



Protecting the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park — Permits

Fact Sheet No. 6

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Why do we have a permit system?

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and adjacent Queensland marine parks are visited by millions of people annually. Uses of the parks include private recreation, fishing, commercial shipping, tourist programmes and scientific research. Legislation governing management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park requires that these multiple uses be allowed to continue with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) providing mechanisms to ensure wise use, conservation and protection of the Marine Park for future use and enjoyment.

The GBRMPA and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) jointly manage activities undertaken in the marine parks through environmental management systems including zoning plans, plans of management and permits. Permits aim to maximise user opportunities in the marine parks, while ensuring minimal environmental damage or consequence.

What is a permit and what does it do?

The permit system is a tool that assists the GBRMPA and the QPWS to:

- ensure minimal environmental impacts, especially in high-use and sensitive areas
- ensure responsible practices are adopted in construction of facilities or conduct of an activity
- ensure that everybody's interests in the marine parks are considered
- plan the day-to-day and the longer term management of the Marine Park.

A permit gives an individual or company the right (permission) to undertake an activity in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and/or Queensland marine parks in accordance with the relevant zoning plans, and will specify:

- what activity is permitted
- the conditions under which that activity can occur. These conditions are additional to what is already laid out in the zoning plans regulations and plans of management;
- exactly where it can occur
- for what length of time.

Who needs a permit?

Most individuals don't need a permit if they are visiting the marine parks for recreational activities. However, the conduct of other kinds of activities within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park or adjacent Queensland marine parks, must comply with existing marine parks zoning plans.

Zoning plans outline which activities are allowed in different marine park areas, and whether or not you need a permit for that activity.

As a general guide, permits are required for the following activities:

- most commercial activities, including tourist operations
- installing and operating structures such as jetties, marinas, pontoons and mariculture facilities
- any works such as repairs to structures, dredging and dumping, placing and operating moorings
- anchoring or mooring for an extended period
- waste discharge from a fixed structure
- scientific research



- educational programmes
- traditional hunting.

How to apply for a permit

The GBRMPA and the QPWS will supply any potential applicant with a Permit Application Form which asks for certain basic information about the proposal. If the proposal is more complicated, additional information may also be included at this stage. This form can be forwarded to either the GBRMPA or the QPWS.

Assessment of a permit application for activities of a commercial nature requires payment of a Permit Application Assessment Fee. The Permit Application Assessment Fee can vary according to the size and nature of the proposed operation and is notified to the applicant in writing on receipt of the application.

Assessment of applications for permits is undertaken jointly by the GBRMPA and the QPWS. Applications for minor activities, such as tourism programmes and educational programmes, generally take about eight weeks to process. Applications for works, including structures and dredging may require more intensive assessment and will take longer. If proposals are deemed to have a significant effect on the environment the application may have to be referred to the Department of the

Environment and Heritage in accordance with requirements of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. A higher level of assessment, for example public environment report or environment impact statement may be required. If proposals are likely to restrict 'reasonable' use by the public, advertisements of the proposal is often required, including invitation for public comments.

Most permit decisions on applications may be reconsidered by the GBRMPA upon request by the applicant. Most permits can also be appealed by any affected party who feels aggrieved by the decision to grant or refuse a permission, or who feels that the conditions of the permission are unreasonable.

A further avenue for appeal is available through the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Suspending or revoking a permit

A marine parks permission may be suspended or revoked if, for instance:

- an activity is causing damage to the marine parks
- the permit holder is not abiding by the terms of the permission
- where relevant charges or fees have not been paid when they are due.

The *Great Barrier Marine Park Act 1975* also sets out substantial penalties for non-compliance with permit conditions and/or breaches of the Act and Regulations.

Permit applications and zoning plans

Contact the GBRMPA or the QPWS for permit application forms and copies of the zoning plans.

For Further Information

Visit the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's websites:
www.gbrmpa.gov.au or www.reefED.edu.au

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