



Queensland

Marine Parks (Moreton Bay) Zoning Plan 2008

Regulatory Impact Statement for SL 2008 No. 343

made under the

Marine Parks Act 2004

1 Regulatory Impact Statement

1.1 Purpose of the Regulatory Impact Statement

Under the *Statutory Instruments Act 1992*, if the draft zoning plan is likely to impose appreciable costs on the community or part of the community, a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) must be prepared before the zoning plan is made.

A RIS is designed to determine whether or not the draft zoning plan is the most efficient and effective way of achieving desired policy objectives. It does this by providing a mechanism by which the Government's policy deliberations are clearly documented and subject to public scrutiny.

The purpose of this section is to explain the need for the draft zoning plan and to present an evaluation of the likely costs and benefits that would flow from its adoption in comparison with other options explored.

1.2 Authorising law

The draft Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan has been prepared under the *Marine Parks Act 2004* and the *Marine Parks Regulation 2006*.

Sections 21–24 of the *Marine Parks Act 2004* give the power to develop a zoning plan and prescribe the content of the zoning plan.

1.3 Policy objectives

The policy objective is to develop a draft zoning plan for Moreton Bay Marine Park which protects and maintains the marine environment while allowing for its ecologically sustainable use.

The draft zoning plan—

- allows most marine activities to continue under an ecologically sustainable use management framework;
- fulfils obligations under the *Marine Parks Act 2004*;
- fulfils obligations under Commonwealth law and international conventions;
- observes internationally recognised standards for designing marine parks;
- provides for public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the marine environment;
- analyses new data and research about environmental and socio-economic factors that has been gathered over the past 10 years; and
- promotes the cooperative involvement and responsibility of stakeholders and the community.

1.4 Consistency with the authorising law

The draft zoning plan is consistent with the *Marine Parks Act 2004* and *Marine Parks Regulation 2006*.

1.5 Consistency with other legislation

The draft zoning plan is consistent with other legislation including the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*, *Environmental Protection Act 1994*, *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994*, *Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Regulation 1995*, *Transport Infrastructure Act 1994* and *Fisheries Act 1994*.

1.6 Fundamental legislative principles

Fundamental legislative principles are set out in the *Legislative Standards Act 1992* to ensure that legislation has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals, and the institutions of Parliament.

The draft zoning plan will impose some restrictions on marine park users through permit requirements and entry and use requirements (which generally reflect those currently in place under the current zoning plan and zoning plans applying to all other State marine parks), as follows—

- Permits will be required for specified activities that need to be managed in order to protect the environment and provide for public safety and enjoyment. Applicants for, and holders of, permits will have formal avenues for appeal over permit decisions. There are no fees and charges associated with the permits.
- Restrictions and prohibitions will also apply to certain actions or behaviour in order to protect the environment and to provide for public safety and enjoyment. They include restrictions on vessel speeds in shallow dugong and turtle areas ('go slow' areas for turtles and dugong), prohibitions on all forms of extraction and disposal in green zones (similar to restrictions applying to terrestrial national parks) and restrictions on anchoring in coral reef habitat.

The costs and benefits associated with the restrictions and the various alternatives considered are outlined in more detail throughout the remaining sections.

The draft zoning plan does not affect, diminish or extinguish native title and associated rights for Traditional Owners to take, use or keep natural and cultural resources in accordance with Aboriginal tradition under the *Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993*.

1.7 Cost-benefit assessment (Draft Public Benefit Test)

The Queensland Government is a signatory to the Competition Principles Agreement that requires a Public Benefit Test (PBT) for proposed new legislation or amendments to existing legislation. The agreement requires that the zoning plan should not restrict competition unless it is demonstrated that—

- the benefits of the restriction to the community as a whole outweigh the costs; and
- the objectives of the legislation can only be achieved by restricting competition.

Both of these criteria must be satisfied, and it must also be demonstrated that there are no less restrictive ways to obtain the desired outcomes.

1.8 Costs and benefits of broader options and alternatives

A number of regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms are available to manage Moreton Bay Marine Park. Codes of conduct and community awareness programs are two non-regulatory alternatives to legislation. Some examples of non-regulatory management mechanisms currently being used in the marine park include training programs for tourist operators, the Moreton Bay Seafood Industry Association's Environmental Management System, monitoring programs such as Seagrass Watch and other educational activities.

Non-regulatory mechanisms are not enforceable. Use of these mechanisms alone is considered too great a risk to the sustainable management of Moreton Bay Marine Park and is not a viable alternative.

The following options for reviewing the Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan were considered when developing the draft zoning plan—

Option one Comprehensive review of the existing zoning plan

Develop a draft zoning plan based on internationally recognised standards for marine park design and extensive consultation with stakeholders and the public.

Option two Partial review of the existing zoning plan

Develop a draft zoning plan that largely retains the current level of protection but adopts zone names and objectives that are consistent with other Queensland marine parks.

Option three No review of the existing zoning plan

Allow the existing zoning plan to expire and Moreton Bay Marine Park to become an unzoned marine park.

Option one—Comprehensive review of existing zoning plan

The independent Expert Advisory Panel believes the current level of green zones does not adequately protect Moreton Bay Marine Park's biodiversity values or provide a solid basis for sustainable management in the future. The panel has based this on a number of reasons—

- The current green zones are small (accounting for only 0.5 percent of the marine park), widely separated and largely confined to coral reefs and mangrove habitats.
- The current level of green zoning falls well short of internationally accepted standards for marine reserve design.
- The current zoning plan protects only five of the marine park's 16 broad-scale habitat types.

A comprehensive review of Moreton Bay Marine Park is considered necessary for a number of reasons—

- The Expert Advisory Panel has recommended that a minimum of 10 percent of each of the marine park's 16 broad-scale habitat type be protected in green zones.
- There is now greater understanding of the importance of marine species, marine habitats and how they interact than when the current zoning plan commenced in 1997.
- The dramatically increasing and changing use of the marine park over the last decade needs to be reflected in the zoning plan.

- A number of species at risk of extinction are under pressure from a range of human impacts.
- The biodiversity of Moreton Bay Marine Park's ecosystems is under increasing threat from the effects of climate change. Recent studies by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority indicate that the resilience of these ecosystems to climate change impacts can be improved by reducing human impacts and increasing the connectivity between areas given total protection.
- The entry and use provisions for some activities (such as extraction of materials, anchoring, mooring, development and collection fisheries) are ambiguous under the current zoning plan and need revision.

Option one delivers strong environmental outcomes while minimising the impacts on marine park users.

