

Queensland REEF WATER QUALITY Program



Season's greetings and best wishes from the Office of the Great Barrier Reef. We thank you for your ongoing commitment and support to help protect the Great Barrier Reef. We look forward to working with you in 2022.

What's new



Reef protection regulations

The Reef protection regulations are continuing to roll out in more regions with new requirements for **grazing** in the **Fitzroy** and **sugarcane** growing in the **Wet Tropics**, **Burdekin** and **Mackay Whitsunday** regions from **1 December 2021**.

Under the minimum practice agricultural standards, all Fitzroy [graziers](#) will need to take action to improve land condition and ground cover on areas of grazing land with less than 50 per cent ground cover (measured as at 30 September each year). There are four standard conditions graziers need to meet. These do not mandate stocking rates or require a land management plan. Graziers can choose the actions they take to meet the requirements.

All [sugarcane growers](#) in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin and Mackay Whitsunday regions will need to develop a [farm nitrogen and phosphorus budget](#) to calculate the amount of fertiliser they can apply in the 2022 season. The requirements still use soil testing and the regulated method (including parts of the SIX EASY STEPS™) to work out nitrogen and phosphorus rates for each block. However, growers can now refine these rates across their farm as long as they do not exceed the whole-of-farm amount.

Meanwhile, grains and horticulture growers have been given two additional years to prepare for the minimum practice agricultural standards under the Reef protection regulations. These requirements are now proposed to come into effect from 1 December 2024. This gives these industries more time to voluntarily improve their practices.

Small updates are proposed to the minimum practice agricultural standards for beef cattle grazing, sugarcane and banana cultivation, and the prescribed methodology for sugarcane cultivation. These updates are administrative in nature and will make the requirements easier to understand. [Consultation](#) on these small updates will run until 20 January 2022. Online information sessions are being held in December and January.

For more information, including a [video](#) outlining the process to develop a nitrogen and phosphorus budget, registering for an online information session and ordering an information pack:

Visit www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations

Phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

Email officeofthegbr@des.qld.gov.au



Farmers turn Reef action into income

A unique collaboration involving government, business and landholders is seeing Queensland farmers earn additional income and prevent 18,000 kilograms of nitrogen from reaching the Great Barrier Reef.

The [Reef Credit Scheme](#) is a market-based collaboration which allows farmers and other property owners in Reef catchments to undertake projects that improve water quality to generate a tradeable unit of pollutant reduction or Reef Credit. This is then sold onto businesses who want to protect the Reef or meet their corporate responsibilities.

So far five sugarcane farmers have successfully traded 18,000 Reef Credits in the second ever tranche of Reef Credits to be sold.

The scheme was developed by a consortium consisting of [GreenCollar](#), [Terrain Natural Resource Management](#) and [NQ Dry Tropics](#) supported by Queensland Government investment.



New Interactive Paddock to Reef paddock scale water quality monitoring website

The world-leading Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting program brings together 20 organisations and hundreds of people, all working to improve the Reef's health and resilience.

From the farm to the Great Barrier Reef, monitoring and modelling is used to evaluate land management practice adoption and effectiveness, catchment condition, pollutant run-off and marine condition.

Paddock-scale water quality monitoring trials have provided robust scientific evidence of the impact that some land management practices have on the quality of the water leaving the farm and flowing into the Reef.

Details and lessons from some of the sugarcane, banana, grazing, grain and erosion paddock monitoring trials, and information about paddock and catchment modelling are outlined in a new Department of Resources [Great Barrier Reef Paddock and Catchment Science digital story](#).



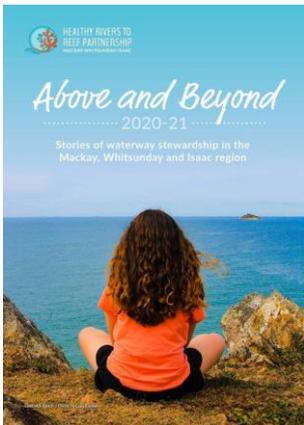
Review of the land management target for agricultural practice adoption

The review of the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan (Reef 2050 WQIP) has started with a review of the land management target for agricultural practice adoption.

The independent review, led by Alluvium Consulting, involves all key stakeholders. A [project engagement hub](#) has been established so people can follow the review, receive email updates and find out how to contact a stakeholder representative or the project team.

A Stakeholder Partnership Group and Technical Working Group have been formed to provide input and advice on technical aspects of the project.

