

Technical Information Sheet #8

>> Representative Areas Program background and history

[Published - 2002]

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is implementing the Representative Areas Program to help ensure better protection of the Marine Park's biodiversity. This will involve a review of the existing zoning throughout the Marine Park. This information sheet is part of a package of materials that help explain various technical elements of the Representative Areas Program and the zoning review.

A review of zoning plans

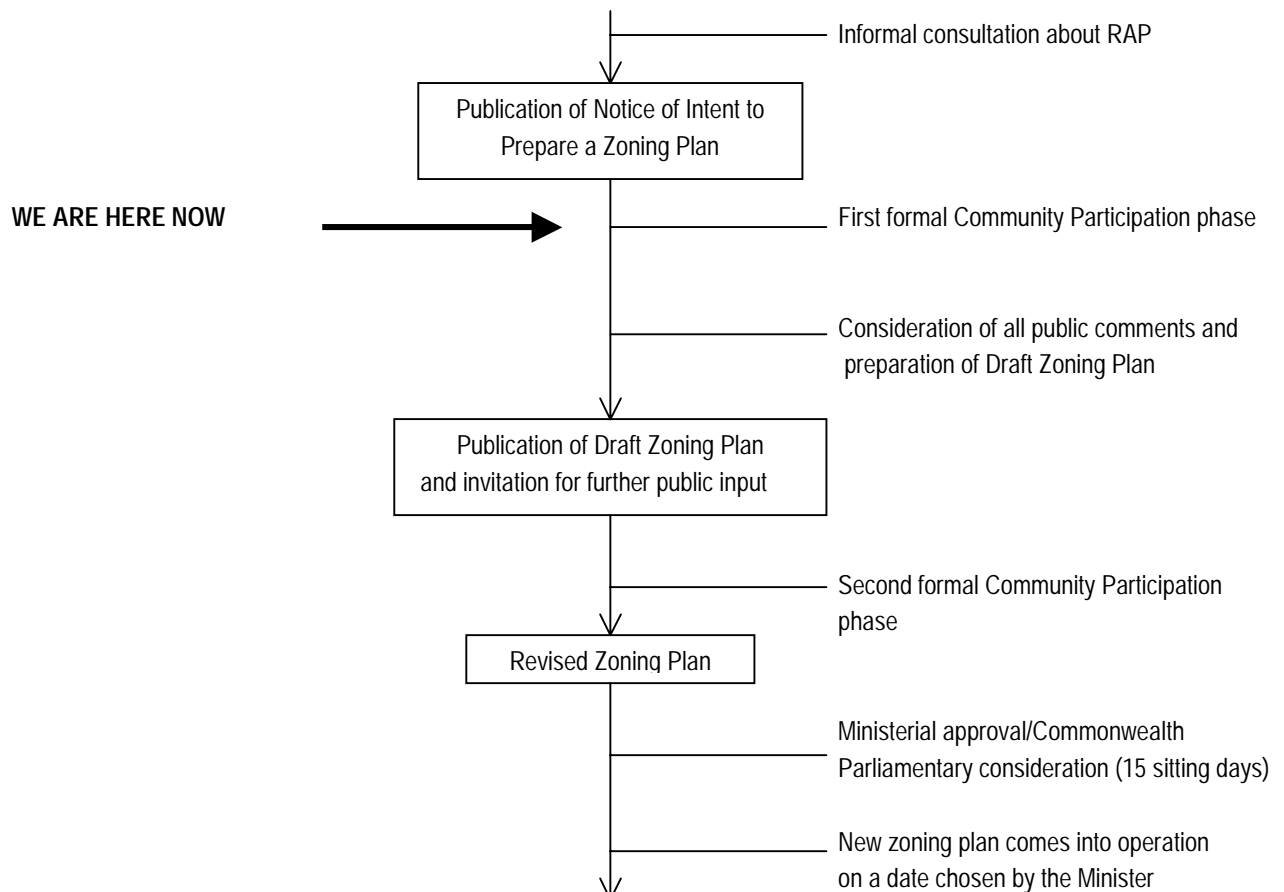
Introduction

The Representative Areas Program (RAP) will be implemented through the rezoning of the Marine Park. Sections 32 and 33 of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* provide the legal basis for the preparation of zoning plans. In order to meet the objectives of RAP and produce consistent zoning across the whole of the Marine Park, the GBRMPA intends reviewing the existing zoning plans for the following main sections of the Marine Park:

