

Policy on the take of protected species

(Revision 1) August 2025

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority acknowledges the continuing Sea Country management and custodianship of the Great Barrier Reef by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners whose rich cultures, heritage values, enduring connections, and shared efforts are protecting the Reef for future generations.

Objectives:

1. Protected species of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area are protected and conserved.
2. Permissions granted under Part 2 of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003* (the Zoning Plan), which involve the take of protected species, consistently and effectively apply Section 105 of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019* (the Regulations), enabling better conservation of protected species.

Target audience: Marine Park managers, users and permission applicants.

Contents

Contents	1
1. Policy Framework	1
2. Statutory Framework	2
3. Policy Outcomes.....	2
4. Management Outcomes	3
Table 1 – Consideration of section 105(1)(b)(iii)&(iv) of the Regulations	4
5. Review	7
6. Definitions	7
7. Supporting information	7
8. Further information	7

1. Policy Framework

- 1.1 This policy is applicable to permission applications under Part 3 of the Regulations for conduct in the Marine Park which relates to, or involves, the taking of protected species.
- 1.2 This policy is hierarchical and contains:
 - a) A statutory framework;
 - b) Policy outcomes; and
 - c) Management outcomes, including a table which provides guidance to achieve the policy outcomes and objectives, and consists of requirements and acceptable standards.

2. Statutory Framework

- 2.1 Under section 5.3(a) of the Zoning Plan, a zone may be used or entered for the purposes of taking a protected species in accordance with a permission granted for a provision of Part 2 of the Zoning Plan.
- 2.2 Pursuant to subsection 105(1) of the Regulations, the Reef Authority must not grant a permission for conduct that relates to, or involves, the taking of a protected species unless satisfied, among other things, that one or more of subsections (b)(i) to (iv) apply.
- 2.3 This policy relates to the application of subsection 105(1)(b)(iii) & (iv) specifically. If these subsections apply, the Reef Authority must be satisfied that:
 - (iii) the conduct will contribute to the conservation of the protected species; and / or
 - (iv) the taking of the protected species is not the main purpose of the conduct but is merely incidental to the conduct and will not adversely affect the conservation status of the species.
- 2.4 This policy is made under section 7(4) of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* (the Act). As such, section 103 of the Regulations provides that it must be considered by the Reef Authority in deciding whether to grant a permission or whether to or not to impose any conditions on a permission relating to the take of protected species where subsections 105(1)(b)(iii)&(iv) apply. The Reef Authority should apply this policy unless there are cogent reasons to depart from it (in which case, those reasons should be documented).
- 2.5 Traditional Owners' inherent rights and interests under lore and custom, common law and the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) are not intended to be affected or extinguished by this policy.
- 2.6 Permission applicants are recommended to review and ensure they understand their obligations and requirements under other State and Commonwealth legislation that may also apply to the take of protected species and the subsequent export of such species from the Marine Park. For example:
 - 2.6.1 Any action that may kill, injure, take, trade, keep or move a listed threatened or migratory species in Commonwealth waters must be assessed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The EPBC Act establishes the legal framework for protecting and managing Australia's unique plants, animals, habitats and places. It also gives effect to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Applicants should refer to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) website for more information on EPBC Act approvals that may be required.
 - 2.6.2 In line with section 103(m) of the Regulations, any recovery plan, wildlife conservation plan, threat abatement plan or approved conservation advice made or adopted under the EPBC Act that is relevant to the proposed conduct must be considered by the Reef Authority as part of the assessment process. Under section 105(1)(a) of the Regulations, the Reef Authority must not issue a permission for conduct that is the subject of an application for a permission that relates to, or involves, the taking of a protected species unless the Reef Authority is satisfied that (among other things) the conduct is not inconsistent with any relevant recovery plan, wildlife conservation plan, threat abatement plan or approved conservation advice, under the EPBC Act. Permission applications for the take of protected species within the Marine Park should therefore not be inconsistent with these documents.

3. Policy Outcomes

- 3.1 The take of protected species is managed to protect and conserve such species in line with the objects of the Act.

- 3.2 The take of protected species in the Marine Park does not adversely impact on the local population of the species.

4. Management Outcomes

- 4.1 In considering whether sections 105(1)(b)(iii) & (iv) of the Regulations are satisfied, permission applications are assessed by the Reef Authority in a consistent way.
- 4.2 Where appropriate, the 'Acceptable Standards' in **Table 1** are considered to achieve the corresponding 'Requirement'.
- 4.3 The conduct referred to below is the conduct that is the subject of an application for permission that relates to, or involves, the take of a protected species. The table refers to temporary or permanent take where relevant.
- 4.4 For any conduct involving the take of protected species, all relevant requirements in the table below should be taken into account for the consideration of section 105(1)(b)(iii)&(iv).