The next step is to explore a range of options for setting the agricultural practice adoption targets. Following consultation in early to mid-2022, the draft targets will be presented to the Australian and Queensland governments to consider in June 2022.



Stories of stewardship in the Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac

The [Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership](#) has released its 2020-2021 'Above and Beyond' report detailing stories of waterway stewardship in the Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac.

The report features a diverse range of stories, initiatives and insights into how organisations took action to improve waterway health during the 2020–2021 year.

These case studies show how individuals, local businesses and industries, councils and community organisations have gone 'above and beyond' to improve their local environment.

Read the [report](#).



Queensland State of the Environment Report 2020

Queensland's State of Environment Report 2020 (SoE2020) has been released providing a comprehensive assessment of our environmental performance from January 2018 to June 2020.

SoE2020 looks at five key themes – biodiversity, heritage, pollution, climate and liveability – and provides a comprehensive picture of the extent and condition of Queensland's environment and the pressures facing our environmental assets. In an Australian-first, indicators and management responses have been mapped to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals targets.

The data in SoE2020 has been collected using satellite imagery, in-field environmental probes and samplers, and combined with laboratory and field work. Using this technology and simulation modelling provides the most comprehensive and scientifically-reliable picture possible.

Understanding the state and condition of our environment and the pressures affecting it is the first step towards better environmental management and better outcomes for all Queenslanders, today and in

the future.

Explore, share and learn by visiting the [State of the Environment website](#), which includes a [Great Barrier Reef section](#), or the [SoE2020 Summary Highlights](#).



Great Reef Census 2021

The Great Reef Census is back! Over 10 weeks, Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef are calling on ocean lovers to don their citizen scientist coats, jump in the water and carry out a simple photo survey or help analyse some of the 13,000 images taken of the Reef.

These insights will help locate the most important sources of reef recovery, some of which could contribute to greater protection from problems like coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish.

The [Great Reef Census](#) is led by Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef, in partnership with [The University of Queensland](#), [Great Barrier Reef Marine Park](#) and [Australian Institute of Marine Science](#).

Project updates



Connecting custodians with country for Reef protection

A program bringing together landholders and Indigenous youth in North Queensland is repairing badly eroded cattle country, while giving young trainees a solid base for future employment opportunities.

Healing Country is a partnership between NQ Dry Tropics and [Three Big Rivers Ltd](#) which is funded through the Queensland Government's [Reef Assist program](#).

Through the project, Indigenous participants are gaining practical on-ground skills working on NQ Dry Tropics projects across the region, while undertaking an accredited environmental training program. This provides them with the opportunity to work on country and gain practical experience in activities that benefit Reef water quality.

ABC recently featured the project on [Landline](#), showcasing the work trainees have done to address significant erosion issues at Red Hill, a 4,000-hectare beef cattle property 50 kilometres north of Charters Towers.

Some of the trainees had never visited a cattle station or worked in environmental remediation before. But in the past year they have gained new qualifications while working on projects on Gudjala, Bindal, Wulgurakaba, and Gugu Badhun country.



Managing urban impacts on Reef water quality

Despite urban areas covering less than one per cent of the Great Barrier Reef catchment, stormwater run-off from urban and industrial land use and wastewater treatments contributes to dissolved inorganic nitrogen entering the Reef and can impact the health of local waterways.

The Queensland Government is taking an integrated approach to addressing land-based sources of water pollution to the Reef. This includes managing run-off from agriculture, which by land area has the greatest impact of any land use, but also includes managing run-off and point source discharges from urban areas.

Around \$3.5 million is dedicated to addressing the urban sector's effect on water quality.

Delivered in partnership with local councils and industry, these 'urban stewardship' initiatives focus on improved urban land use management and wastewater treatment, while supporting regional communities and economies.

Read this [factsheet](#) or visit the [website](#) for more information.



GRASS Mid-Term Review

The [Grazing Resilience and Sustainable Solutions \(GRASS\) program](#) team conducted a Mid-Term Review through Ernest and Young Australia (EY) which has provided valuable feedback about participants' experience in the program.

EY undertook the Mid-Term Evaluation of the program between May–October 2021 covering the September 2019–June 2021 delivery period. Interviews were conducted with graziers, program partners and potential investment partners and EY analysed data, reports and case-studies generated by GRASS.

The report was very positive, finding GRASS had delivered on its key purpose to help graziers put in place action plans to improve their ground cover, particularly in areas of poor and degraded condition, and understand the Reef protection regulations requirements.

