

WHITSUNDAYS

AMENDED PLAN OF MANAGEMENT

OCTOBER 1999

A guide to the AMENDED Whitsundays Plan of Management for Marine Park users

This brochure explains the key points of the amended Whitsundays Plan of Management, and provides additional important information for all Marine Park visitors. Included are guidelines and restrictions that apply to all users of the Whitsunday Planning Area, plus others that apply only to permitted tourism operators.



GREAT BARRIER REEF
MARINE PARK AUTHORITY

INTRODUCTION

The Whitsundays Plan of Management (the Plan) was released by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in June 1998. After extensive consultation with key stakeholders an amended Plan is now available. The amended Plan provides better strategies for protecting the Whitsunday reefs and waters of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, which are part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

The Planning Area is well known for its spectacular island scenery, the fringing and offshore reefs and the variety of wildlife, including rare and threatened species. These natural attractions are the focus of a rapidly increasing number of visitors to the Whitsundays. As such, there has been a need to review management strategies in the Planning Area.

The amended Plan is additional to the existing Zoning Plan, and provides extra tools for managing activities associated with tourism and recreation. When used together the two strategies combine to ensure continued use of the Planning Area without compromising the special values users come to enjoy.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT MARINE PARK USERS READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION IN THIS BOOKLET BEFORE VISITING THE WHITSUNDAYS.

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- SETTINGS
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- WILDLIFE PROTECTION
- TOURISM MANAGEMENT

Protecting the Whitsundays

SETTINGS

RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE

'Settings' (1-5) have been assigned to the reefs and coastal waters of the Whitsundays in order to provide a range of recreational opportunities (refer map). Settings describe the type of activities to expect when visiting particular parts of the Whitsundays, and in some settings there are limits on vessel length

and group size (see Table 1). These limits apply to all users of the Planning Area, including tourism operators (unless stated otherwise on their permit).