- Central Section (in operation since October 1987)
- Mackay/Capricorn Section (in operation since August 1988)
- Cairns Section (in operation since April 1992)
- Far Northern Section (in operation since April 2002)

As these zoning plans were prepared, new ideas, policies and legislation were developed for the management of the Marine Park. Accordingly, terms, management provisions and zone names differ slightly across the various sections of the Marine Park. The GBRMPA is undertaking a review of all zoning provisions to facilitate the development of a single zoning plan. Revised zoning provisions will be based mainly on the Far Northern Section Zoning Plan (which came into effect April 2002), which is the most recent zoning plan for the Marine Park.

The chart below provides a summary of the planning process:



The formal review of zoning plans as part of the RAP process will also enable the GBRMPA to:

- ensure consistency between different zoning plans;
- simplify boundaries by introducing a coordinate based system; and
- develop zoning plans for previously unzoned coastal areas (see next section) that have recently been included in the Marine Park.

The major aspects for review include:

Zone names

The Marine Park is divided into a number of zones each representing a different level of conservation, protection and resource use. At the moment, different zoning plans across the Marine Park have different names, objectives and use or entry provisions for each zone. For example, Green Zones are referred to as 'National Park Zones' in the Far Northern and Cairns Sections, and as 'Marine National Park 'B' Zones' in the Central and Mackay/Capricorn Sections. Inconsistencies like these will be addressed and improvements implemented through the review of zoning plans.

Definitions

Marine Park zoning plans and associated regulations define the various terms used in zoning and management. Several of these definitions differ between the various zoning plans and regulations, or have become outdated with time. The GBRMPA is reviewing these definitions in order to increase their consistency on a reef-wide basis and to update definitions as required. This will improve the clarity of zoning plans for Marine Park users, stakeholders and managers.

Designated areas

Designated areas are those areas of the Marine Park that have special management provisions. As part of the review of zoning plans, designated area categories that currently exist within the Marine Park are being assessed. Based on this assessment, amendments will be made to increase consistency between designated area objectives and the provisions of various zones, and to implement new strategies for designated area management. Some designated areas may be removed from zoning plans or amended as required. New designated area categories may also be applied to address significant management issues.

Zone boundaries

The existing zone and designated area boundary descriptions can be quite confusing. They may be based on a specified distance from the 'reef edge' which is difficult to locate, making it difficult to interpret where the boundaries lie 'on the water'. This can create problems for both the public and enforcement officers. In response, the GBRMPA is moving toward a coordinate-based system for describing boundaries. This means the zoning boundaries on zoning maps will be simpler to use and determine in the field. However, inshore zoning boundaries will still be aligned with recognisable coastal features as far as possible.

The coordinate-based approach will use points of latitude and longitude (referenced to the Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994) wherever possible to determine boundaries. This will allow boundaries to be identified on modern navigation systems, including Global Positioning Systems (GPS).

The following example describes an existing boundary and shows how the new coordinate-based approach may look.

Example: Marine National Park 'B' Zone—Stanley Reef (Central Section)

Current boundary description:

(All coordinates are expressed in terms of Australian Geodetic Datum 1966)

Stanley Reef

The area enclosed within the 500-metre line of Stanley Reef.

