



Australian Government  
Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority



# Fisheries permissions

Fishing is a long-established and important activity in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Parks (the Marine Parks). While fishing activities are regulated within the Marine Parks, some fishing practices continue to have an impact on the Reef. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (the Reef Authority) and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, as the joint managing agencies of the Reef, seek to ensure fishing is ecologically sustainable through an ecosystem-based approach and management actions that consider the cumulative impacts of fishing on all species and habitats of the Marine Parks.

Fishing is a popular pastime that allows people to spend time on the water with family and friends and to get in touch with nature. Fishing on the Reef is also an important source of income for Queensland coastal communities and the Queensland seafood industry.

The managing agencies work collaboratively with other stakeholders including the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) (who are responsible for day-to-day fisheries management), the Australian Department of Agriculture,

Water and the Environment, and commercial and recreational fishers to continuously enhance the sustainability of the fisheries, including improvements in fishing gear and methods and vessel monitoring systems.

Recreational fishing can be conducted on the Great Barrier Reef without a permit as long as it is conducted in accordance with Marine Parks Zoning and fishing regulations. It is also important to follow Responsible Reef Practices any time you are in the Marine Parks.

## Commercial fishing

Commercial fishing is the largest extractive activity in the Marine Parks and an important contributor to Australia's seafood industry, with about 14, 885 tonnes (2018–19) of seafood harvested each year.

The managing agencies work with the Queensland Government who manage the sustainability of commercial fishing in the Marine Parks. The Queensland Government are responsible for:

- Limits on the number of fishing licences
- Spatial and seasonal closures
- Restrictions on fishing vessel size

- Limits on the number of hooks used
- Limits on the number of traps such as crab pots and dillies used
- Limits on fishing effort or total allowable catch
- Size limits and restrictions on the species that may be retained.

All commercial fishing requires permission within the Marine Parks. This permission may be solely provided by DAF or may require both DAF and the managing agencies permissions depending on the Great Barrier Reef Regulations 2019 and Great Barrier Reef Zoning Plan 2003 provisions. Trawling does not require Marine Parks permission within the General Use Zone. Trolling, line fishing, limited spearfishing, netting, and trapping do not require a Marine Parks permit if conducted within General Use, Habitat Protection and Conservation Park Zones. There are some limitations on line, spearfishing trapping and collecting within Conservation Park Zones.

## Activities requiring a Marine Parks permit

### Charter fishing

Tourism operators wanting to offer fishing experiences will require a tourism permit issued by the managing agencies, in addition to a Queensland fisheries licence. If granted, tourism fishing must be conducted in accordance with the Zoning Plans, Plans of Management and any additional conditions imposed under a Marine Parks permit.

### Harvest fisheries

Harvest fisheries are commercial fisheries which use mainly hand-selection methods, for example, aquarium fish, coral or tropical rock lobster. All harvest fisheries require a permit from the managing agencies and the permit applicant must have the appropriate Queensland fisheries licence before applying.

The managing agencies may accredit a harvest fishery if the fishery has management arrangements in place under Queensland fisheries legislation that provide a basis for ecologically sustainable harvest. There are no harvest fisheries currently accredited within the Marine Parks. The accreditation would be provided to DAF. If a fishery is accredited, individual fishers would not need to obtain additional permission from the managing agencies to operate in the Marine Parks.

Harvest fisheries are only considered for permission within General Use zones and Habitat Protection Zones. Coral and Aquarium and Worm Fisheries can be considered for permission within Conservation Park zones. Harvest Fisheries are not permitted within the Whitsunday Planning Area, regardless of zone. Harvest Fisheries are also not permitted within the Palm Islands Group Habitat Protection Zone (HP-18-5146) and the Great Palm Island Conservation Park Zone (CP-18-4054).

## Developmental fishing activity

Any new type of commercial fishing activity that has not previously been conducted in the Marine Park will require a Marine Parks Permit for a Developmental Fishery. This is important to ensure all risks associated with the new activity have been assessed to avoid, mitigate or offset relevant impacts to allow for ecologically sustainable use. If measures cannot be implemented to reduce the risk, then the proposed activity may be refused.

A Developmental Fishery permission from the managing agencies cannot be applied for until DAF have granted a Developmental Fishery permit. Developmental Fisheries can only be considered within General Use Zones and Habitat Protection Zones.

**See the Reef. Love the Reef. Protect the Reef.**

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

[assessments@gbmpa.gov.au](mailto:assessments@gbmpa.gov.au)

[www.gbmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbmpa.gov.au)