

REEF JOINT FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Reef Joint Field Management Program (the Program) is responsible for the planning and delivery of in-field activities and delivers field operations within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. This includes Commonwealth and State marine parks (plus Commonwealth Islands Zones) and island protected areas like national parks.

The Program is delivered jointly by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service — part of the Queensland Department of Environment and Science. There are also established and evolving collaborative arrangements with allied government agencies, First Nations People, research institutions, industry and the community to work together to protect the World Heritage Area.

This Annual Business Plan Summary outlines the activities and priority projects the Program will undertake in 2021–22 to protect the World Heritage Area from threats, build resilience for the reef, island and species, and support ecotourism opportunities.

PROGRAM BUDGET

The Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement sets out the Australian and Queensland governments' commitment to joint 50:50 funding for the Program. The Program is currently in its fifth and final year of a significant expansion. The Program's anticipated funds for 2021–22 are \$39,969,138. The Program will also oversee around \$16 million in funding from other sources on behalf of the Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

COVID-19

The Program continues to implement measures to ensure ongoing delivery of field activities under modified work arrangements while maintaining the safety of staff and the public. However, the Program's capacity to deliver planned activities and priority projects will continue to be affected in 2021–22.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The Program operates under five priorities to deliver nine outcomes identified in the *Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement 2015* and mitigate threats to the World Heritage Area.

FIVE JOINT FIELD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM PRIORITIES



NINE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT OUTCOMES

- 1 PROTECT OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE
- 2 PROTECT VULNERABLE SPECIES AND HABITATS
- 3 EFFECTIVE COMPLIANCE
- 4 EFFECTIVE PERMITTING
- 6 UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT
- 7 TRADITIONAL OWNER ENGAGEMENT
- 8 INCREASING EFFECTIVENESS
- 9 INCIDENT RESPONSE

REEF 2050 VISION

FIVE PROGRAM PRIORITIES

EXPECTED OUTCOMES



DELIVERING CONSERVATION ACTIONS

The Program delivers conservation actions to protect and recover important values, including coral reefs, seagrass meadows, mangrove forests, coral cays, continental islands, threatened species and cultural heritage.

- Planned burns and hazard reduction reduces bushfire risk, protects property and promotes healthy vegetation
- Pest management reduces threats to islands and species
- Condition of northern and far northern islands improves
- Values-based planning guides island management
- Moorings and reef protection markers maintained
- Management of seabird and turtle breeding sites improves
- Condition and trend of historic heritage assessed



CHECKING FOR CHANGE

Knowing the condition of values is fundamental to effective management. The Program checks for change on islands and in the water to monitor reef and island condition and the extent of existing or emerging threats.

- Reef surveys inform reef health awareness and management
- Crown-of-thorns starfish surveillance identifies outbreak extent and severity and informs control efforts
- Understanding of island condition and trends improves
- Seabird and shorebird surveys monitor population trends
- Emerging island threats identified
- Understanding of turtle nesting and foraging sites improves
- Knowledge of habitats and species including megafauna improves



RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS

The Program responds to a wide range of incidents including ship and vessel groundings, oil and other pollution spills, wildfires, coral bleaching and disease, island and marine pests, stranded marine animals and severe weather events like cyclones.

- Risk based response to incidents
- In-field assessment of the extent and severity of damage from maritime incidents



WELCOMING PEOPLE

Improving community understanding of values and threats, fostering responsible behaviour, providing visitor facilities and risk-based permissions management is critical to ecologically sustainable use and good visitor experiences.

- Timely risk-based assessment and administration of the joint permission system
- Community stewardship and involvement in field management delivery
- Connecting and engaging with World Heritage Area users
- Maintained visitor infrastructure



UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE

The Program is the principal driver and coordinator of environmental compliance in the World Heritage Area. Risk-focused, well-planned and intelligence-driven patrols are delivered to deter and detect illegal activity.

- Compliance patrols by the Program and partners deter and detect illegal activity
- Compliance effort corresponds with risk and threat assessments for recreational fishing
- Marine parks permit conditions are followed
- Educate the community and industry about World Heritage Area rules and responsibilities



WORKING WITH FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

The Program is actively seeking to strengthen partnerships with First Nations People to plan, deliver and report on field management activities across the World Heritage Area and fill gaps where relationships are emerging.

- Joint management of National Parks (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land)
- Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements are implemented
- First Nations Peoples are involved in field delivery
- Mentor First Nations Peoples who received compliance training



PROGRAM INPUTS

The Program requires a number of inputs to deliver the five Program priorities and work with First Nations People, including funding, staff, vessels, workbases, training, and technology.

- Training needs identified for an expanded Program
- Strong safety culture
- Expand capacity to operate across entire World Heritage Area
- New technologies implemented are more efficient, effective or safe
- Financial management well planned and delivered

DELIVERING CONSERVATION ACTIONS



ACTIVITIES

- Maintain and expand moorings and reef protection markers and make no anchoring areas enforceable
- Deliver the annual burn program and enhance fire management
- Develop pest and fire strategies
- Deliver the priority pest program
- Implement the *Lady Elliot Ecosystem Resilience Plan* and *Raine Island Recovery Project*
- Support implementation of the *Raine Island Indigenous Cultural Heritage Plan*
- Address gaps in management of key seabird breeding sites
- Develop an implementation plan for the *Queensland Marine Turtle Conservation Strategy 2021*
- Protect Indigenous heritage together with First Nations People
- Implement heritage management plans for Commonwealth islands
- Maintain island historic heritage
- Support historic heritage management by partners
- Commence accreditation of the Commonwealth Cairns and Hinchinbrook plans of management
- Support implementation of the Authority's Policy and Planning Roadmap