Option two—Partial review of the existing zoning plan

Reinstating the *Marine Parks (Moreton Bay) Zoning Plan 1997* with minimal changes has been considered. Under this option the only change would be to update the current zones names and objectives and make them consistent with the *Marine Parks Act 2004* and *Marine Parks Regulation 2006*. This would mean that marine park zones would be consistent across all Queensland marine parks, therefore improving compliance, administration and public awareness.

Under this option the distribution of existing use and the coverage of green zones in Moreton Bay Marine Park would be largely unchanged. The consequences of this option are outlined below—

- The majority of the marine park's 16 broad-scale habitat types would remain unprotected from all forms of extraction, disposal or coastal development.
- The current level of green zones would not satisfy Australia's international obligations.
- Many problems associated with the rapidly increasing use of the marine park would remain unaddressed.
- Habitats and species of special interest or significance would be inadequately protected.

- The overall level of protection currently provided to the marine park would be reduced. This is because to accommodate existing use, most current yellow zones would be downgraded to dark blue zones and most current dark blue zones would be downgraded to light blue zones.

Option two fails to adequately meet the objectives of the *Marine Parks Act 2004* and *Marine Parks Regulation 2006*, does not consider new information and research, fails to meet international obligations, and does not follow best practice standards for marine reserve size and design to effectively conserve marine environments. Option two is therefore not a viable option.

Option three—No review of the existing zoning plan

If the current zoning plan expired, Moreton Bay Marine Park would be managed as Queensland's first large unzoned marine park under the *Marine Parks Regulation 2006*. The consequences of allowing the *Marine Parks (Moreton Bay) Zoning Plan 1997* to expire are outlined below—

- The current zones and designated areas under the existing zoning plan would expire and no longer apply, therefore removing the current protection.
- Measures such as 'go slow' areas, put in place under the current zoning plan to protect specific wildlife such as dugong and turtles, would no longer apply.
- Moreton Bay Marine Park's habitats would remain unprotected from all forms of extraction, disposal or coastal development. These activities could resume in all areas currently zoned green or yellow, subject to restrictions in place under other legislation.
- Fishing closures implemented under the *Fisheries Act 1994* to protect the grey nurse shark would remain. However, restrictions under the current zoning plan on diving activities in designated grey nurse shark areas would be removed.
- While the current zoning plan allows most commercial fishing to be conducted without a marine parks permit, all forms of commercial fishing would require a permit in an unzoned marine park. This would result in increased costs for Government and industry to complete and assess applications for marine park permits.

- The differences between an unzoned Moreton Bay Marine Park and marine parks elsewhere in Queensland would cause confusion for users.
- An unzoned marine park would not help Australia meet its responsibilities and obligations as a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Option three would greatly reduce the current level of protection for the marine park and substantially increase permit and administration requirements and costs. As outlined in option one, the current level of protection is already considered to be scientifically and socially inadequate. Option three is therefore not a viable option.

Based on this analysis of options for reviewing the Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan, option one is the preferred approach. This draft zoning plan has therefore been developed based on option one.

2 Summary of costs and benefits arising from the draft zoning plan

2.1 Government

Potential costs

The draft zoning plan will result in costs to the Queensland Government. This includes costs associated with implementing awareness campaigns and public consultation processes, and implementing and monitoring compliance programs for the final zoning plan. Government agencies responsible for conducting compliance and education programs will require additional funding for these types of activities.

There will be additional costs associated with administering the Moreton Bay Marine Park Structural Adjustment Package (MBMP SAP, as detailed on page 6) and implementing artificial reefs and baseline monitoring programs. However, these projects are expected to deliver ongoing benefits to the Queensland community by supporting a range of significant industries that currently use the Moreton Bay Marine Park.

Potential benefits

Consistent legislation across all State marine parks will reduce the costs of compliance and educational campaigns for users of Queensland's marine parks. This may also increase patronage of the State's marine parks and improve community understanding about the unique environmental values of marine environments and the issues facing these areas.

The draft zoning plan is expected to significantly reduce other Government costs associated with permitting requirements and remediation of degraded habitats.

2.2 Commercial fishing

Commercial fishing inside Moreton Bay Marine Park has an extensive history, with many operators able to trace their families' reliance on commercial fishing back several generations. On average, 410 commercial fishing licences accessed the marine park annually during the three year period ending 30 June 2006. These vessels landed approximately \$24.1 million gross value of product ('GVP', or the wharf price paid to commercial fishers) from within the marine park each year. These vessels also landed an additional \$22.6 million each year during fishing operations outside Moreton Bay Marine Park.

Commercial fishing activities within the marine park and the potential implications of the draft zoning plan have been fully considered throughout the development of this draft zoning plan.

Potential costs

Commercial fishing occurs across all 16 broad-scale habitat types in Moreton Bay Marine Park. As a result, it is the industry most affected by the draft zoning plan.

Commercial logbook data has been used to estimate the potential impacts of the draft zoning plan on commercial fisheries. This modelling indicates a total potential impact of approximately 17 percent, or \$4.1 million of the \$24.1 million annual average GVP generated within the marine park. These impacts vary across different commercial fisheries sectors depending on the types of habitats they use and the presence of existing fisheries closures in these habitat types. The direct cost of the draft zoning plan on these

individual commercial fishing sectors' GVP is estimated to be 32.5 percent for net, 23.6 percent for beam trawl, 14.9 percent for pot, 11.3 percent for line and 7.9 percent for trawl.

The Government is proposing to implement a Moreton Bay Marine Park Structural Adjustment Package (MBMP SAP) to minimise the costs of the draft zoning plan on commercial fisheries. To reduce issues arising from displaced commercial fishing effort, it is proposed that the MBMP SAP be implemented prior to the new zoning plan commencing. The MBMP SAP aims to maintain the levels of effort in areas outside the closures to the same levels reported under the current zoning plan. This will maintain the level of competition between commercial fishers and potentially lead to greater catches as migratory fish species move across the boundaries of areas within the marine park closed to commercial fishing.

It is intended the MBMP SAP will use a competitive offer process similar to the one employed during the implementation of effort units under the *Fisheries (East Coast Trawl) Management Plan 1999*. The MBMP SAP will contain two components. The main component is designed to reduce effort from within Moreton Bay Marine Park. Holders of a commercial fishing licence or commercial harvest fishery licence with proven history of fishing activities within the marine park will be eligible to apply to this component of the MBMP SAP.

The second component is intended to reduce the potential for currently under-utilised east coast fishing licences entering Moreton Bay Marine Park after the new zoning plan commences. Holders of a Queensland commercial fishing boat licence or a commercial harvest fishery licence with fishing symbols that could be utilised within the marine park will be eligible for this component of the MBMP SAP.

