

FLYNN REEF SITE PLAN (Prepared August 2001)

Note 1: On 1 July 2004, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003 came into effect. It changed the zoning and activities allowed in zones for the Marine Park. Flynn Reef is now zoned Conservation Park Zone, for more information please refer to the Zoning Plan and maps.

Note 2: Pursuant to paragraph 4.2.1(1)(b) of the Zoning Plan 2003, the following Special Management Areas have been designated over Flynn Reef:

- Flynn Reef Public Appreciation Special Management Area; and
- Flynn Reef One Dory Detached (Conservation Park Zone) Special Management Area.

1. Background

Site planning is an integral part of the Cairns Area Plan of Management. Site planning was required at a number of Locations in the Cairns Area to provide for a balance of recreational and commercial access consistent with the protection of conservation, scientific and cultural values.

Site plans were prepared for the following Locations: Lizard Island Localities 2 and 3; Opal Reef; Tongue Reef; Agincourt Reefs; Hastings Locality 1; Briggs Reef; Norman Reef; Michaelmas Cay Locality; Upolu Cay Reef; Green Island Reef Locality 1; Flynn Reef; Milln Reef; Moore Reef Locality 2; Normanby Island Reef; Russell and Round Island Reefs.

Site planning occurred progressively and draft plans were presented for comment to all the interested parties. Site plans for Lizard Island Localities 2 and 3 were finalised in August 1999, while the remaining draft plans were discussed at site planning meetings held in Cairns and Port Douglas from 11 to 14 December 2000. All comments received were considered in the preparation of the final plans.

2. Site planning objectives

The following summarises the objectives of site planning in the Cairns Area:

- Provide an appropriate balance of private and public access opportunities
- Provide for Reef Anchorages where reasonable access will not be inhibited by moorings.
- Minimise damage to fish spawning aggregation sites and disturbance of fish spawning aggregations when determining the location of Reef Anchorages, moorings and pontoons.
- Minimise the impact on significant dugong habitat when determining the location of Reef Anchorages, moorings and pontoons.
- Minimise disturbance to significant cultural and heritage values when determining the location of Reef Anchorages, moorings and pontoons.
- Ensure that Reef Anchorages, moorings or pontoons are not located within an existing research or monitoring site if the project design would be adversely effected by anchoring.
- Minimise damage to coral from anchoring when determining the location of Reef Anchorages, moorings and pontoons.
- Determine a maximum number of moorings and pontoons for Locations with no limit (refer to Schedules 6 and 7 of the Cairns Area Plan of Management).

Note: Approval for new private moorings and pontoons will remain subject to detailed impact assessment.

3. Site description and map

Flynn Reef (No. 16-065) is an outer shelf planar reef with an area of 2.19 km². It is located at latitude 16°44' longitude 146°16.5' (Figure 1).

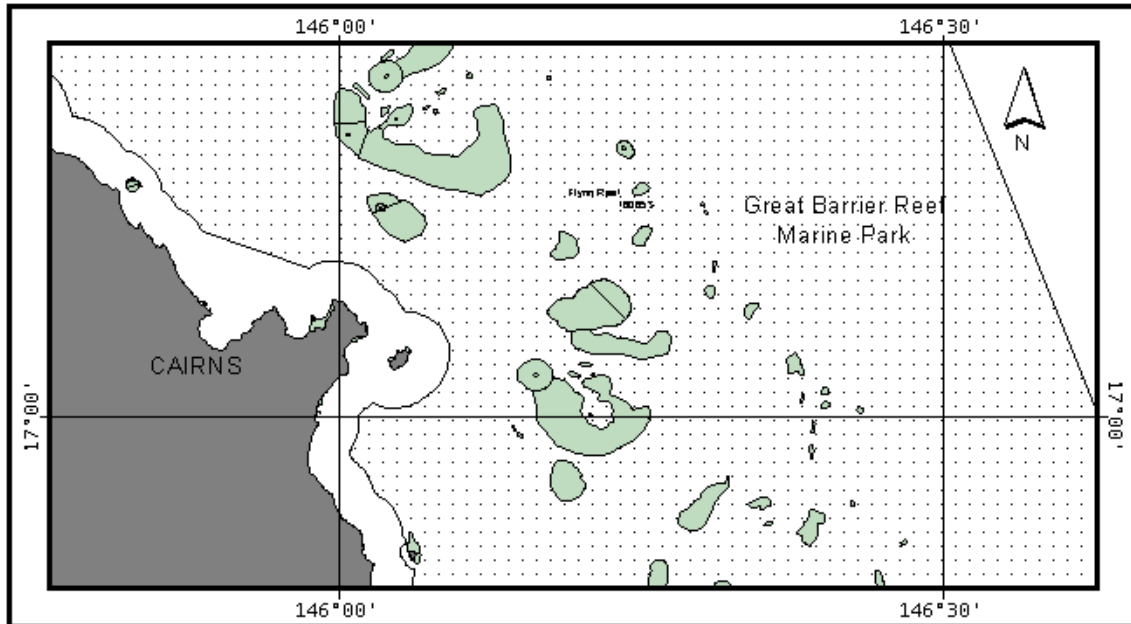


Figure 1: Location of Flynn Reef in the South Offshore Cairns Sector

4. Values

4.1 Coral

Ayling (1983) noted that the reef was characterised by attractive coral and scenery. The Australian Institute of Marine Science Long-term Monitoring Program found that coral cover declined from 1986 to 1995 before showing signs of recovering in 1998. Recent crown-of-thorn starfish activity has resulted in a further decline of coral cover.

