

Wet Tropical Coast Regional Coastal Management Plan

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Queensland Government
Environmental Protection Agency
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

The Wet Tropical Coast Regional Coastal Management Plan provides regional direction for the implementation of the *State Coastal Management Plan – Queensland’s Coastal Policy (State Coastal Plan)* in the Wet Tropical Coast region. The Wet Tropical Coast Regional Coastal Management Plan follows the framework established by the State Coastal Plan and should be read in conjunction with the State Coastal Plan.

To assist readers, sections of the State Coastal Plan are reproduced in this document within shaded boxes.

More information

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Acknowledgements

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Photo on page 18 ‘rainforest fruits’ courtesy of Wet Tropics Management Authority

Photos on page 18 ‘hands showing traditional bush food and grinding stone’ courtesy of Kerry Trapnell

Photos on pages 116 and 134 ‘Port of Mourilyan’ courtesy of Ports Corporation of Queensland

Photo on page 164 ‘Trinity Inlet’ courtesy of Cairns Port Authority

Photo on page 188 ‘Daintree River mouth and wetlands’ courtesy of Wet Tropics Management Authority

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Foreword

The Wet Tropical Coast region is renowned for its significant ecological, recreational, cultural and scenic values. Its terrestrial and marine environments are of international significance and largely incorporated in the Wet Tropics of Queensland and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage areas. The rugged mountain ranges and numerous sections of the coast where the 'rainforest meets the sea' characterise the region and provide spectacular scenic landscapes.

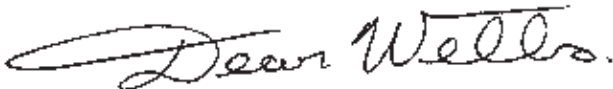
Everyone involved in coastal management has a responsibility to protect the Wet Tropical Coast region's priceless coastal resources by appropriately managing the many activities that affect these resources.

The Queensland Government has worked closely with those involved in coastal management to address the challenges involved in protecting and managing the coastal zone. The *State Coastal Management Plan—Queensland's Coastal Policy* (State Coastal Plan) already provides statewide direction for management of the coastal zone. This Wet Tropical Coast Regional Coastal Management Plan delivers the regional direction to implement the State Coastal Plan in the Wet Tropical Coast region.

I congratulate the Wet Tropical Coast Regional Consultative Group for their effort during the preparation of this plan. This group played a vital role in identifying the coastal resources and associated management issues in the region, proposing solutions for these issues, and revising the plan in response to public submissions on the draft plan.

We now have a coastal planning framework in the Wet Tropical Coast region that focuses on achieving ecologically sustainable management of the coastal zone while taking into account its enormous environmental, social, cultural and economic importance. This will help to ensure that the way we live and the way we plan for future development minimises any adverse impacts on the region's coastal resources.

The competing demands for the use of coastal resources will always exist but we must ensure that the internationally recognised values of the Wet Tropical Coast region are protected for all to enjoy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dean Wells". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Dean Wells MP

Minister for Environment

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Executive summary

The Wet Tropical Coast region contains a distinctive portion of Queensland's coast, representing significant natural, cultural, economic and social values worthy of protection and conservation. The region has the highest level of biodiversity and endemic species in Australia, receives the highest rainfall, and features spectacular portions of the Wet Tropics of Queensland and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage areas. Internationally renowned tourist destinations include Cairns and Port Douglas. Important primary industries are sugar cane, dairying and cattle grazing, banana and pawpaw plantations, commercial fishing and aquaculture. The region includes all of Cairns City, and Johnstone, Douglas, Atherton and Eacham shires, and parts of the Mareeba and Herberton shires.

The Wet Tropical Coast Regional Coastal Management Plan, developed under the *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995* (Coastal Act), describes how the coastal zone of the Wet Tropical Coast region is to be managed.

The key challenges for coastal management within the Wet Tropical Coast region come from development pressures associated with a growing population and growing tourism industry, and agricultural intensification, particularly for sugar cane and bananas. Specific challenges include:

- ◆ accommodating the growing demand for tourism development at Mission Beach, Cairns northern beaches, Port Douglas, and the Daintree to Cape Tribulation lowlands, while protecting the unique natural and cultural resources and values in the region that generate this demand;
- ◆ resolving conflicts arising from increased levels of urban development in coastal towns and agricultural intensification, that may adversely impact on the water quality of the region, particularly the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, as well as remnant coastal habitat areas;
- ◆ reducing threats to the outstanding biodiversity significance of the region's remnant coastal habitat areas, which provide important wildlife habitat and corridors for endangered wildlife including the southern cassowary; and
- ◆ conserving the region's coastal wetlands, which are critical for fisheries productivity.

