

# Protecting the reef bioregions in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage Area

## Protecting the bioregions of the Great Barrier Reef

There are 30 reef and 40 non-reef bioregions identified within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (the Marine Park).

Under the existing zoning plans, only 4.6% of the Marine Park is in no-take zones (locally known as Green Zones). However the location of the existing Green Zones are largely confined to coral reefs or to the remote northern areas of the Marine Park. An analysis of each bioregion shows that the existing level of protection is incomplete and inconsistent, varying from zero to 62%. Bioregions in the north are generally better protected under the existing zoning plans.

When RAP material was published in 2002, it specifically stated that the exact amount of Green Zones would not be known until the RAP process was completed. However if all the scientific principles recommended by the scientific experts were implemented in full, then it was expected that around 25% of the Marine Park would be in Green Zones.

A number of points were also made very clear at this time:

- Firstly, that we would aim to meet the scientific principles, including a minimum of 20% Green Zones in each of the 70 bioregions; and

- Secondly, we would not reduce the level of Green Zone protection already existing under the current zoning.

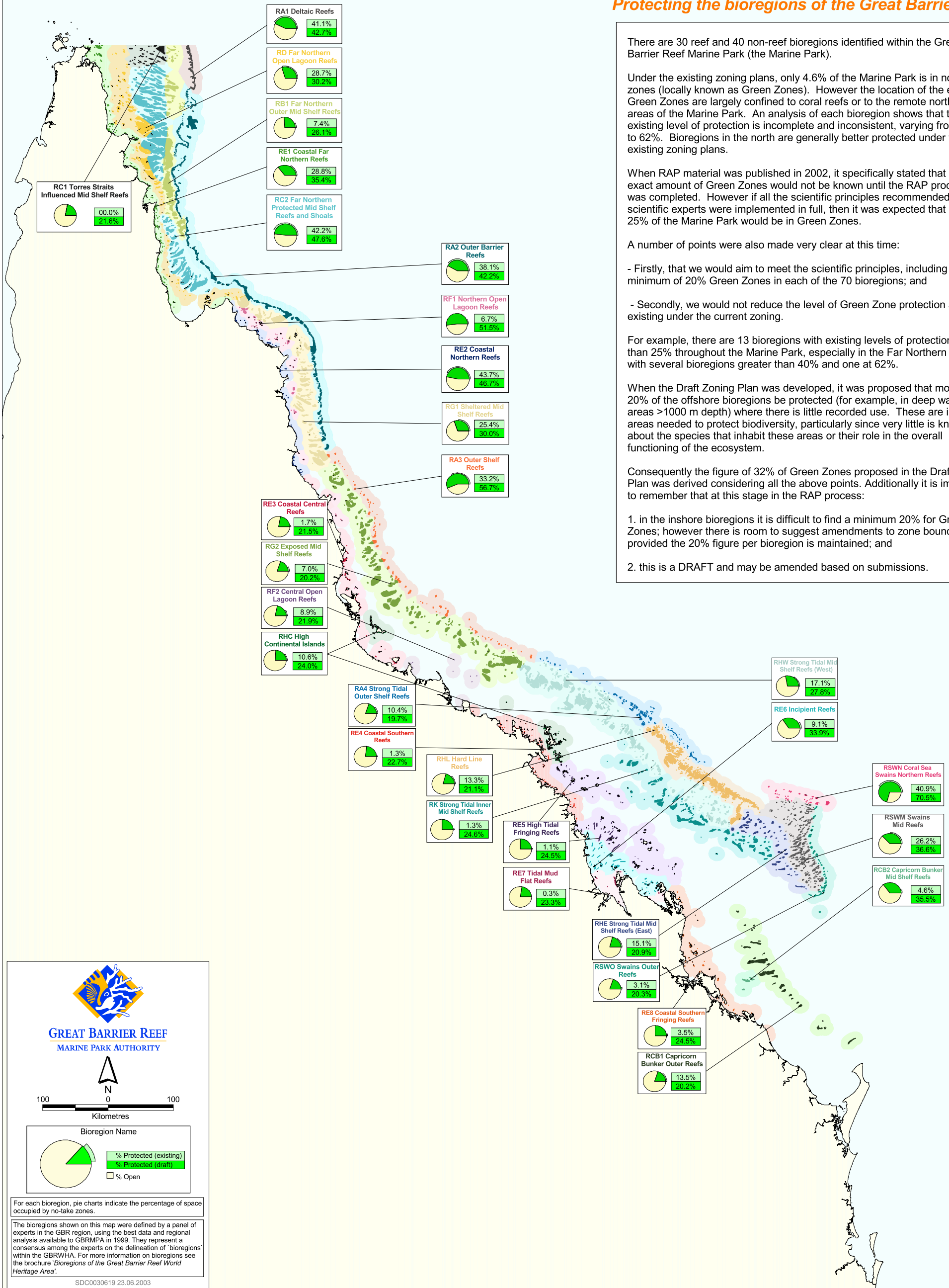
For example, there are 13 bioregions with existing levels of protection greater than 25% throughout the Marine Park, especially in the Far Northern Section, with several bioregions greater than 40% and one at 62%.

When the Draft Zoning Plan was developed, it was proposed that more than 20% of the offshore bioregions be protected (for example, in deep water areas >1000 m depth) where there is little recorded use. These are important areas needed to protect biodiversity, particularly since very little is known about the species that inhabit these areas or their role in the overall functioning of the ecosystem.

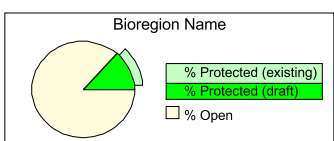
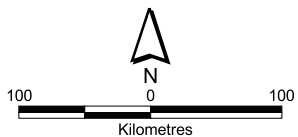
Consequently the figure of 32% of Green Zones proposed in the Draft Zoning Plan was derived considering all the above points. Additionally it is important to remember that at this stage in the RAP process:

1. in the inshore bioregions it is difficult to find a minimum 20% for Green Zones; however there is room to suggest amendments to zone boundaries provided the 20% figure per bioregion is maintained; and

2. this is a DRAFT and may be amended based on submissions.



GREAT BARRIER REEF  
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For each bioregion, pie charts indicate the percentage of space occupied by no-take zones.

The bioregions shown on this map were defined by a panel of experts in the GBR region, using the best data and regional analysis available to GBRMPA in 1999. They represent a consensus among the experts on the delineation of 'bioregions' within the GBRWHA. For more information on bioregions see the brochure 'Bioregions of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area'.