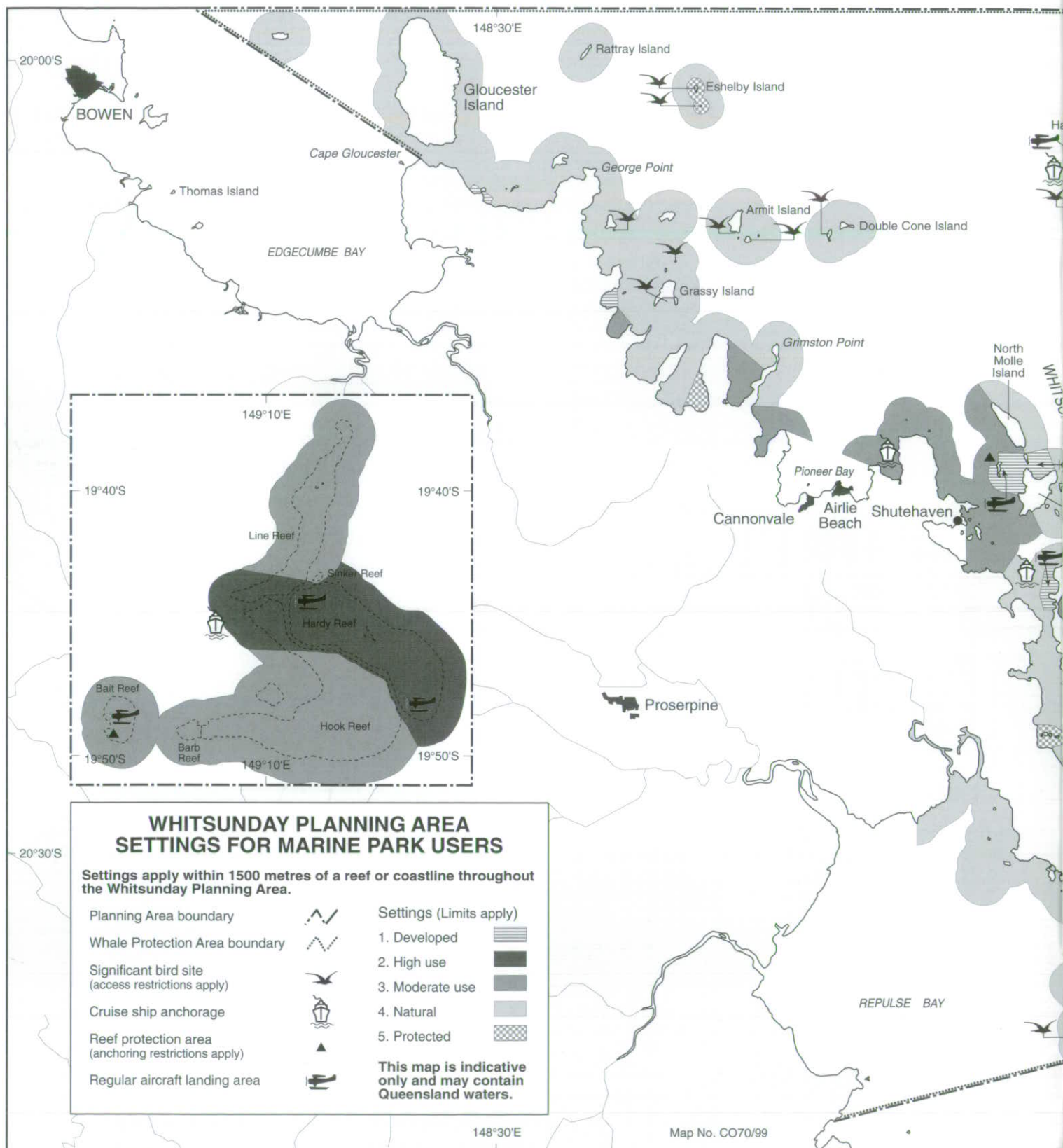


Table 1. Limits on vessel length and group size in each setting

SETTING	VESSEL LENGTH	GROUP SIZE
1. Developed	max. 70 metres	no limit
2. High Use	max. 35 metres	no limit
3. Moderate Use	max. 35 metres	max. 40 people
4. Natural	max. 35 metres	max. 15 people
5. Protected	refer to site plans	refer to site plans

Limits do not apply to anchored cruise ships and their service vessels, large vessels (>35 m) anchored at cruise ship anchorages, and vessels in transit.



REEF PROTECTION

PROTECTING CORAL

The Whitsunday reefs, particularly around the northern islands, are outstanding in their coral cover and diversity. The increasing use of the fringing reefs makes them vulnerable to damage by careless anchoring and vessel groundings. Be aware of the following reef protection measures in the Whitsundays.

It is generally an offence to damage coral. Take care to avoid damage to coral and adhere to the following guidelines.

- Anchor in sand wherever possible.
- Use a lightweight reef pick when anchoring near coral.
- Do not run a vessel aground on the reef.

REEF PROTECTION MARKERS

Reef protection markers have been placed in popular bays where anchoring in the past has damaged coral. In these bays, the reef areas are marked by a line of white, pyramid-shaped buoys with a blue Marine Parks label. Anchoring is prohibited inshore of this line. Vessels may enter a no-anchoring area when approaching or leaving a mooring or the beach.



- Do not anchor inside a no-anchoring area.
- Do not attach your vessel or aircraft to a reef protection marker.

Reef protection markers are located at the following sites (refer map): Hook Island — East and West Butterfly Bay, Maureen's Cove, Luncheon Bay, Pinnacle Bay, North and South Stonehaven Bay,

CRUISE SHIPS

Seven cruise ship anchorages have been nominated to enable cruise ships to visit the Whitsundays (refer map). Further anchorages may be nominated over time. Because of the size of cruise ships and their often high passenger numbers, a number of restrictions apply.