Key initiatives in the Wet Tropical Coast Regional Coastal Management Plan include:

- ◆ describing and mapping the region's significant coastal resources and their values;
- ◆ ensuring new development is appropriately sited to avoid significant coastal resources, such as areas of high biodiversity;
- ◆ promoting improved management of urban and rural land (including improved management of wastewater and farming practices) to reduce pollutants in stormwater runoff to wetlands, coastal waters and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area;
- ◆ protecting coastal wetlands, remnant native vegetation and wildlife corridors, including habitats for rare and endangered species such as the southern cassowary;
- ◆ supporting voluntary conservation agreements on private land, and the identification and management of conservation values on State land on the coast, to protect significant biodiversity values; and
- ◆ providing guidance for protecting the region's outstanding scenic coastal landscapes and Indigenous Traditional Owner cultural resources when considering new coastal development.

The Wet Tropical Coast Regional Coastal Management Plan provides the foundation to lead coastal management in this region through cooperation and partnerships between land managers, landholders, industry, the community and all levels of government.

Terms and abbreviations

acid sulfate soils soils or sediments containing highly acidic soil horizons or layers (actual acid sulfate soils), and iron sulfides or other sulfidic material that has not been exposed to air and oxidised (potential acid sulfate soils)

agencies State Government departments, statutory authorities, government-owned corporations, local governments and Aboriginal Councils and Island Councils

ancestral homeland estate the particular natural estate occupied by the ancestors of groups or clans of Indigenous Traditional Owners and their descendants

ANZECC Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council

aquaculture the breeding, keeping and harvesting of marine, estuarine or freshwater organisms for sale

ARMCANZ Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand

assessable development development specified in schedule 8, part 1 of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*, or for a planning scheme area, development that is not specified in schedule 8, part 1 but is declared under the planning scheme for the area to be assessable development (schedule 10 of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*)

benthic associated with the bottom of the sea or a lake

best practice (environmental management) the management of an activity to achieve a continuing minimisation of the activity's environmental harm, through cost-effective measures, assessed against the measures currently used nationally and internationally for the activity (s 18 *Environmental Protection Act 1994*)

biodiversity the natural diversity of native wildlife, together with the environmental conditions necessary for survival. Includes regional diversity, that is, the diversity of the landscape components (landforms, soils, water, climate, wildlife and land uses) of a region and their functional relationships that affect environmental conditions within ecosystems; ecosystem diversity, that is, the diversity of the different types of communities formed by

living organisms and the relations between them; species diversity, that is, the diversity of species; and genetic diversity, that is, the diversity of genes within each species (s 10 *Nature Conservation Act 1992*)

biological diversity biodiversity

bioregion the primary level of land classification in Queensland, based on regional geology and climate, as well as major biota

BPA Beach Protection Authority, established under the *Beach Protection Act 1968*

CAMBA China Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Climate change a change of climate, which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity which alters the composition of the global atmospheres, and is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods

coast all areas within or neighbouring the foreshore (s 6 *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

Coastal Act *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*

coastal building line a line fixed within a control district that is declared by a regulation or notice (s 59 *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

coastal-dependent land use land use for which a location adjoining the waterfront or access to the water is essential to function, including industrial and commercial facilities such as ports, harbours, jetties, pontoons, marinas, ramps and slipways, coastal or marine (boating) tourism facilities and appropriate marine service industries. It may also include residential and tourist land uses that are part of an integrated development proposal incorporating a marina and such land uses are located landward of the marina and are protected from coastal processes and hazards by the marina. Coastal-dependent land uses do not include residential land uses or tourist accommodation which conflict with the principles and policies of this Plan, waste management facilities (landfills, sewage treatment plants) and transport infrastructure (other than for access to the coast)

coastal ecosystems ecosystems of the coast, including marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems

coastal habitat habitat of wildlife (plants and animals) of the coast

coastal hazards events such as erosion, storm tide inundation and cyclone effects

coastal landscape the visible landscape of the coastal zone, its aesthetic attributes and cultural associations

coastal management the protection, conservation, rehabilitation, management and ecologically sustainable development of the coastal zone (s 7 *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

coastal management district replaces the term 'control district' in the *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*

