

Fish habitat (marine plant) management strategy fact sheet

Fisheries Queensland partnerships

Introduction

Fisheriesⁱ Queensland is the lead agency responsible for the management of fish habitats, including protected marine plant communities. This fact sheet outlines the process to develop, adopt and implement a fish habitat (marine plant) management strategy that establishes a structured co-management approach between state and local government and ports for long-term community and fisheries benefits. The approach includes an opportunity for community input where relevant.

The strategy will also address fisheries development approvals required for maintenance and new works triggered under the *Sustainable Planning Act 2009*. All works identified and described within the agreed strategy will become self-assessable works under the Fisheries Integrated Development Assessment System (IDAS) self-assessable code for minor impact new works MP06.

Developing fish habitat (marine plant) management strategies meets the objectives of the State's planning reform agenda embodied in Qplanⁱⁱ. Qplan is the name of Queensland's planning, development and building system. The system is shifting the focus to sustainable outcomes, rather than process, to deliver more sustainable communities across Queensland.

Who can participate?

Coastal local governments and port managers are entering into partnerships with Fisheries

ⁱ Fisheries Queensland is part of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation

ⁱⁱ Qplan is administered by the Department of Local Government and Planning
<http://www.dlqp.qld.gov.au>



Queensland to manage protected marine plants and fish habitats in their areas. These management strategies are developed jointly and enable long-term management under a self-assessable code.

What is included in the strategy?

The strategy applies only to land for which the port or local government is responsible. **Private landsⁱⁱⁱ are not included in the strategy.** Private landholders should contact Fisheries Queensland for advice prior to undertaking any works that may impact on fish habitats and marine plants.

Developing the strategy is a process that includes:

- a scoping study to determine the spatial extent over which the strategy will apply
- an audit of the assets (natural and built)
- management objectives of the local government or port

ⁱⁱⁱ Private lands are excluded from a strategy unless specified (e.g. freehold land in a port area plan).

Depending on the type (estuarine, coastal or riverine), scope and size of the area/s to be managed, smaller and more manageable units can be applied. For example, a section of river that is identified for inclusion in the strategy can be broken up into separate River Bank Management Units (RBUs). A coastal area could be broken into Coastal Management Units.

The mapped sites (RBUs etc) of the strategy are then overlain with categories of fish habitat (marine plant) management developed by Fisheries Queensland. These categories relate to the management of marine plants to achieve agreed outcomes for the particular site.

Not all of these categories need to be identified in each management unit. Importantly, the strategy must identify areas where fish habitats will be protected and / or restored.

The fish habitat management categories developed are:

Protect—areas where existing fish habitats are maintained and natural processes, such as further colonisation and marine plant community development, are allowed to occur. These areas benefit from being linked to terrestrial vegetated buffers to provide long-term protection.

Modify—multiple use areas where impacts to fish habitats are minimised while meeting specific public use requirements, for example foreshore access structures, and may include treatments that remove or modify marine plants. A site-based operational plan will identify the most appropriate treatments (e.g. crown lifting, trimming or thinning of mangroves).

Restore—areas where opportunities to enhance fish habitats exist and actions may be taken to reduce or remove threatening processes to support natural or assisted regeneration. A site-based operational plan will identify relevant actions for restoration.

Keep free—areas without marine plants which are maintained marine plant free (e.g. treatment of the bank and maintenance activities need not specifically allow for colonisation of marine plants).

What types of works are covered?

Maintenance or new works for which the council or port are responsible can be proposed or identified within **each** management unit in the strategy. All types of operational works can be included, for example:

- drainage maintenance works
- construction of new headwalls
- mowing and trimming of marine plants
- replacing damaged marine infrastructure
- building a new boat ramp.

How much detail is required?

High resolution mapping including aerial photos is required to provide a baseline and visual map that shows the area within the strategy.

Additional maps for each management unit can be included and a summary of the categories of management and preferred outcomes described, including maintenance and new works sites.