The MBMP SAP will be used to purchase entire licence packages; that is, the current commercial fishing boat licence or commercial harvest fishery licence, all associated fishery symbols and, where appropriate, quota and effort units. It will not purchase fishing vessels or fishing related equipment. Separate targets and conditions of offer will be established for each fishery operating within the Moreton Bay Marine Park once comments on the draft zoning plan have been analysed. Catches reported on a commercial licence after the Moreton Bay Marine Park zoning plan review was announced on 22 February 2007 will not be considered during the offer process.

There are expected to be minimal flow-on costs to businesses such as boat brokers and chandleries in south-east Queensland as a result of the draft zoning plan. This is because of the relatively high importance of recreational boating activities to these businesses compared to commercial fishing. Downstream effects on seafood wholesalers and retailers are also expected to be minor compared to the natural annual fluctuations in market supply and the potential for increased catches from the remaining commercial operators.

Potential benefits

Commercial fishing will benefit from increased levels of protection to some habitat types in the marine park, such as mangroves and riverine/estuarine areas which are critical for fisheries production.

The benefits of marine parks and their zoning are recognised in the State and Federal Government ecological assessments. These ecological assessments identify marine parks as a management tool for minimising and managing interactions with species of conservation interest, such as turtles, dugong and sea snakes. They also recognise that having areas where fisheries operations are prohibited, including as part of marine park zoning, contributes to the sustainability of fisheries by protecting marine species and habitats.

2.3 Commercial collection fisheries

Commercial collection fisheries (such as aquarium, bait and developmental beche de mer collection) are relatively small-scale operations compared to the major commercial fisheries operating in Moreton Bay Marine Park. These fisheries rely on manual collection activities that are generally very selective in the species they target and retain.

The aquarium fish fishery produces the largest estimated GVP from this group. It generates approximately \$300,000 each year in the marine park (based on compulsory marine park permit information and estimated species prices).

Potential costs

The aquarium fish fishery is restricted in its area of operation because of physical diving constraints and the limited number of preferred habitat types, predominately offshore reef habitat, that provide the majority of fish catches. Most aquarium fish collectors in the marine park can currently operate within the Flinders Reef buffer zone using a non-conforming use permit. These collectors can also operate within the existing Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) grey nurse shark closures which restrict most other forms of fishing activities. Under the draft zoning plan these areas have been classified as green zones because the current exclusion of most forms of commercial and recreational fishing means this type of zoning will have a relatively low economic impact.

Approximately 42 percent of the aquarium fish fishery GVP is generated from the Flinders Reef and Flat Rock areas. When all proposed green zones are considered this equates to a potential loss of 68 percent of the total GVP for this fishery. A number of actions will be implemented to help the aquarium fish fishery adapt to the changes associated with the draft zoning plan—

- Given the magnitude of the impact on this fishery, the restrictions to aquarium fish collectors in green zones will be introduced in a staged approach to provide this industry with a three to five year period to modify its operations.
- Aquarium fish fishery licence holders will be eligible to apply for the MBMP SAP.
- The EPA, in consultation with other Government agencies and marine park users, will develop a policy, identify suitable locations and establish trial artificial reefs in the marine park or adjacent waters. It is anticipated licensed aquarium collectors will benefit from this additional reef habitat.

The draft zoning plan is not expected to have any major impacts on the commercial bait collection fisheries because zones that would restrict commercial collection activities do not overlap significant bait collection areas.

Potential benefits

Commercial blood worming areas have been removed from the draft zoning plan, providing more flexibility for operators to conduct their activities over a larger area of the marine park.

Establishing artificial reefs in Moreton Bay Marine Park may provide benefits to aquarium fish collectors. Similar programs in New South Wales reported recruitment of 80 percent of local reef species within the first three years of establishment, and a similarly rapid colonisation of the ex-HMAS Brisbane has also been observed.

2.4 Recreational fishing

Recreational fishing is an important activity in Moreton Bay Marine Park. Recreational fishing in the marine park includes shore and boat based line fishing, bait gathering and crabbing. About 60 percent of Queensland's recreational anglers live in the Moreton Bay region with 432,000 anglers, or 18.4 percent, of the south-east Queensland population aged over 15 years harvesting approximately 3,500 tonnes of fish, crabs and prawns a year. Recreational fishing was reported to have generated \$194 million in related expenditure in south-east Queensland annually in 2000–2001.

The recreational fishery in Queensland is undergoing a rapid transformation with participation rates declining significantly since monitoring commenced in 1996. Participation rates in south-east Queensland have declined at a faster rate than the state average, with a net decrease of approximately 90,000 anglers between 1996 and 2004. This decline is most significant in anglers aged under 30 years. Research conducted by Sutton et al. for James Cook University has identified that lack of time and income are major constraints for this age group.

Unlike the commercial fishery where the objective for fishing is to maximise the catch, recreational anglers have a range of objectives or motives to go fishing; such as escaping from routine, experiencing nature, or for rest and relaxation. This diversity of motives means that recreational anglers may be more likely to find substitute locations that fulfil both their catch and non-catch related motives.

Potential costs

The EPA has collected and analysed information from a range of sources to ensure that the potential impacts of green zones on the recreational fishing sector are minimised. An analysis of this information has shown that the draft zoning plan will have a direct impact on approximately five percent of recreational fishing trips conducted inside the marine park.

Various types of recreational fishing occur throughout Moreton Bay Marine Park, however effort is clearly concentrated in areas with easy accessibility. A wide range of easily accessible alternative fishing locations are still available under the draft zoning plan, therefore it is anticipated that the direct impact will be replaced by effort shifting to substitute fishing locations near proposed green zones. Moving to alternative fishing locations is not expected to add appreciable costs to recreational fishing trips or reduce the overall recreational fishing that occurs adjacent to communities that rely substantially on recreational fishing related trade.

Potential benefits

The benefit of marine parks, particularly from green zones, on fish stocks has been widely studied and reported in numerous scientific articles and texts. There is increasing evidence that green zones replenish fish populations regionally. This has been observed in increasing fish density, size, biomass or abundance, and ‘spillover’ of species into adjacent fished areas.

Several submissions from the recreational fishing sector have highlighted the lack of accessible reef habitats within the Moreton Bay Marine Park. These submissions have called for artificial reefs to be introduced to provide additional habitat for reef species, which are commonly key target species for the recreational fishery. Artificial reefs may have a number of short-term benefits to the recreational fishery, including reducing crowding at fishing locations and boat ramps, providing alternative fishing opportunities, reducing pressure on natural areas within the marine park, reducing vessel operating costs, and increasing stewardship of marine resources.