- Cruise ships are confined to the General Use 'A' Zone and Shipping Areas unless accessing a designated cruise ship anchorage.
- Cruise ships may only anchor in the designated anchorages with a booking.
- Only three cruise ships may visit the Whitsundays per day.
- Only one cruise ship may use a designated anchorage at any one time.
- Cruise ships must carry a pilot when operating in the Whitsundays.
- Cruise ships may only use their tenders to transfer passengers to resorts or reef pontoons.

MOTORISED WATERSPORTS AND TOURS

Activities such as motorised watersports and associated tours, aerobatics, beach hire and goods vending can disturb other users in the vicinity. Within the settings there are restrictions on these activities.

- Motorised watersports, associated tours, aerobatics, beach hire and goods vending can only be undertaken in setting 1 areas.
- Personal watercraft may also be used for private transport purposes in settings 2, 3 and 4.

FISHING

In addition to the Zoning Plan, the following fishing restrictions apply.

- Manta Ray Bay and parts of Bait Reef are closed to fishing (these are also no anchoring areas').
- Tourism operations must not conduct fishing in the Langford/Black Islands area.
- No additional fishing charter permits will be issued for the Marine National Park 'A' Zone (yellow).

AIRCRAFT ACCESS AND ACTIVITIES

Some restrictions on aircraft activities will minimise the disturbance to people and wildlife.

- Aircraft operating in the Whitsundays must not visit a location more than twice a week, unless landing or taking off from a 'regular aircraft landing area' (refer map).
- Scenic flights and whale-spotting activities must not be conducted below 1000 feet (above ground or water).
- Aircraft must observe restrictions near whales and significant bird sites.

REEF WALKING

- No additional reef walking permits will be issued, except at Hardy Reef and Black Island Reef where reef walking trails will be provided.

PRIVATE FACILITIES

- No more permits will be issued to install moorings or tourist facilities except at Hardy Reef or in setting 1 areas.

BEST ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES

Guidelines for doing the right thing while enjoying the Whitsundays can be obtained from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?



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False Nara Inlet; Hayman Island — Blue Pearl Bay; Langford Island Reef; Border Island — Cateran Bay; Daydream Island — Sunlovers Bay. Manta Ray Bay (Hook Island) and parts of Bait Reef are also closed to anchoring, but no reef protection markers are present.

PUBLIC MOORINGS

Public moorings have been installed at a number of sites to provide access to popular bays while protecting the fragile reefs. Public moorings are blue, beehive-shaped buoys with a colour coded band that signifies the ‘class’ of the mooring. There are five classes of mooring (refer Table 2) and the relevant limits are displayed on the colour coded band and an engraved tag attached to the pick-up line.



- Conditions of use of public moorings are:
- The vessel length must not exceed the limit stated on the mooring.
 - Generally public moorings have a 2-hour access limit between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. with unlimited overnight access.
 - Public moorings must not be used if the forecast wind strength is in excess of 24 knots for tender and class A mooring, and 34 knots for mooring classes B, C and D.

Public moorings have been installed at the following sites in the Whitsundays: Hook Island — East and West Butterfly Bay, Maureen’s Cove, Luncheon Bay, Manta Ray Bay, Pinnacle Bay, North and South Stonehaven Bay, False Nara Inlet; Black Island Reef; Langford Island Reef; Hayman Island — Blue Pearl Bay; Daydream Island — Sunlovers Bay; Border Island — Cateran Bay; Bait Reef lagoon and Manta Ray drop-off.

(Refer to Marine Parks information brochure ‘Protecting Coral in the Whitsundays’ for more details of moorings.)

Refer also to the *Best Environmental Practices* for anchoring and mooring.

