



Commercial fishing in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

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Commercial fishing is the largest extractive activity in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. It is an important industry for the Queensland and Australian economies. Each year about 9500 tonnes of seafood (valued around \$100 million) are harvested from the Marine Park by the commercial sector.

While commercial fishing is valuable to our economy, it can have significant impacts on the Marine Park. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), the Australian government authority responsible for the care and protection of the Marine Park, works with fisheries managers and the fishing industry to protect and conserve the Marine Park.

Commercial fishing activities

There are five main commercial fisheries in the Marine Park. These are:

1. Trawl

Trawl fisheries make up the largest commercial fishery. Trawlers use trawl nets in the inter-reefal areas, and between the coral reefs and the mainland coast, to catch prawns, scallops, bugs, squid and other animals such as octopus and cuttlefish.

2. Line

Line fisheries include the coral



reef fin fish fishery (also called the reef line fishery), the rocky reef fin fish fishery, and the Spanish mackerel fishery. These fisheries use hook and line to catch fish such as coral

trout, emperors, snappers and mackerel species.

3. Mesh net

Mesh net fishing occurs in bays and foreshore waters to catch fish such as barramundi, salmon and mullet, as well as in offshore waters to catch shark and some mackerel species.

4. Trap

These fisheries use traps such as pots and dillies to catch blue swimmer crabs, mud crabs and spanner crabs, in inshore coastal and offshore waters.

5. Dive Based

Dive based fisheries involve hand-collecting aquarium fish, coral, tropical rock lobster, trochus, sea cucumber and specimen shells.



How fishing can affect the Marine Park

Potential impacts of fishing in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park include:

- Too many fish being caught (unsustainable take of fish).
- Other animals caught unintentionally (called 'bycatch'), for example unwanted fish caught in trawl nets and by hook and line.
- Physical damage to the seabed caused by nets and anchors; research shows that a single pass of a trawl net can remove up to 25% of the organisms that live on the seabed.
- Non-compliance with the Zoning Plan — illegal fishing in zones closed to fishing activities, negatively affects numbers and size of fish.
- Targeting fish while they are spawning, this reduces the chance of fish stocks replenishing themselves.

How fisheries are managed

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority works in partnership with other Australian and Queensland Government agencies to manage fisheries, by reducing impacts to ensure they are ecologically sustainable.

The Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries manages commercial fishing in the Marine Park through fisheries management plans and

regulations. Management arrangements for commercial fisheries include:

- Limits on the amount of fish that can be taken
- Limits on the number of fishing licences
- Spatial and seasonal closures
- Restrictions on fishing vessel size
- Restrictions on the length, mesh size and number of nets used
- Limits on the number of hooks
- Restrictions on the take of some fish species
- Restrictions on the minimum and maximum size of fish retained.

The GBRMPA uses a Zoning Plan to determine what fishing activities may occur in specific areas. Some areas are closed to particular fishing methods, some are closed to all fishing (called Marine National Park Zones or 'Green Zones') and some areas are closed to all uses (Preservation Zones or 'Pink Zones').

Reducing the impacts

To reduce the negative impacts of commercial fishing in the Marine Park, the GBRMPA works to ensure that all fishing activities are ecologically sustainable, through:

- Working cooperatively with other Australian and Queensland government agencies, and industry
- The Zoning Plan, which determine what activities may be undertaken in certain parts of the Marine Park
- Monitoring and assessing (in conjunction with research agencies) the effects of fishing activities on fish stocks, non-target species (bycatch) and ecosystems
- Informing and educating the public about sustainable fishing and the Zoning Plan.

For Further Information

Visit the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's website:

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