In addition, the proposal to reduce the number of approvals associated with applying for mooring sites within the marine park will also provide benefits for recreational anglers wishing to moor fishing vessels within the marine park.

2.5 Recreational boating

Recreational boating is an increasingly popular activity in south-east Queensland. The Department of Transport reports that the number of vessels registered in the region has increased by 45 percent in the last eight years from 72,000 registrations in 1999 to more than 105,000 in 2006. Boating is particularly popular in the southern parts of the Moreton Bay Marine Park, with one quarter of all registered recreational vessels in south-east Queensland located on the Gold Coast. Members of the boating industry have highlighted that healthy and well-functioning marine environments are essential for the continued success of this industry.

Potential costs

There are no significant costs to recreational boating activities within the marine park because the draft zoning plan does not prevent recreational boating access.

‘Go slow’ areas for turtles and dugong areas have been expanded and new areas added, to minimise the impacts of boating—one of the key threatening processes to dugong and turtle populations. This will increase travel times for people traversing these areas, however alternative routes are available to minimise time costs. The costs associated with speed restrictions in ‘go slow’ areas for natural values are minor because these areas are located away from main navigation areas and within proposed green zones.

It is not expected that any downstream impacts on the boating industry will occur as a result of the draft zoning plan. According to the Department of Transport, boat registration figures for regions adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) Marine Park did not show a significant decline in the number of vessels registered when the GBR was rezoned even though 33 percent of the GBR Marine Park was closed to recreational fishing. A similar result is expected for the Moreton Bay Marine Park region if external forces such as interest rate rises and the price of fuel do not impact on people’s discretionary spending on boating.

Potential benefits

The draft zoning plan reduces the number of approvals associated with applying for mooring sites within the marine park, which will benefit recreational boaters wishing to moor a vessel within the marine park.

Recreational boaters may benefit from plans to establish artificial reefs in Moreton Bay Marine Park. These reefs will provide alternative fishing locations for boaters who are also involved in recreational fishing. This is likely to reduce effort at key locations like Peel Island where overcrowding has been identified as a major issue. Appropriately placed artificial reefs are also expected to reduce boating traffic in some of the more confined areas of the marine park, such as the channel areas south of Jumpinpin.

Information collected during the first stage of the zoning plan review has highlighted that ‘no anchoring’ areas are needed to protect areas susceptible to anchor damage. Additional mooring facilities will be considered in these ‘no anchoring’ areas, which may benefit recreational boaters.

The draft zoning plan also clarifies the types of boating activities that can occur in the different zones within the marine park. This will benefit some sectors of the boating industry. In particular Personal Water Craft (PWC) operators who are prevented from entering green zones under the current zoning plan will be allowed to navigate throughout the whole marine park.

2.6 Tourism and recreational activities

Moreton Bay is an emerging tourism market and the marine park is seen by the industry as an undervalued tourism and ecological asset. Tourism Queensland has advised that visitors to Brisbane’s Moreton Bay and islands region spent an estimated \$500 million in 2006, contributing to around 5,500 jobs. The marine park’s proximity to Queensland’s capital city also provides significant recreational opportunities for local residents including boating activities, nature watching and the ability to escape from residential surroundings.

Potential costs

Under the draft zoning plan all commercial tourism operators within the marine park are required to hold a marine park permit by the end of the

transitional period of 120 days. There are no fees attached to this permit, except for whale watching operations.

Potential benefits

There are significant benefits to the tourism industry from the draft zoning plan. Greater public awareness of the marine park's unique values is expected to lead to greater acceptance of the marine park as a potential tourism destination. This awareness of eco-tourism opportunities within easy travel of Brisbane will become increasingly important for the tourism market.

Other benefits to the tourism industry are associated with the protection of the marine park's unique habitat types and species that rely on these habitats. In particular, growth is expected in interstate and international tourism markets relating to viewing wildlife like dugongs, grey nurse sharks and migratory shorebirds. Growth in this tourism market is expected to deliver strong growth to the local businesses that service these industries and increase local economies.

Under the current zoning plan tourism permissions vary between each zone, leading to difficulty in interpretation and compliance. The draft zoning plan simplifies permissions for a tourist program by adopting a single permission that will apply across the entire marine park. This provides greater security for tourist program operators and enables operators to establish a history of using and monitoring their operations in the marine park.

3 Proposed zones under the draft zoning plan

3.1 Proposed green (marine national park) zones

Background

Green zones provide the highest level of protection in Moreton Bay Marine Park. These are areas where all forms of extractive use, direct disposal into

the area, coastal development and most maritime infrastructure are prohibited to provide whole-of-ecosystem protection. Green zones form the core of Queensland's marine protected area estate in the same way that National Parks, under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, form protected area estate on land.

The current green zones are small and widely separated areas which are largely confined to coral reefs and mangrove habitats. Under the current zoning plan 11 of the 16 broad-scale habitat types occurring in the Moreton Bay Marine Park are not protected in green zones and only one of these (inshore reef habitat) contains more than 10 percent of the habitat type represented in green zones (refer to Table 1).

The name for green zones will change from 'protection zones' to 'marine national park zones' under the draft zoning plan to comply with the *Marine Parks Act 2004* and *Marine Parks Regulation 2006*, and to provide consistency with other State marine parks. This will alleviate public confusion over the status and restrictions applying to the areas.

Proposal

There are 33 green zones proposed under the draft zoning plan.

Habitat type	Percentage in green zones	
	Current zoning plan	Draft zoning plan
Bioturbated mud	0.0	10.00
Bioturbated sand	0.0	14.20
Diverse sandy	0.0	14.60
High energy coastal	0.0	18.80
Inshore reef	10.7	21.90
Inshore, algae/sponge habitat	0.0	5.90
Mangrove/intertidal habitat	3.6	19.20
Offshore deep	0.0	8.40
Offshore reef	0.4	9.90
Offshore sandy	0.0	16.50
Riverine/estuarine	0.8	22.30
Rocky headland	0.0	18.40
Rocky shores	0.0	10.10
Sand/rubble	0.0	28.70
Sandy channels	3.4	9.40
Seagrass	0.0	15.20

Table 1—Representation of habitat types in green zones under the current zoning plan compared to the draft zoning plan

Rationale for decision and alternatives considered

The size, shape and location of the proposed green zones have been guided by the scientific guiding principles. Feedback from stakeholder groups and

the community has also been considered to minimise impacts arising from the placement of green zones.

In general green zones have been designated over areas to—

- protect the full range of habitat types and other biodiversity features;
- maintain the ecological viability and integrity of populations, species and communities;
- protect an example of each biodiversity feature;
- protect species of conservation concern as well as species vulnerable habitats and life-stages;
- protect the natural values of the marine environment to ensure greater resilience against future changes or threats; and
- provide for adaptive management through assessment of effectiveness of zoning.