coastal plan the State Coastal Management Plan or a regional coastal management plan

coastal processes natural processes of the coast including: sediment transport; fluctuations in the location and form of the foreshore, dune systems and associated ecosystems; tides; changes in sea level and coastal hazards (e.g. cyclones and storm tide surge); ecological processes (e.g. migration of plant and animal species) and the natural water cycle (e.g. coastal wetlands' role in nutrient filtration and flood mitigation)

coastal resources the natural (natural and physical features and processes of the coastal zone, including wildlife, soil, water, minerals and air) and cultural (places or objects that have anthropological, archaeological, historical, scientific, spiritual, visual or sociological significance or value, including such significance or value under Aboriginal tradition or Island custom) resources of the coastal zone (s 8 and schedule 2 of the *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

coastal waters Queensland waters to the limit of highest astronomical tide (s 9 *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

coastal wetlands tidal wetlands, estuaries, salt marshes, melaleuca swamps (and other coastal swamps), mangrove areas, marshes, lakes or minor coastal streams regardless of whether they are

of a saline, freshwater or brackish nature (s 10 *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

coastal zone coastal waters and all areas to the landward side of coastal waters in which there are physical features, ecological or natural processes or human activities that affect, or potentially affect, the coast or coastal resources (s 11 *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

conservation the protection and maintenance of nature while allowing for its ecologically sustainable use (s 9 *Nature Conservation Act 1992*)

contaminant (a) a gas, liquid or solid; (b) an odour; (c) an organism (whether alive or dead), including a virus; (d) energy, including noise, heat, radioactivity and electromagnetic radiation; or (e) a combination of contaminants (s 11 *Environmental Protection Act 1994*)

contemporary association the links forged to particular areas by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders currently living in those areas

control district parts of the coastal zone declared under the Coastal Act as areas requiring special development controls and management practices (s 4 and schedule 2 of the *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

critical habitat habitat that is essential for the conservation of a viable population of protected wildlife, or community of native wildlife, regardless of whether special management considerations and protection are required (s 13 *Nature Conservation Act 1992*)

cultural heritage a place or object that has aesthetic, architectural, historical, scientific, social or technological significance to the present, past or future generations

cultural resources places or objects that have anthropological, archaeological, historical, scientific, spiritual, visual or sociological significance or value, including such significance or value under Aboriginal tradition or Torres Strait Island custom, within the coastal zone (schedule 2, *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

cumulative impacts impacts that may be caused by or result from a number of separate successive and contributing activities including (a) frequent and repetitive effects; (b) delayed effects; (c) effects

that occur away from the source; (d) effects arising from multiple causes or sources; (e) combined potential effects of current development approvals, whether implemented or not (i.e. taking into account the 'latency' effect of current unimplemented approvals); (f) significant secondary effects; (g) interaction with other existing developments and uses; and (h) fundamental changes in system behaviour or structure (i.e. triggers and threshold effects are reached due to cumulative effects)

custodial obligations the obligations and responsibilities of Indigenous Traditional Owners to follow customary lore to fulfil their cultural and spiritual obligations to other people and to country

customary lore the laws and customs developed by Indigenous Traditional Owners to regulate their societies

DOGIT Deed of Grant in Trust. Land granted in fee simple in trust by the State under the *Land Act 1994*

dry land marina a marina created by the excavation of land above high water mark

ecologically sustainable development (ESD) using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be improved

ecosystem a community of organisms interacting with one another and the environment in which they live

ecotourism nature-based tourism that involves education and interpretation of the natural environment and is managed to be ecologically sustainable

endangered regional ecosystem an endangered regional ecosystem listed or mapped in a regional coastal plan or, in the absence of a regional coastal plan, an endangered regional ecosystem as defined by the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*

enhanced greenhouse effect changes in the earth's climate as a result of increasing levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere due to human activity

EPA Environmental Protection Agency

EPP (Waste Management) *Environmental Protection (Waste Management) Policy 2000*

EPP (Water) *Environmental Protection (Water) Policy 1997*

ERA an environmentally relevant activity as defined by the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* and Regulations

erosion prone areas those areas shown on the erosion prone area maps prepared by the BPA to accommodate physical coastal processes

existing urban area includes areas currently developed for urban purposes, areas with current approvals to be developed for urban purposes and areas identified to be developed for urban purposes in currently approved planning instruments, for example local government planning schemes

foreshore the land lying between high water mark and low water mark as is ordinarily covered and uncovered by the flow and ebb of the tide at spring tides (schedule 2 of the *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

high water mark the ordinary high water mark at spring tides (see also mean high water springs) (schedule 2 of the *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

highest astronomical tide (HAT) the highest level that can be predicted to occur under average meteorological conditions and any combination of astronomical conditions. This level will not be reached every year, and is less than the extreme levels that can be caused by storm tides

historical association Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders who were displaced from their ancestral homeland estate and their subsequent links or connection to the places to which they moved