Table 1 – Consideration of section 105(1)(b)(iii)&(iv) of the Regulations

Requirement	Conduct	Acceptable Standards
For permission applications which involve the permanent take of protected species in any zone		
R1 The Reef Authority is satisfied that the conduct will contribute to the conservation of the protected species.	Lethal Research	S1 The Reef Authority may consider the conduct satisfies R1 where all of the following are met: S1.1 the research relates directly to the species of interest; S1.2 the research intends to lead to benefits for the species of interest; S1.3 the conduct is unlikely to adversely impact a population of the species; and S1.4 the permission applicant has the capacity to collect, transport and/or handle the species appropriately in order to reduce the risk of the animal being significantly harmed during the process (if alive), or the specimen being damaged (if dead).
	Non-lethal Research	S2 The Reef Authority may consider the conduct satisfies R1 where all of the following are met: S2.1 the research relates directly to the species of interest; S2.2 the research intends to lead to benefits for the species of interest; S2.3 non-lethal research methods are used; S2.4 the method of take is unlikely to significantly harm the animal; and S2.5 the permission applicant has the capacity to collect, transport and/or handle the species appropriately in order to reduce the risk of the animal being significantly harmed during the process.
	Public display	S3 The Reef Authority may consider the conduct satisfies R1 where all of the following are met: S3.1 the main purpose of the conduct is education and interpretation, and relates specifically to the conservation of the species; S3.2 the proposed conduct is unlikely to adversely impact a population of the species; S3.3 the exhibition will include information on the species with cultural, scientific and conservation content, and the proposed content of the exhibition is provided at the time of the permission application; S3.4 the permission applicant is the entity who is carrying out the public display and therefore has control over achieving the outcome of contributing to the conservation of the protected species; ¹ S3.5 the proposed method of take is unlikely to significantly harm the animal;

¹ If a third party will be undertaking the take or collection of the species, this should be included within the permission application and a permission condition allowing the permission holder to grant an authority pursuant to section 118 of the Regulations may be included in the permission if approved.

CAUTION: Only the electronic copy of a document sourced from either GBRMPA's internal [Master Document List](#) or external [eLibrary](#) is controlled. Check the revision number of printed copies against these lists to verify currency.

Requirement	Conduct	Acceptable Standards
		<p>S3.6 the proposed methods of collection, transport, handling and on-going exhibition and husbandry of the species is not inconsistent with the Australian Animal Welfare Standards;² and</p> <p>S3.7 the permission applicant has demonstrated experience and success in the collection, transport and handling of similar marine animals.</p>
	Supply as broodstock for aquaculture	<p>S4 The Reef Authority may consider the conduct satisfies R1 where all of the following are met:</p> <p>S4.1 if the applicant is not the entity operating the facility, the permission is for the direct supply to appropriate facilities (because the entity operating the aquaculture facility will ultimately have control over whether R1 will be met);</p> <p>S4.2 the purpose is either to restock wild populations within the Marine Park, or to curb commercial wild harvest where relevant;</p> <p>S4.3 the relevant aquaculture facility is involved in land-based aquaculture only (as opposed to mariculture);</p> <p>S4.4 the entity operating the aquaculture facility has the permission from the appropriate authority to keep the species for aquaculture;</p> <p>S4.5 the methods of collection, transport, handling and on-going husbandry will meet best practice standards, including the National policy guidelines for translocation of live aquatic animals,³ and;</p> <p>S4.6 the permission application relates to the following species (due to high rates of unsuccessful captive breeding of most other protected species):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Family <i>Tridacnidae</i> (all species) (giant clams); b) Families <i>Syngnathidae</i> and <i>Solenostomidae</i> (all species) (seahorses, seadragons, pipefishes and ghost pipefishes); c) <i>Epinephelus lanceolatus</i> (Queensland groper); d) <i>Epinephelus tukula</i> (potato rockcod); e) <i>Cheilinus undulatus</i> (humphead Maori wrasse); f) <i>Chromileptes altivelis</i> (barramundi cod); or

² <https://animalwelfarestandards.net.au/welfare-standards-and-guidelines/exhibited-animals/>

³ <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/animal/aquatic/guidelines-and-resources>

CAUTION: Only the electronic copy of a document sourced from either GBRMPA's internal [Master Document List](#) or external [eLibrary](#) is controlled. Check the revision number of printed copies against these lists to verify currency.