Key changes

- There is no significant difference between the restrictions that apply to green zones under the existing and draft zoning plan.
- The key change is the increased number and coverage of green zones, which provide greater habitat protection (refer to Table 1).

Major costs and benefits

Marine parks are an integral component of ecosystem-based management and are able to protect ecosystem structure, function and integrity. This can be achieved by protecting physical habitat structure and biodiversity from direct human impacts.

The draft zoning plan is expected to deliver strong conservation outcomes. It protects many iconic species, some of which (such as the dugong and loggerhead turtle) are under threat of localised extinction. Under the draft zoning plan all of the marine park's 16 broad-scale habitat types have representative areas protected in green zones, compared to only five under the current zoning plan. A marine environment free from extraction and additions to the marine environment, coastal development and maritime infrastructure will have greater resilience against natural and human

impacts. It will also provide opportunities to enjoy an example of each habitat type in its natural state.

Recreational fishing

Recreational fishing in Moreton Bay Marine Park will remain an integral part of the lifestyle and economy of the local community. In developing the draft zoning plan, the EPA has considered information such as DPI&F recreational fishing data, tagging information, competition records and the EPA's online survey data to minimise impacts on the existing pattern of recreational fishing.

Areas of high existing fishing value have generally been avoided and as a result, it is estimated that only five percent of recreational fishing effort in the marine park will be directly affected by the proposed green zones. Additionally, the proposed green zones are generally situated away from easily accessible foreshore areas that are traditionally fished by people with limited alternative access opportunities like the young or aged, or people with a disability or low disposable income. For example, the draft zoning plan allows fishing from beaches and other shorelines over most of Stradbroke, Moreton and Bribie islands and the mainland coastline.

It is expected that downstream industries which rely on recreational fishing expenditure will not be affected as a result of the draft zoning plan. Zone boundaries have been located to minimise impacts on recreational fishers, especially those with limited fishing opportunities like mainland shore anglers. The small percentage of anglers affected by the zoning plan has the ability to substitute alternative fishing locations, which is likely to minimise impacts to recreational fishing related businesses. Any potential impacts will be further minimised by the introduction of the artificial reef program. This program will enhance recreational fishing opportunities for a large number of anglers, and potentially stimulate expenditure in local communities adjacent to the new fishing opportunities.

Commercial fishing

Green zones are expected to account for approximately \$1.9 million of the total \$4.1 million per year direct impact on commercial fisheries. Likely impacts on major commercial fisheries include a reduction in GVP of 15.6 percent for net, 10.5 percent for pot, 8.4 percent for line, 2.7 percent for trawl and 0.9 percent for beam trawl.

To mitigate these impacts, commercial fishers will have the opportunity to apply for funding under the MBMP SAP (refer to page 6 for further details). This is likely to increase the harvest efficiency of the remaining operators as there will be less competition from other commercial operators and less potential for future increases in commercial effort.

The current zoning plan allows for non-conforming use for one tunnel-netter at Peel Island and six aquarium fish collectors in the Flinders Reef green zone. To ensure the integrity of the proposed green zones the draft zoning plan no longer allows these activities.

The proposed green zones are likely to impact on the aquarium fish collection industry, as detailed on page 7. Impacts on this industry will be mitigated by providing a transitional period of between three to five years and the establishment of artificial reefs.

Aquaculture

The proposed green zones have been located following consideration of existing aquaculture operations. While new aquaculture operations will not be permitted in the proposed green zones, there are no existing aquaculture operations that will be affected by the draft zoning plan.

Tourism, recreation and education

For commercial tourism operators there is little operational difference between the current and draft zoning plans, including for whale watching. However, the increased number and size of green zones are expected to enhance tourism opportunities within Moreton Bay Marine Park. Refer to page 10 for more discussion on impacts on the tourism industry.

The network of proposed green zones enhances opportunities for recreational activities such as snorkelling, diving and kayaking in the marine park.

The network of proposed green zones also enhances opportunities for education and research programs. Educational providers wishing to conduct an educational program in the marine park that does not involve fishing or collecting can do so without permission. Education and research programs that do involve fishing or collecting require permission in all zones to ensure any impacts on the marine environment are mitigated and managed. There is also a mechanism for granting accreditation to

education providers, which removes the need for permissions in a marine park (for further information, refer to the *Marine Parks Regulation 2006*, Division 3).

Recreational boating

Recreational boating is not likely to be impacted by the proposed green zones as these zones do not prevent recreational boating access within the marine park. The small proportion (15 percent) of the marine park included in green zones means there are a large number of alternative sites that can be visited by boaters who include fishing as part of their recreational experience.

Traditional Owners

The proposed green zones will provide protection to some areas of cultural significance. Traditional hunting, fishing and gathering will not be affected by green zones.

Coastal development

Coastal development is not permitted in proposed green zones, however green zones have been located to minimise impacts on this sector as far as possible.

3.2 Proposed yellow (conservation park) zones

Background

Yellow zones are areas where most forms of large scale extractive use, direct disposal into the area, private structures and development are prohibited. These zones emphasise protection of the area's natural integrity, however limited recreational and commercial line fishing and crabbing may still occur. Yellow zones, like green zones, form part of Queensland's marine conservation estate in the same way that Conservation Parks, under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, form protected area estate on land.

Under the existing zoning plan, a relatively high proportion of the marine park is designated as yellow zone. However, the zone name and restrictions applying to these areas under the current zoning plan need to be updated to comply with the *Marine Parks Act 2004* and *Marine Parks Regulation 2006*.

Currently, yellow zones in Moreton Bay Marine Park have similar restrictions to dark blue zones (habitat protection zones) in other Queensland marine parks. This has caused public confusion over the status and restrictions applying to yellow zones. For example, under the current zoning plan yellow zones in Moreton Bay Marine Park are called ‘conservation zones’, while in all other Queensland marine parks they are called ‘conservation park zones’. Similarly, commercial netting may occur in Moreton Bay Marine Park’s current yellow zones while elsewhere in Queensland only bait netting is allowed in these zones.

Proposal

There are 10 proposed yellow zones under the draft zoning plan. The entry and use provisions applying to proposed yellow zones have been updated to comply with the *Marine Parks Act 2004* and *Marine Parks Regulation 2006* and are now consistent with yellow zones in all other Queensland marine parks.

Rationale for decision and alternatives considered

The size, shape and location of the proposed yellow zones have been guided by the scientific guiding principles. Feedback from stakeholder groups and the community has also been considered to minimise impacts arising from the placement of yellow zones.