IDAS the Integrated Development Assessment System established under Chapter 3 of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*

Indigenous Traditional Owners Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders particularly concerned with land if they are members of a group that has a particular connection with land under Aboriginal tradition or Island custom

Indigenous Traditional Owner cultural resources cultural resources of significance to Indigenous Traditional Owners

integrity the extent to which the natural values of the planning area are in their natural ecological, physical and aesthetic condition

intellectual ownership (section 2.5) describes Indigenous Traditional Owners right of ownership in all forms of 'Indigenous Traditional Owner intellectual property' or 'Indigenous Traditional Owner folklore'. It encompasses (but is not limited to) Indigenous Traditional Owner sacred knowledge, sacred sites, stories, dance and artworks. From Indigenous Traditional Owner perspectives, intangible information, expression and knowledge are intrinsically woven within their culture, and as such are regarded as a significant part of Indigenous Traditional Owner intellectual ownership

intergenerational equity the concept that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment are maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations

IPA *Integrated Planning Act 1997*

JAMBA Japan Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

land includes land that is, or is at any time, covered by Queensland waters (schedule 2 of the *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

landholder a landowner, land manager, person or group of people with an interest in the planning area through special lease, mining claim, occupational licence, occupation permit, exploration permit, stock grazing permit, pastoral holding, permit to occupy, and trustees of land set aside for public purposes

landscapes natural landscapes, cultural landscapes and seascapes

marina an area of tidal water where facilities are provided for boat launching, landing, berthing, storing, repairs of a minor nature, provisioning, fuelling and servicing, and the recreation, comfort and convenience of persons who own or use boats

mean high water springs long-term average of the heights of two successive high waters during those periods of 24 hours (approximately once a fortnight) when the range of tide is greatest, at full and new moon

mutual subsistence is defined as 'the inter-connectiveness for survival between Indigenous Traditional Owners and all that is in, on, and around their cultural landscape'

natural resources the natural and physical features and processes of the coastal zone, including wildlife, soil, water, minerals and air (schedule 2 *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

nature all aspects of nature, including but not limited to: (a) ecosystems and their constituent parts; (b) all natural and physical resources; (c) natural dynamic processes; and (d) the characteristics of places, however large or small, that contribute to (i) their biological diversity and integrity, or (ii) their intrinsic or scientific value (s 8 *Nature Conservation Act 1992*)

nature-based activities activities that depend entirely on, or are considerably enhanced by, a natural setting. These may include recreational, tourist, scientific, educational, intellectual, spiritual and cultural activities

no net loss of public access the provision of alternative or mitigatory measures to ensure access to the foreshore or the public useability of coastal waters is maintained over time

non-urban area an area other than an urban area

net benefit for the region there is a net benefit (taking into account all financial, social and environmental impacts) to the regional community, which is for the benefit of the whole community, as distinct from sectoral, commercial or private gain, and the proposal delivers the greatest net benefit of all viable alternatives

net benefit for the State there is a net benefit (taking into account all financial, social and environmental impacts) to the State as a whole, as distinct from sectoral, commercial, private or regional gain, and the proposal delivers the greatest net benefit of all viable alternatives

pest species plant and animal species that have established in areas outside their naturally occurring distributions

planning scheme see s 2.1.1 of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*

precautionary principle where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation. (In the application of the precautionary principle, public and private decisions should be guided by: (i) careful evaluation to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment; and (ii) an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of various options.) (*National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development 1992*)

primary industries the growing of crops, grazing and fisheries

protected areas (State land) national parks (scientific), national parks, conservation parks and resources reserves (*Nature Conservation Act 1992*)

protected wildlife presumed extinct, endangered, vulnerable, rare or common wildlife, as defined in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*

Queensland waters all waters that are within the limits of the State, or are coastal waters of the State (s 36 *Acts Interpretation Act 1954*)

rare species or taxa species or taxa that are not at present endangered or vulnerable but are at risk because of small population size, as defined in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*