(Unfortunately in many places it is extremely difficult to determine the edge of the reef, let alone 500 metres from it, as the legal definition of 'reef' includes all bommie fields, reef slopes, ramparts, etc)

Coordinate-based zoning option description: a possible new boundary

(All coordinates are expressed in terms of Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994)

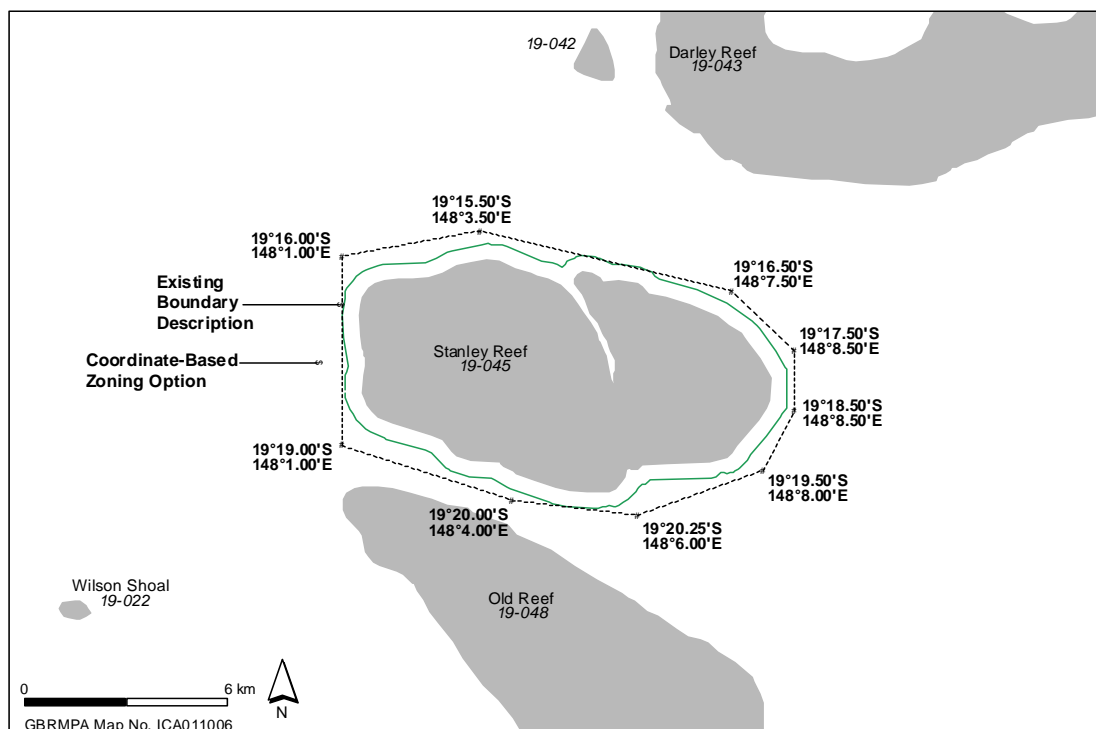
Stanley Reef

The area bounded by a notional line commencing at the point of latitude 19°16.00'S, longitude 148°01.00'E, to the north-west of Stanley Reef

(19-045), and running progressively:

- north-easterly along the geodesic to latitude 19°15.50'S, longitude 148°03.50'E;
- south-easterly along the geodesic to latitude 19°16.50'S, longitude 148°07.50'E;
- south-easterly along the geodesic to latitude 19°17.50'S, longitude 148°08.50'E;
- south along the meridian to latitude 19°18.50'S, longitude 148°08.50'E;
- south-westerly along the geodesic to latitude 19°19.50'S, longitude 148°08.00'E;
- south-westerly along the geodesic to latitude 19°20.25'S, longitude 148°06.00'E;
- north-westerly along the geodesic to latitude 19°20.00'S, longitude 148°04.00'E;
- north-westerly along the geodesic to latitude 19°19.00'S, longitude 148°01.00'E; and
- north along the meridian to commencement.

Note: This is an example of coordinate-based zoning only, and it may not resemble the final zoning plan for Stanley Reef. New zone boundaries will only be determined after consideration of local views and local knowledge.



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