In general yellow zones have been designated over areas to—

- broadly complement the level of protection provided to adjacent land based protected areas (such as national parks) while supporting existing recreational use and some limited commercial fishing;
- protect special and unique areas (including dugong and turtle habitats) where inclusion of these areas in green zones would have resulted in unacceptable social or economic impacts; and
- allow continued entry and use of areas of high recreational value, in particular for recreational fishing.

Key changes

- Commercial netting is reduced to bait netting in yellow zones in line with restrictions applying to yellow zones in all other Queensland marine parks.
- Commercial crabbing is limited to four pots per person, in line with restrictions that also apply to recreational fishing.
- Commercial and recreational line fishing is restricted to one line/one hook per person.
- Dredging and trawling are prohibited in yellow zones.

Major costs and benefits

The key environmental benefit of yellow zones is the high level of protection they provide to habitats of the marine park. In addition, removing the most threatening processes such as trawling, dredging, spoil disposal, waste disposal and coastal development is likely to improve the health and overall quality of the environment.

Proposed yellow zones have been placed adjacent to green zones or land based national parks such as Bribie Island National Park. This provides an additional buffer against future impacts, for example, those arising from climate change.

Commercial fishing

Commercial netting and crabbing is most affected by the proposed yellow zones. To minimise the impacts to commercial fisheries, proposed yellow zones have been placed in areas of lower commercial value or over areas currently closed to commercial fishing.

The likely impacts of yellow zones account for approximately \$1.5 million of the total \$4.1 million impact per year calculated for commercial fisheries. By sector, the impacts on GVP are 16.8 for net, 4.4 percent for pot, 4.5 percent for beam trawl, 2.9 percent for line, and 0.8 percent for trawl. These impacts will be mitigated by the MBMP SAP, as detailed on page 6.

Aquaculture

Existing aquaculture operations will not be affected by the proposed yellow zones. There may be new opportunities for marine aquaculture not involving fish feeding, dredging or trawling in some areas.

Tourism, recreation and indigenous activities

Recreational fishing, boating, charter fishing, indigenous hunting and gathering, and tourism are expected to benefit from the improved quality and diversity of habitats likely to result from the proposed yellow zones.

Coastal development

Coastal development involving private works and structures will not be permitted in the proposed yellow zones, however stakeholder feedback has been used to guide placement of yellow zones to minimise impacts on this sector as far as possible. For example, to minimise impacts on existing and future works and marine infrastructure, the coastal strips at Pelican Waters and Golden Beach have been excluded from this proposed yellow zone.

3.3 Proposed dark blue (habitat protection) zones

Background

Dark blue zones are areas where the protection of sensitive habitats is emphasised and threatening processes, in particular those activities which disturb the seabed, are prohibited. These areas are compatible with fish habitat areas declared under the *Fisheries Act 1994* and are important areas for wildlife residence, breeding and maturation.

Under the current zoning plan, a substantial percentage of the marine park has been designated as dark blue zone. The zone name, objectives, and entry and use provisions applying to the areas in Moreton Bay Marine Park differ from those in all other Queensland marine parks. This has caused public confusion over the status and appropriate use of these areas. For example, dark blue zones are called ‘habitat zones’ in Moreton Bay Marine Park and ‘habitat protection zones’ elsewhere. There are also key differences in what may and may not occur within dark blue zones between

Moreton Bay Marine Park and all other Queensland marine parks (see ‘Key changes’ below).

Proposal

There are 12 dark blue zones proposed under the draft zoning plan. The entry and use provisions applying to dark blue zones have been updated to comply with the *Marine Parks Act 2004* and *Marine Parks Regulation 2006* and are now consistent with dark blue zones in all other Queensland marine parks.

Rationale for decision and alternatives considered

The size, shape and location of the proposed dark blue zones have been guided predominantly by feedback from the stakeholder groups and the community. In general, dark blue zones have been designated over the following areas—

- significant habitat, especially those supporting threatened species (such as dugong and turtle habitat at Moreton Banks);
- existing dark blue zones not designated as either green or yellow zones;
- existing yellow zones where substantial economic impacts would result from phasing out commercial netting;
- areas adjacent to green or yellow zones, or areas adjacent to land based national parks, to provide an environmental buffer against threatening processes; and
- areas supporting low levels of trawling or existing areas that are closed to trawling.

Key changes

As outlined above, the key change between the current and draft zoning plan for dark blue zones is the removal of trawling.

Major costs and benefits

Trawling

Under the proposed draft plan, trawling will be removed from dark blue zones. Dark blue zones in the draft zoning plan mostly apply to areas with existing annual trawl closures or build on seasonal trawl closures. Trawling may still occur in general use zones, which presently support the marine park's highest trawling use.

The economic impacts on Moreton Bay Marine Park's \$24 million commercial fishery from proposed dark blue zones will be limited to the trawl and beam trawl fisheries. The likely impacts of dark blue zones account for approximately \$700,000 of the total estimated \$4.1 million per year impact on the commercial fisheries. Likely impacts from the proposed dark blue zones are 4.1 percent of the trawl fishery's GVP and 19.2 percent of the beam trawl fishery's GVP. These impacts will be mitigated by the MBMP SAP, as detailed on page 6.

Aquaculture

Aquaculture involving the addition of feed, trawling and dredging is not permitted in dark blue zones, however existing operations will not be affected by this restriction.

Tourism, recreation and indigenous activities

Recreational fishing, boating, indigenous hunting and gathering, and tourism activities are not affected by the proposed dark blue zones and are likely to benefit from the protection of sensitive habitats.

Coastal development

Coastal development involving major works may only occur in dark blue zones. It must be conducted in a works area and the works must deliver public benefits or be for public purposes. Dark blue zones have been located to minimise impacts on existing development proposals as far as practicable, and the location of these zones has involved consultation with relevant stakeholders.

3.4 Proposed light blue (general use) zones

Background

Light blue zones are areas where most activities can occur with or without a permit under an ecologically sustainable management framework. Light blue zones are called ‘general use zones’ in Moreton Bay Marine Park as well as in all other Queensland marine parks.

Proposal

General use zones comprise all areas that are not designated green zones, yellow zones and dark blue zones.

Rationale for decision and alternatives considered

Proposed general use zones are predominately located in the central and offshore sections of the marine park. They are areas where a higher level of protection could not be achieved or was not required given the percentage of each habitat type protected in other zones.

Key changes

There is no significant difference between restrictions applying to light blue zones under the current and draft zoning plan. However, aquaculture involving the addition of feed (fish farms) will be prohibited.