As of June 2021, 279 action plans for land management had been developed. A total of 107 projects received Queensland Government grants of \$1.2 million for on-ground works with graziers contributing almost \$2 million for works such as watering points, fencing and gully remediation.

Interviewed graziers advised that GRASS helped them better understand their land condition and to improve land management. The grants then helped them put actions in place. All participants identified that the support provided by their local extension officer/s was valued and critical to the program.

Potential program improvements were also identified. They included better communication with graziers about GRASS' achievements and benefits, increased opportunities for peer-to-peer networking and ongoing communication with graziers outside of GRASS so that they understand the Reef regulations.

Many thanks to the graziers and GRASS team who participated in the review. The GRASS team is discussing how to best implement the recommendations.

The GRASS program is funded through the Queensland Government's Queensland Reef Water Quality Program and delivered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), Burnett Mary Regional Group, Fitzroy Basin Association and NQ Dry Tropics.

Overview summary:

Action plans completed by graziers in partnership with DAF, Burnett Mary Regional Group, Fitzroy Basin Association and NQ Dry Tropics.

As of June 2021:	Action plans	Area of land with action plans
Burdekin	87	1,137,229 ha
Fitzroy	123	360,744 ha
Burnett Mary	69	84,116 ha
GRASS Program to date	279	1,582,090 ha
Target by June 2022	321	N/A

Grants to grazing enterprises to support improved land management

As of June 2021:	Number of projects	Incentives distributed	Graziers' in-kind contribution
Burdekin	41	\$508,239	\$973,650
Fitzroy	47	\$459,652	\$749,885
Burnett Mary	19	\$249,920	\$212,658
GRASS program to date	107	\$1,217,810	\$1,936,194
Allocated funding by June 2022		\$1,178,000	



Invasive weeds targeted on islands to promote sea turtle nesting

Turtles that visit St Bees Island are *shell*-ebrating after hard working volunteers cleared half a hectare of invasive weeds from nesting beaches.

Volunteers, Reef Catchments staff and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service rangers worked together to remove invasive weeds from Turtle Beach on St Bees Island, which is one of nine islands in the South Cumberland Islands National Park.

Invasive weeds cause problems for nesting turtles as they encroach on their nesting habitat. Removing the weeds means turtles will be able to nest more easily and the natural ecosystem can regenerate without competing with weeds.

This project was funded through the [Queensland Government's Reef Assist program](#) and delivered by [Reef Catchments](#).



First Australian Carbon Credit Units received

The Queensland Government has received the first Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) for projects funded through the Land Restoration Fund's 2020 Investment Round.

The Beef and Conservation for the Future project, a 10-year \$2.1 million collaboration, which aims to improve water quality in the Burnett River amongst a range of co-benefits, has delivered its first 5000 ACCUs.

The Ivanhoe Timber Retention Project, which will deliver environmental outcomes including improved water-quality and improved extent and condition of threatened species habitat, while diversifying on-farm income and delivering socio-economic benefits to the community, has delivered 3000 ACCUs.

Both projects are being led by project developer [GreenCollar](#) and will lead to improved water quality in the Burnett Mary region.

To learn more about these projects visit the Land Restoration Fund [website](#).



For the love of Queensland—get the COVID-19 vaccine

There's so much to love about life in Queensland and the COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to keep the community safe and get back to doing more of the things we love.

COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective and free—which is why so many Queenslanders have already made the choice to be vaccinated.

People aged 12–59 now have several options to get their COVID-19 vaccine. Visit the [Queensland Health website](#) to find out more.

Events



Connectivity, flow and change: Social perspectives on the Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef social science community recently held their inaugural symposium – *Connectivity, flow and change: Social perspectives on the Great Barrier Reef*.

The symposium ran as a free hybrid event, in person and online, with the idea of **connections** being explored. The program featured two plenary talks, 12 presentations, a panel session and discussion around the themes 'Connecting and collaborating' and 'Navigating change'.

The Social Science Community for the Reef is an initiative of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in collaboration with CSIRO, the Queensland Government, James Cook University, The Cairns Institute, the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, Queensland University of Technology and The University of Queensland.

The group brings together social science practitioners and academics working in the Reef region to collaborate, share knowledge and provide a platform for improving understanding of social science for the Reef.

Contact us

For more information about any of these projects, email officeoftheGBR@des.qld.gov.au

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