Table 2. Mooring class information

MOORING CLASS	COLOUR BAND	MAX. VESSEL LENGTH	
		Monohull	Multihull
Tender (T)	Brown	6 metre	6 metre
Class A	Yellow	10 metre	9 metre
Class B	Orange	20 metres	18 metres
Class C	Blue	25 metres	22 metres
Class D	Red	35 metres	30 metres

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

PROTECTING DUGONGS AND TURTLES

Dugong populations in the southern Great Barrier Reef Marine Park are severely depleted and under pressure from habitat loss, gill netting, illegal hunting and boat strikes. Loggerhead turtles, which pass through the Whitsundays on their way to southern nesting sites, are listed as ‘endangered’.

- The taking of dugongs and loggerhead turtles in the Whitsundays is prohibited.

- Dugong sanctuaries or dugong protection areas have been established in Edgcumbe Bay and Repulse Bay and restrictions apply on the use of mesh nets.

Refer also to the *Best Environmental Practices* for turtle watching.

PROTECTING WHALES

The Whitsundays is an important calving ground for humpback whales between May and September each year. Most of the waters around the islands are part of a 'whale protection area' (refer map) to minimise disturbance to whales.

- Inside the whale protection area boats must not approach within 300 metres of a whale.
- Outside the whale protection area boats must not approach within 100 metres of a whale.
- Tourism operators with a permit to conduct whale watching may only do so outside the whale protection area.
- No additional whale watching permits will be issued for the Whitsundays.
- Fixed-wing aircraft must remain at least 300 metres (and above 1000 feet) from a whale at all times in the Planning Area.
- Helicopters must remain at least 1000 metres (and above 2000 feet) from a whale at all times in the Planning Area.
- Helicopters must not be used for whale spotting.

Refer also to the *Best Environmental Practices* for whale watching.

PROTECTING BIRDS

The Whitsundays is an important area for seabirds and shorebirds, and a stop-over for several migratory species. A number of islands and rocks are home to seabirds which are easily disturbed by human activity. Several sites have been identified as requiring special management (refer map). These 'significant bird sites' have access restrictions that apply during specified periods (refer Table 3). A 'boat free zone' applies during the stated period at sites where nesting species are most easily disturbed by noise.

Refer also to the *Best Environmental Practices* for observing seabirds.

Table 3. Significant bird sites with restriction periods

ALL YEAR RESTRICTION	SEASONAL RESTRICTION (1 October to 31 March)
No beach access, 6-knot speed limit within 200m of the high water mark Bird Island East Rock* Edwin Rock* Eshelby Island Little Eshelby Island	No beach access, 6-knot speed limit within 200 m of the high water mark Armit Island (south beach) Double Cone Island (west island) Grassy Island (south beach) Little Armit Island Olden Rock (south of Olden Island)* Shaw Island (beach east of Burning Point) South Repulse Island (west beach, excluding camp site)
* Boat-free zone (within 200 m of high water mark) also applies between 1 October and 31 December each year.	

TOURISM MANAGEMENT

The rapid growth in use of the Planning Area necessitates some changes to tourism management. The amended Plan therefore limits tourism growth within the Planning Area except for operations using non-motorised craft (e.g. kayaks). It also introduces a new permit structure which recognises historic users and manages opportunities for new tourism operations in the Whitsundays.

PERMIT MANAGEMENT

The new permit structure generally limits tourism operation access to the Planning Area to 50 days per year subject to a booking. All-year access will only be permitted if using a non-motorised craft or if operations are eligible.

Tourism operations that hold current permits for all-year operation in the Planning Area, and can demonstrate historic use (or special circumstances),

will be allowed to continue to do so. Other tourism operations will be limited to 50 days access to the Planning Area per year with a booking. The number of such bookings is limited to 20 craft per day plus three cruise ships.

Up to ten permits for tourism operations based out of Bowen will be available. These operations will be allowed all-year access to the Planning Area without a booking. Long range roving operations will be allowed 100 days access to the Planning Area per year without a booking. Specific conditions apply to these operations.

BAREBOATS

Permits will not be issued for additional bareboats, and all currently permitted bareboat operations will be required to obtain appropriate accreditation.