Major costs and benefits

Most activities currently allowed in general use zones can continue to be conducted. The proposed general use zones continue to accommodate 92 percent of the marine park’s trawling operations or 44 percent of the commercial fishing GVP attributed to the marine park (that is, \$10.5 million each year).

Aquaculture involving the addition of feed will be prohibited. This has been the position of the Queensland Government since 2004, in recognition

of programs such as the Healthy Waterways SEQ Partnership to reduce nutrient inputs into the marine park.

4 Proposed designated areas under the draft zoning plan

Designated areas are areas in Moreton Park Marine Park that require special management of activities or uses for a specific purpose. Like zones, entry and use provisions apply to designated areas.

Under the draft zoning plan some of the current designated areas have been retained, some have been changed, some have been removed, and some new designated areas have been proposed.

4.1 Current designated areas with no changes

4.1.1 Grey nurse shark areas

Background

The purpose of a grey nurse shark area is to protect grey nurse shark populations and their habitat while minimising harm or distress caused directly or indirectly by diving or other activities. The grey nurse shark (*Carcharias taurus*) is at risk of extinction and is listed as endangered under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Measures have been undertaken since 1993 to mitigate threatening processes affecting this species and to protect known habitats. These measures are part of a State and Commonwealth campaign to assist natural recovery of depleted grey nurse shark populations along Australia's east coast.

Proposal

The three existing grey nurse shark areas will be retained in the draft zoning plan. The entry and use provisions that apply in these areas will also be retained.

Rationale for decision and alternatives considered

The grey nurse shark areas support a nationwide program to protect the species by managing threatening processes and impacts in known aggregation sites.

Key changes

No change is proposed.

Major costs and benefits

Retaining grey nurse shark areas in the draft zoning plan will benefit the community by contributing to the recovery of a threatened species.

4.1.2 Works areas

Background

The purpose of a works area is to provide for works that are inconsistent with the object of the marine park zone in which they are proposed. The works must provide a direct public benefit, or provide facilities for public use. Works areas cannot be designated in highly protected areas such as green and yellow zones.

Proposal

Two existing works areas (Weinam Creek and Toondah Harbour) will be retained with no changes.

Rationale for decision and alternatives considered

Retaining the current works areas allows for pre-existing approvals to continue. Further works areas may be considered in the future if required. Activities in works areas are managed by a permission.

Key changes

No change is proposed.

Major costs and benefits

There are no impacts associated with retaining the existing works areas. The key benefit for future areas is that proposals will be scrutinised by both the public and Governor-in-Council prior to permissions being issued and works commencing.

4.2 Current designated areas with changes

4.2.1 'Go slow' areas for turtles and dugong

Background

The purpose of a 'go slow' area for turtles and dugong is to protect these species from injury, death or disturbance caused by the operation of vessels. Dugong and some turtles are at risk of extinction and are highly valued by the community. Six of the world's seven marine turtles are found in Moreton Bay Marine Park, including the loggerhead turtle which is listed as endangered under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

The dugong (*Dugong dugong*) is listed as vulnerable under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Moreton Bay Marine Park is the southernmost limit of this threatened species along the east coast of Australia. Herds of dugong were once observed in significant numbers in this area in the mid 1800s. Today, the marine park is home to about 600–800 dugong. Dugong are slow breeders, not maturing until they are 10–17 years old. This means

they are susceptible to factors that threaten their survival, including disturbance and injuries from boats.

South-east Queensland's increasing population, visitation and boat ownership poses a significant threat to turtle and dugong populations in Moreton Bay Marine Park. Based on the breeding potential of these species, the number of boat strikes each year alone accounts for more than what may be sustainable for the populations to survive.

Proposal

The current 'go slow' areas for turtles and dugong will be retained with some extensions. Additionally, four new areas are proposed where vessels longer than eight metres must not operate at a speed greater than six knots. These areas are located at Weinam Creek, Garden Island, Karragarra Channel and Krummel Passage.

Rationale for decision and alternatives considered

Research by Hodgson (2004) and Lanyon (2003) shows that, at low tide, dugong and turtles occupy the edges of sandbanks and their adjacent deep-water areas. This is also where boats travel on the low tide, which results in an increased risk of boat strikes to these animals. Extending the existing turtle and dugong 'go slow' areas to include a greater area where turtles and dugong reside at all tidal phases will protect critical areas for these threatened species and reduce the risk of boat strike.

The proposed new 'go slow' areas in southern Moreton Bay are primarily to reduce dugong injury from boat strike attributed to larger vessels. The shallow waters, narrow channels and high volume of vessel traffic in these areas contribute significantly to dugong mortality. Investigations of dugong carcasses in this area indicate that their injuries are consistent with high speed and/or shallow water strikes from larger vessels.

The proposed new areas only apply to vessels longer than eight metres. It is considered unnecessary to restrict the speed of all vessels when evidence indicates that larger vessels are primarily responsible for interactions with dugong in these areas.

Key changes

- The existing ‘go slow’ areas at Moreton and Amity Banks and Lamb Island will be expanded.
- The Moreton Banks ‘go slow’ area will extend north along the western side of Moreton Island, although the area adjacent to the Tangalooma Resort will not be included in the area.
- The ‘go slow’ area at Peel Island will be realigned to reflect the green zone boundaries.
- The Price Anchorage ‘go slow’ area will not change.
- Weinam Creek, the Karragarra Channel (Ws), Krummel Passage and Garden Island are proposed new ‘go slow’ areas for turtles and dugong where boats longer than eight metres will be restricted to six knots.

Major costs and benefits

Expanding existing ‘go slow’ areas for turtles and dugong provides significant protection for these threatened species.

Expanding some of the current areas will include areas which are regularly used as a short cut by vessels. Increasing these areas is not expected to significantly affect travelling time as a marked navigational channel or deeper water areas are readily available adjacent to the proposed areas.

The proposed new ‘go slow’ areas for turtles and dugong for vessels longer than eight metres affects commercial ferry operations to the southern bay islands. It also affects larger recreational craft entering or traversing the areas.

Preliminary discussions have been held with the ferry operator about these proposed ‘go slow’ areas as there are impacts on their operations and the commuting needs of southern bay island residents. More detailed discussions on the issue are needed to help conserve turtle and dugong populations while minimising impacts on marine park users.

4.3 New designated areas

4.3.1 Mooring areas

Background

As the popularity of boating increases in Moreton Bay Marine Park, the demand for more moorings and greater management of moorings, including their environmental impact, is increasing.

Proposal

Proposed mooring areas in the draft zoning plan apply only to private and non-commercial vessels. These areas are intended to allow for the continued use of existing moorings. They also establish locations which are appropriate for current and future moorings.