PRIORITY PROJECTS

- Great Barrier Reef island intervention and rehabilitation
- Increasing protection of Great Barrier Reef islands
- Reef intervention and rehabilitation

CHECKING FOR CHANGE



ACTIVITIES

- Deliver Reef Health Impact Surveys
- Undertake deepwater seagrass surveys
- Deliver crown-of-thorns starfish surveys
- Undertake Island Watch surveys
- Undertake Health Checks of iconic and priority islands
- Monitor the success of planned burn and pest projects
- Monitor seabirds and shorebirds
- Deliver inshore dolphin survey program
- Initiate a Bait Reef rehabilitation project
- Contribute to monitoring of priority turtle index sites
- Review the population status of flatback turtles
- Finalise acoustic monitoring trials for seabirds
- Collect data on marine strandings including necropsies
- Support underwater cultural heritage surveys by partners

PRIORITY PROJECTS

- Coastal bird monitoring and information strategy
- RIMReP knowledge gaps
- Northern Great Barrier Reef green turtle research

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS



ACTIVITIES

- Prevent, prepare, respond and recover from bushfires
- Respond if marine animal strandings exceed thresholds
- Support delivery of the North East Shipping Management Plan, the War on Wrecks taskforce and Serious Maritime Incidents Project
- Investigate improved data sharing and interoperability with partners

PREPARE

- Maintain an Incident Management Framework and response equipment
- Coordinate an in-field oil spill exercise and support delivery of oiled wildlife training

PLAN

- Coordinate pre-summer workshop
- Maintain situational awareness of reef health

RESPOND

- Assess maritime incident risk and damage
- Issue vessel removal orders and consider removing where owners have insufficient insurance
- Assist incident response led by partners including foreshore assessment of oil spills
- Respond to high priority mammal strandings
- Support marine pest response

RECOVER

- Coordinate damage mitigation or rehabilitation of key sites
- Prioritise reopening key visitor sites

PRIORITY PROJECTS

- Incident management framework
- Future coral bleaching and summer reef health assessment

WELCOMING PEOPLE



ACTIVITIES

- Provide a strong visible presence across the World Heritage Area and engage with visitors
- Undertake risk-based complementary environmental assessment, regulation and administration of permits, leases, agreements and authorities
- Continue the 'Be pest-free' campaign
- Support First Nations, community and volunteer involvement in the marine animal strandings program
- Encourage and support existing and new partnerships with others to undertake monitoring
- Complete a strategy for adaptive reuse of Low Isles infrastructure
- Deliver new island visitor infrastructure and maintain existing infrastructure
- Update and implement the five-year capital investment program
- Attend advisory committee meetings
- Educate the community and industry using a range of communication methods
- Support the campground host volunteer program

PRIORITY PROJECTS

- Magnetic Island Master Plan
- Transforming permissions management, policies and legislation
- Enhancing communication and engagement
- Collaborating with interest groups

UPHOLDING COMPLIANCE



ACTIVITIES

AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

- Evolve the Recreational Fishing Communications Strategy
- Increase awareness on finding marine parks zoning information
- Undertake education and field audit inspections

PLANNING, EXECUTING and REPORTING

- Deliver dedicated compliance vessel and aircraft patrols with partners
- Undertake targeted compliance in response to illegal activity
- Support aerial surveillance by Maritime Border Command
- Conduct special operations targeting high risk offenders, issues and activities
- Encourage public and industry reporting of illegal activity
- Supervise authorised activities with the potential to cause harm

INTELLIGENCE

- Identify trends and emerging issues through regular analysis
- Investigate the impact and effectiveness of compliance

INVESTIGATIONS and COMPLIANCE ACTIONS

- Investigate offences and deliver actions to deter illegal activity
- Identify legislative changes for efficiencies and mitigating threats

PRIORITY PROJECTS

- Enhancing compliance through vessel tracking

WORKING WITH FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE



ACTIVITIES

- Participate in negotiations for *Cape York Heritage Act 2007* outcomes
- Jointly manage National Park Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land with First Nations People
- Assist Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement implementation
- Implement Indigenous Land Use Agreements
- Support Indigenous Protected Areas
- Work with traditional knowledge holders to investigate illegal hunting
- Encourage reporting of illegal activity
- Together with First Nations People identify Indigenous cultural heritage values and who will monitor, protect and manage

- Expand participation of First Nations groups in delivery of marine and island field activities
- Provide work placements for Traditional Owners
- Maintain existing and develop new fee for service arrangements
- Collaborate with partner agencies working with First Nations People
- Improve staff cultural awareness
- Enhance connections with First Nations People through the permissions Future Act notification process

PRIORITY PROJECTS

- Indigenous Partnerships Strategy
- Capacity Building for Indigenous Rangers

PROGRAM INPUTS



ACTIVITIES

- Deliver annual training and implement the five-year training strategy
- Develop online training for coastal bird monitoring
- Maintain and improve management infrastructure to accommodate expansion
- Implement the five-year vessel replacement program
- Develop comprehensive deployment schedules for *Reef Ranger* and *Reef Resilience*
- Record data in relevant systems and support system improvements
- Undertake business planning and reporting
- Ensure Memoranda of Understanding are in place for field delivery
- Contribute to the Department of Environment and Science *Carbon Neutral Parks 2025 Program*

PRIORITY PROJECTS

- Integrated compliance management system
- Technology transformation
- Health and safety