GBRMPA document No: 200327 Revision: 1

Requirement	Conduct	Acceptable Standards
		g) <i>Genus crocodylus</i> (all species) (crocodiles).
	Supply for conservation breeding programs	<p>S5 The Reef Authority may consider the conduct satisfies R1 where all of the following are met:</p> <p>S5.1 the breeding program is purely for conservation purposes and not for commercial gain;</p> <p>S5.2 the breeding program aims to increase the population of the species;</p> <p>S5.3 the program is demonstrated to have a high likelihood of success;</p> <p>S5.4 the applicant has a demonstrated ability to deliver on the aims of the program;</p> <p>S5.5 the program aims to release the offspring of the program, and the permission application demonstrates how this will occur;</p> <p>S5.6 the method of take is unlikely to significantly harm the animal; and</p> <p>S5.7 the permission applicant has the capacity to collect, transport and/or handle the species appropriately in order to reduce the risk of the animal being significantly harmed during the process.</p>
For permission applications which involve the temporary take of protected species (other than cetaceans) in any zone		
R2 The Reef Authority is satisfied that the conduct will contribute to the conservation of the Protected Species.	Non-lethal Research	<p>S6 The Reef Authority may consider the conduct satisfies R2 where all of the following are met:</p> <p>S6.1 the research relates directly to the species of interest;</p> <p>S6.2 the research intends to lead to benefits for the species of interest;</p> <p>S6.3 non-lethal research methods are used;</p> <p>S6.4 the animal is returned to the Marine Park once the research has concluded, and the permission application demonstrates how this will occur;</p> <p>S6.5 the animal is unlikely to be significantly harmed by the activity; and,</p> <p>S6.6 the permission applicant has the capacity to collect, transport and/or handle the species appropriately in order to reduce the risk of the animal being significantly harmed during the process.</p>
	Photography, filming and sound recording	<p>S7 The Reef Authority may consider that the conduct will meet R2 where all of the following are met:</p> <p>S7.1 the animal is not likely to be significantly harmed by the activity;</p> <p>S7.2 the conduct will be conducted in accordance with the Reef Authority's Activity Assessment Guidelines – Photography, filming and sound recording;⁴ and,</p>

⁴ Activity Assessment Guidelines – Photography, filming and sound recording 2017 (GBRMPA), <https://elibrary.gbrmpa.gov.au/jspui/handle/11017/3236>

CAUTION: Only the electronic copy of a document sourced from either GBRMPA's internal [Master Document List](#) or external [eLibrary](#) is controlled. Check the revision number of printed copies against these lists to verify currency.

GBRMPA document No: 200327 Revision: 1

Requirement	Conduct	Acceptable Standards
		S7.3 the conduct is for the purpose of education and interpretation, and will lead to conservation benefit to the species of interest.

5. Review

5.1 This policy will be reviewed every five (5) years to ensure that it is contemporary and fit for purpose.

6. Definitions

Animal has the meaning given in the Act - means any member, alive or dead, of the animal kingdom (other than man), and includes: (a) eggs or part of eggs; and (b) the skin, feathers, shell or any other part of an animal.

Conservation has the meaning given in the Zoning Plan.

Permanent take means take of a Protected Species resulting in removal from the Marine Park without intent to return it.

Protected Species has the meaning given in section 1.5 of the Zoning Plan (which includes a species declared to be a protected species pursuant to section 30 of the Regulations) and section 3(1) of the Act (which includes a species declared to be a protected species pursuant to section 10 of the Regulations).

Significantly harm for the purpose of this policy is any impact on the animal that may have a severe or lasting effect and includes, but is not limited to, the following: stress, physical injury, mortality, reduced longevity and reduced reproductive success.

Temporary take means take of a Protected Species that does not involve removing the species from the Marine Park permanently. This may include taking the animal from the Marine Park with the intent of returning it. This may also include filming, photography and sound recording.

Taking an animal, plant or marine product has the meaning given in the Zoning Plan and includes:

- (a) removing, gathering, catching, capturing, killing, destroying, dredging for, raising, carrying away, bringing ashore, interfering with and obtaining (by any other means) the animal, plant or marine product; and
- (b) attempting to do anything mentioned in paragraph (a).

7. Supporting information

1. [Policy on Managing Activities that include direct take of protected Species from GBR 2005](#) (superseded).

8. Further information

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

PO Box 1379

Townsville Qld 4810, Australia

www.gbrmpa.gov.au

Document Control Information			
Approved by:	Marine Park Authority Board – MPA292	Approved date:	19-Aug-25
Last reviewed:	19-Aug-25		
Next review:	19-Aug-30		
Created:	19-Aug-25		
Document custodian:	Marine Park Policy and Planning Section		
Replaces:	Policy on Managing Activities that include direct take of protected Species from GBR 2005		

CAUTION: Only the electronic copy of a document sourced from either GBRMPA's internal [Master Document List](#) or external [eLibrary](#) is controlled. Check the revision number of printed copies against these lists to verify currency.