There are 49 proposed mooring areas. Of these 49 areas, 23 have existing moorings, 10 extend areas with existing moorings and 14 are new mooring areas.

Rationale for decision and alternatives considered

Moorings areas have been introduced to simplify the approvals process. Currently, a person wishing to maintain, transfer or install a mooring in Moreton Bay Marine Park is required to obtain up to three permissions. These permissions are needed from three different Government agencies; the EPA, Department of Transport (Maritime Safety Queensland) and DPI&F.

Key changes

The EPA is working closely with other Agencies with the aim of simplifying the approvals process for moorings to a single permission. Introducing mooring areas is one step towards achieving this aim, which also requires DPI&F initiating changes to the *Fisheries Act 1994*. Responsibility for moorings is proposed to be given primarily to the Department of Transport, with support from other Agencies. Mooring areas will support legislation under the Department of Transport and remove the

need for a marine park permission to be obtained. However, a marine park permission will still be required for commercial moorings. It is intended that new moorings will need to meet environmental criteria regarding their installation and design to minimise environmental impacts on the seabed. These criteria do not form part of the draft zoning plan.

Major costs and benefits

Mooring areas will benefit the community by identifying approved and safe mooring areas for private and non-commercial vessels within the marine park. Providing these areas is an important measure for managing the increasing number of boats wishing to moor in the marine park. The streamlined approvals system provides significant benefits for the boating community. Mooring areas also address community concerns about the impacts of boating on the marine environment.

4.3.2 No anchoring areas

Background

The introduction of green zones in marine parks has historically attracted criticism that removing uses or activities which impact on habitats does not include anchoring. The purpose of a ‘no anchoring’ area is to protect coral habitats and the diversity of coral species from damage caused by anchoring. A person must not anchor in these areas.

Proposal

There are three proposed ‘no anchoring’ areas in the draft zoning plan. These areas are located at Flinders Reef, Flat Rock and Myora. The ‘no anchoring’ areas reflect green zone boundaries in the same location.

Rationale for decision and alternatives considered

The location of ‘no anchoring’ areas include sites with existing anchor damage that contain significant coral communities, some of which are at the southern limit of their distribution. While these areas cover green zones, the zoning does not prohibit vessels from anchoring in the marine

park. These areas enhance the protection of reef habitats in specific green zones.

Key changes

‘No anchoring’ areas are a new approach to conservation of some sensitive reef habitats.

Major costs and benefits

A number of marine park users rely on reef habitats for their business. Therefore protecting and recovering these areas is likely to generate economic benefits. Reef habitats are popular recreational diving sites, as well as fishing sites and play an important role in the life cycle of many marine plants and animals.

‘No anchoring’ areas help marine park managers regulate the number of people accessing an area. This may be important for sensitive reef communities. For example, stakeholders have highlighted that there are overcrowding issues at Flat Rock when the weather is not suitable to access other areas. This may have an impact on the endangered grey nurse shark and rocky reef habitat.

The ‘no anchoring areas’ will slightly reduce boating opportunities for those who conduct activities in the proposed locations. However, there are a number of safe, easily accessible anchoring areas in the marine park. For example, there is an anchorage directly adjacent to the Myora ‘no anchoring’ area that is a more suitable area for anchoring. There are also existing mooring facilities at Flinders Reef.

Where appropriate, additional public moorings will be considered in ‘no anchoring’ areas to help reduce any inconvenience to marine park users.

4.3.3 ‘Go slow’ areas for natural values

Background

The purpose of a ‘go slow’ area for natural values is to protect the natural integrity and presentation of the relatively undisturbed values of selected

areas. In these areas a person must not operate a vessel on the plane or for the purpose of motorised water sports.

Proposal

‘Go slow’ areas for natural values are proposed in four locations (Swan Bay, McCoys Creek, Coombabah Lake and Willes Island). These areas reflect green zone boundaries in the same location. Vessels travelling off the plane through these areas will reduce disturbance to the area.

Rationale for decision and alternatives considered

‘Go slow’ areas for natural values are located in areas that are generally undisturbed and relatively pristine. Natural values areas provide an opportunity for marine park users to appreciate and enjoy the natural integrity and seascape of the marine environment. They also support the conservation objectives of the underlying green zone.

Key changes

‘Go slow’ areas for natural values areas are a new approach to conserving the marine environment and its seascape. They overlay green zones, which do not require vessels to go slow.

Key costs and benefits

These proposed areas are likely to have high benefit to the public, the eco-tourism industry and passive recreational users by protecting the area’s natural integrity and values. The likely cost of these proposed areas is the additional time and fuel cost involved in reducing vessel speed. Any cost is not likely to be significant as the proposed areas are not in main navigational routes.

4.3.4 Material extraction and disposal areas

Background

The purpose of a material extraction and disposal area is to provide for disposal of dredge material, extraction of sand, and nourishment activities while minimising their impact on the marine environment.

Proposal

There are four proposed material extraction and disposal areas in the draft zoning plan. The proposed sites are at Mud Island (dredge disposal), Spitfire and Middle Banks (sand extraction) and Skirmish Banks (nourishment). A marine park permit will be needed to use these areas. Material extraction and disposal areas replace the navigation and port areas in the current zoning plan.

Rationale for decision and alternatives considered

Material extraction and disposal activities in Moreton Bay Marine Park have been reduced to four sites that are specific to certain types of extraction or disposal. The proposed sites are operationally convenient and efficient for their specific purpose. Permits are already in place for these areas which manage likely impacts on the marine environment. These areas are located away from sensitive environments and popular recreational and tourism sites in the marine park.

Key costs and benefits

The material extraction and disposal areas are not expected to have any impacts that cannot be addressed through existing approval and conditioning processes.

4.4 Current designated areas to be removed

4.4.1 South Passage, Pumicestone Passage and ocean beach areas

The South Passage, Pumicestone Passage and ocean beach areas in the current zoning have been removed in the draft zoning plan because the objectives of these areas are provided for under other legislation and management tools. There are no impacts associated with their removal.

4.4.2 Commercial blood worm areas

The areas for commercial collecting of blood worms in the current zoning plan have been removed in the draft zoning plan as these areas deal with a fisheries allocation issue. Management of commercial blood worm harvesting under marine parks legislation will be transferred to DPI&F.

4.4.3 Navigation and port areas

There are four navigation and port areas in the current zoning plan. Of these, two are replaced by areas under the new material extraction and disposal areas. There are no impacts associated with removing the remaining two areas as they are either provided for under other provisions in the draft zoning plan or have not been used in the past 10 years.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Laid before the Legislative Assembly on . . .
- 2 The administering agency is the Environmental Protection Agency.