge of sustainable pasture management and extension methodologies to increase adoption of improved practices and systems.

This includes organisations such as Natural Resource Management bodies, land care groups, producer networks, agribusiness, and commercial agronomy providers.

The funding is part of the Queensland Government's \$125.1 million investment to support agricultural industries in Great Barrier Reef catchments.

For more information, including details on the eligibility criteria, please visit: [QTenders - DES1231497](#). Tenders close on 11 December 2023.

Get involved



How you can help the Great Barrier Reef

Like all the world's coral reefs, the Great Barrier Reef is under threat but is still a spectacular sight.

It is the best managed reef in the world and with our help, the Reef can not only survive but thrive.

Read this Tourism and Events Queensland [article](#) to learn more about the best ways you can help protect the Great Barrier Reef – both when visiting and when at home.

Contact us

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

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