



Gift to the Earth



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Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan

Bringing science, policy and the community together in creating the world's largest network of marine sanctuaries

SUMMARY

On 1 July 2004, a vast synthesis of scientific research and a comprehensive public consultation process culminated in the implementation of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park zoning plan. This plan is a pioneering development in marine conservation, and it sets a new benchmark for the establishment of marine protected areas in Australia and around the world.

The size and scale of the network of marine sanctuaries prescribed in the zoning plan is unprecedented, and firmly establishes the Australian Government as a global leader in protecting our marine environment.

More than its size however, the new zoning plan is also unprecedented in terms of its comprehensiveness. It includes representative areas of all of the Marine Park's range of biological regions within the strict protection of marine sanctuaries and is based on the best available scientific research and advice¹.

The zoning plan is the third major step in the evolution of the protection of the Great Barrier Reef. The first two were its declaration as a marine park in 1975 followed by its classification as a World Heritage Area in 1981.



© Viewfinder

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park zoning plan increased the proportion of marine sanctuaries from less than 5% to more than 33% of the Marine Park.

The Great Barrier Reef is one of WWF's Global 200 ecoregions — a science-based ranking of the world's most biologically outstanding and globally representative areas of biodiversity — and a conservation priority for WWF.

WWF recognises the implementation of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan as a **GIFT TO THE EARTH** — a globally significant conservation achievement, and an example of environmental leadership which can inspire others.

BACKGROUND

The Great Barrier Reef is undisputedly one of the world's most important and treasured natural assets. It stretches more than 2300km along the northeast coast of Australia from the tip of Queensland to just north of Bundaberg. At 348,700km², the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is the largest World Heritage Area.

The rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef involved one of the largest public consultation processes in Australia's history². The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority undertook two community participation phases resulting in over 31,500 submissions being received. This huge number of submissions reflects the special place that the Great Barrier Reef occupies in the hearts and minds of all Australians.



The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is home to a number of threatened species, including 6 of world's 7 species of marine turtles.

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The zoning plan increased the proportion of marine sanctuaries — places where commercial and recreational fishing are prohibited — from 4.6 per cent to 33 per cent of the Marine Park. This equates to an area covering more than 11 million hectares — about half the size of the UK. In addition to the marine sanctuary network, the plan also provides a range of zoning provisions that assist in the sustainable management of all the activities throughout the entire Marine Park.

THE CONSERVATION BENEFITS

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park zoning plan provides a strict level of protection for the full suite of the Marine Park's biological regions. It aims to make the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem more resilient to the pressures it faces and to result in a greater abundance of marine life.

The zoning plan provides benefits beyond conservation outcomes. It is also a strong investment that helps provide security for coastal communities and significant benefits to the Australian economy. Reef industries contributed approximately \$5.8 billion to the Australian economy in 2004 and employed about 63,000 people, and are reliant on a healthy environment in which to operate.



Reef industries, worth approximately \$5.8 billion to the Australian economy, are reliant on a healthy environment in which to operate. The zoning plan aims to make the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem more resilient to the threats it faces.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contacts:

Gilly Llewellyn, WWF-Australia: gllewellyn@wwf.org.au

Richard Leck, WWF-Australia: rleck@wwf.org.au

Websites:

WWF-Australia: wwf.org.au

WWF International: panda.org



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The **GIFT TO THE EARTH** is WWF's highest recognition for a globally significant conservation achievement, which addresses WWF's conservation priorities by:

- Advancing conservation of biodiversity, especially forest, freshwater and marine ecosystems, or enhancing the prospects for survival of threatened species
- Addressing global threats posed by climate change, toxic chemicals and unsustainable use of resources such as timber, freshwater and fisheries.

Contacts:

Rob Soutter +41 22 364 9290, rsoutter@wwfint.org

Visit panda.org/gtte

Source:

¹ http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/documents/ITMEMS_paper_23_Mar03_Comp_if-1.pdf

² http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/zoning/documents/93_jagob.pdf