RCMP regional coastal management plan

regional coastal management plan a regional coastal management plan approved under the *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*

regional coastal plan regional coastal management plan

regional ecosystems readily identifiable mapping units consisting of an amalgamation of land types within a bioregion

riparian on the banks of and adjacent to a waterway or wetland

rural land uses land uses including primary industries, within non-urban areas

significant coastal dune system (includes swales and beach ridges) a system or landform identified, listed or mapped in a regional coastal plan or, in the absence of a regional coastal plan, is a system

or landform that has a high degree of ecological integrity and biodiversity conservation values, and satisfies all of the following criteria:

- (a) it is a good example of a coastal dune system;
- (b) access to it is limited, and has not compromised its significant ecological values (including level of integrity); and
- (c) it is undeveloped, or relatively undeveloped and any works or structures have not compromised its significant ecological values;

and one or more of the following criteria:

- (d) it is a system that is in dynamic equilibrium, and contains intact representations of the (i) various dunal zones and (ii) various dunal types naturally occurring in that region;
- (e) for a coastal sand dune system, the various dunal zones are intact or relatively intact (i.e. the zones have not lost more than 5–10 percent of the original existing vegetation cover), particularly in the foredune and in the exposed seaward slopes and crests of secondary and hind dunes;
- (f) it supports native plants or animals or natural communities that have been identified as being, or are considered to be, endangered or vulnerable at the bioregional level;
- (g) it supports a significant number of the bioregional populations of any native plant or animal;
- (h) it is important as a habitat for animals at a vulnerable stage in their life cycles (e.g. migratory species at breeding or nesting stages); and
- (i) it is of cultural significance

significant coastal wetland a significant coastal wetland that is listed or mapped in a regional coastal plan or, in the absence of a regional coastal plan, an area that has the following characteristics:

- (a) it is listed as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention; or
- (b) it is listed as a wetland of importance within the Queensland chapter of *A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia*; or
- (c) it is an area of permanent or periodic inundation, whether natural or artificial, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres, that meets one or more of the following criteria:
 - (i) it is a good example of a wetland type occurring within a bioregion in Queensland;

- (ii) it plays an important ecological or hydrological role in the natural functioning of a major wetland system;
- (iii) it is important as a habitat for animal taxa at a vulnerable stage in their life cycles, or provides a refuge when adverse conditions such as drought prevail;
- (iv) it supports a significant number of the bioregional populations of any native plant or animal taxa;
- (v) it supports native plant or animal taxa or communities that are considered endangered or vulnerable at the bioregional level; or
- (vi) it is of historical or cultural significance

State land on the coast for the purposes of this Plan is State land located on the coast excluding freehold and leasehold land

stock any grazing animal, including commercially farmed birds (schedule 2 *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

storm tide the effect on coastal water of a storm surge combined with the normally occurring astronomical tide

threatened species wildlife prescribed under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* as presumed extinct, endangered, or vulnerable

threatening process any process that is capable of threatening the survival of any protected area, area of major interest, protected wildlife, community of native wildlife or native wildlife habitat, or the capacity of any of these to sustain natural processes (s 12 *Nature Conservation Act 1992*)

tidal water the sea and any part of a harbour or water course ordinarily within the ebb and flow of the tide at spring tides (schedule 2 of the *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*)

urban area an area identified on a map in a planning scheme as an area for urban purposes, including residential, industrial, commercial, rural residential, major tourist developments, ports and future urban purposes

water infrastructure dams, weirs, barrages, pumps, outlet works and off-stream storage

water quality the ecosystem health of aquatic systems (including surface, soil and underground

waters), including processes affecting or involving the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of water

water quality objectives as defined in the *Environmental Protection (Water) Policy 1997*

water resource plan means a plan approved under section 50(2) of the *Water Act 2000*

waterway includes a river, creek, stream, watercourse or inlet of the sea (s 5 *Fisheries Act 1994*)

wilderness an area that is substantially undisturbed by modern society, and remote at its core from points of mechanised access and other evidence of society; includes an area that provides a sense of wilderness, but does not necessarily contain all other wilderness values

wildlife any plant or animal, as defined in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*



Vision

The outstanding coastal resources of the **Wet Tropical Coast** region, including internationally recognised World Heritage values, are maintained and enhanced, while providing for ecologically sustainable development, a high quality of life, the maintenance of Indigenous Traditional Owner cultural landscapes and a rich cultural heritage.