Detailed operational plans for the program of works at each management unit do not need to be included with the strategy document. These can be developed as priorities for action as works are programmed.

What are the benefits?

The benefits to the local government or port are both short and long term in nature and will quickly recoup the costs of developing the strategy. Some of the benefits include:

Administration

- Certainty for work programs and budgets for local government / port
- No fees for agreed works
- No fisheries development permit required
- Flexible and responsive—no delays to agreed works due to administrative burden
- Strategy is a living document—can be changed as needed.

Community profile

- Active management of access to high use public areas within marine plant zones

- Promotes council / port as a key player in the joint management of fish habitats and marine plants
- Promotes transparency to developers about areas that can and can't be impacted upon
- Provides for an ability for council / port to undertake innovative management techniques in marine plant communities
- Development of closer understandings between state, local government and ports for the joint management of a highly valued community resource

Proactive planning

- Audits and maps assets within the waterways and the management requirements of these under Fisheries legislation
- Identifies offset opportunities
- Clarifies and integrates maintenance strategies applicable to foreshore structures and areas
- Proactively establishes foreshore buffer zones
- Provides for a consistent state-wide strategic framework

What are the key steps?

1. Contact Fisheries Queensland as early in the process as possible
2. Identify a 'champion' who is willing to promote, develop and implement the concept within the organisation
3. Agree on the extent of the strategy
4. Audit and map the assets and proposed management within the scope of the strategy
5. Establish an interagency steering committee to progress the drafting and implementation of the strategy, including consultation
6. Reach agreement (with Fisheries) on the draft strategy
7. Undertake wider consultation on the draft strategy to the community
8. Discuss feedback and amend draft
9. Submit for review and endorsement by Fisheries Queensland
10. Fisheries Queensland amends self-assessable code MP06 to link the strategy

11. Develop site-based operational plans for agreed works

What are the costs?

Fisheries Queensland recognises the integral role of land managers such as local governments and port managers in adopting a strategic approach to the management of natural resources. The development of a fish habitat (marine plant) management strategy requires commitment and support.

Fisheries Queensland works closely with the council or port from the start of the process and will provide as much in-kind assistance as possible to help the council or port draw together the information needed for the strategy.

Funding is not generally available through Fisheries Queensland. However, funding options do exist (e.g. through natural Resource Management Agencies) and can be explored.

Development of the strategy is to complement existing strategic planning for the management of natural assets and should link to existing key strategic policy documents (e.g. climate change adaptation, water cycle management, biodiversity conservation).

Are offsets required for the strategy?

Yes, offsets to cover the proposed impacts within the strategy are required and will be identified during the scoping and audit process. Examples include rehabilitation of an acid sulfate soils hot spot to improve fish habitats and restoration of fish habitats to improve connectivity.

Are there any strategies being implemented?

Yes, the following local governments have endorsed strategies in place:

- Bundaberg Regional Council—2005, River Bank Units for Burnett River CBD and Elliott River.
- Cairns Regional Council—2010, Catchment Management Units for whole LGA

- Fraser Coast Regional Council—2011, River Bank Units Mary River CBD

Who do I contact for further information?

Contact the Business Information Centre on 13 25 23 or the Fisheries Queensland Planning and Assessment team at:

Northern Fisheries Centre – Cairns (localities north of, and including, Gladstone Regional Council), PO Box 5396
Portsmith Qld 4870, Ph: 07 4057 3712

Maroochy Research Facility - Nambour (localities south of Gladstone Regional Council)
PO Box 5083, SCMC Nambour Qld 4560
Ph: 07 5453 5860

Fisheries Queensland, Marine Fish Habitat,
Brisbane:

Dawn Couchman, ph 07 3224 2249; email
dawn.couchman@deedi.qld.gov.au

John Beumer, ph 07 3224 2238; email
john.beumer@deedi.qld.gov.au