4.2 Seagrass

There have been no official seagrass surveys conducted at Flynn Reef. No seagrass was found during QPWS site surveys.

4.3 Fish spawning

Fish spawning aggregation sites have been identified at Flynn Reef. Further research and monitoring will be undertaken to establish the significance of these sites.

4.4 Commercial

All fishing except trawling is allowed at this reef. Overall, there are 19 permits issued for collecting beche-de-mer, six for collecting trochus shell and 32 for collecting marine aquarium fish. There are no coral leases on Flynn Reef.

4.5 Recreation

Flynn Reef has had attractive coral and scenery. Due to Flynn Reefs significant distance from the mainland, visitation by recreational boaters is limited. However, in good weather, Flynn Reef is a readily accessible outer reef location.

4.6 Tourism

Flynn Reef is a popular destination for tourist operations based in the Cairns region. Three tour operators hold permits to visit the reef daily and anchor, 80 operators hold permits to visit daily without anchoring. A further 25 tourism operators hold roving permits which allows them to visit and anchor twice per week and 74 permits, permitting twice weekly visits with anchoring are held by the Cairns Professional Game Fishing Association.

There are seven permitted moorings at Flynn Reef. During the financial year 1998/99, a total of 15,251 tourists visited Flynn Reef.

4.7 Cultural

Flynn Reef is part of the traditional sea country of the Gugandji Aboriginal people.

4.8 Research and monitoring

Flynn Reef has been surveyed regularly as part of the Australian Institute of Marine Science Long-term monitoring program. Flynn Reef was last surveyed by AIMS in February 1998.

5. Summary of submissions received – Cairns Area Plan of Management

The draft Cairns Area Plan of Management was released for public comment in August 1997. A total of 160 submissions were received on the Plan. Of the 160 submissions received two referred to Flynn Reef

The first submission found that “*there are more moorings [on Flynn Reef] than necessary*” (submission no 1074). The second submission expressed a concern about the exclusion of the public due to the large numbers of commercial moorings inhibiting access to the location (submission no 1137).

6. Issues

6.1 Appropriate balance of use (mooring and anchoring)

There are currently seven permitted moorings on Flynn Reef. Of these moorings one is owned by an Association providing access to a large number of members. However, for the bigger part most of the reef is not accessible to the public due to the small sheltered area and number of existing moorings.

Public access will need to be considered for this site.

6.2 Protection of conservation values

Anchoring or inappropriate mooring placement and design can damage fragile coral communities. The designation of Reef Anchorages and pre-selection of potential mooring sites required an assessment of the bio-physical characteristics of identified areas to ensure that conservation values are upheld. Broad surveys of all potential sites were conducted and their suitability as mooring sites or reef anchorages was assessed.

Fish spawning aggregation sites (FSASs) have been identified at the Location. There is potential for disturbance of spawning activity by tourism activity during spawning events. FSASs will need to be considered in the selection of new mooring, pontoon or Reef Anchorage sites.

7. Current management strategies

7.1 Cairns Section Zoning Plan (Zoning Map: BRA Q 156)

The waters surrounding Flynn Reef are within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and are zoned as Habitat Protection Zone under the Zoning Plan. Activities which are permitted within the Habitat Protection Zone include diving, line fishing, trolling, commercial netting and trawling. Limited collecting of no more than five of any species of fish, shell or invertebrates is allowed, collecting over this amount requires a permit.

7.2 Cairns Area Plan of Management

The Cairns Area Plan of Management was released by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in June 1998 to provide strategies for protecting values of the offshore areas from Cairns and Port Douglas, the Ribbon Reefs, Lizard Island and the Frankland Islands. The following is a summary of the major strategies in the Cairns Area Plan relevant to Flynn Reef.

- Flynn Reef has been identified as a moderate use location, group limits of 60 people apply.
- No motorised water sports.

- No anchoring within 50 metres of a permitted mooring.
- The Plan allows seven permitted moorings at Flynn Reef.

8. Site planning strategies

8.1 Reef Anchorage

Site assessment of Flynn Reef found that there was limited scope for a designated Reef Anchorage. Further discussions among interested parties during the Site Planning meeting supported the view that insufficient area was available to designate a Reef Anchorage. Therefore, there will be no designated Reef Anchorage at Flynn Reef.

(Note: As designated Reef Anchorages are effectively ‘no mooring zones’, vessels may still anchor in suitable areas subject to the provisions of the CAPOM)

8.2 Private Moorings

All moorings allowed by the CAPOM at Flynn Reef have been permitted.

8.3 Public Moorings

In view of constraints in identifying a suitable Reef Anchorage, public access will need to be assured to the site through placement of one or two public moorings. The site marked on figure 2 will be investigated further for its suitability as a public mooring site.

9. References

- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority 1998, *Cairns Area Plan of Management*, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Townsville
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority 1997, *Submissions to the Cairns Area Plan of Management*, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Townsville (unpublished).
- Sweatman, H. Bass, D, Cheal, A, Coleman, G, Miller, I, Ninio, R, Osborne, K, Oxley, W, Ryan, D, Thompson, A, and Tomkins P. 1998. *Long-term Monitoring of the Great Barrier Reef*.

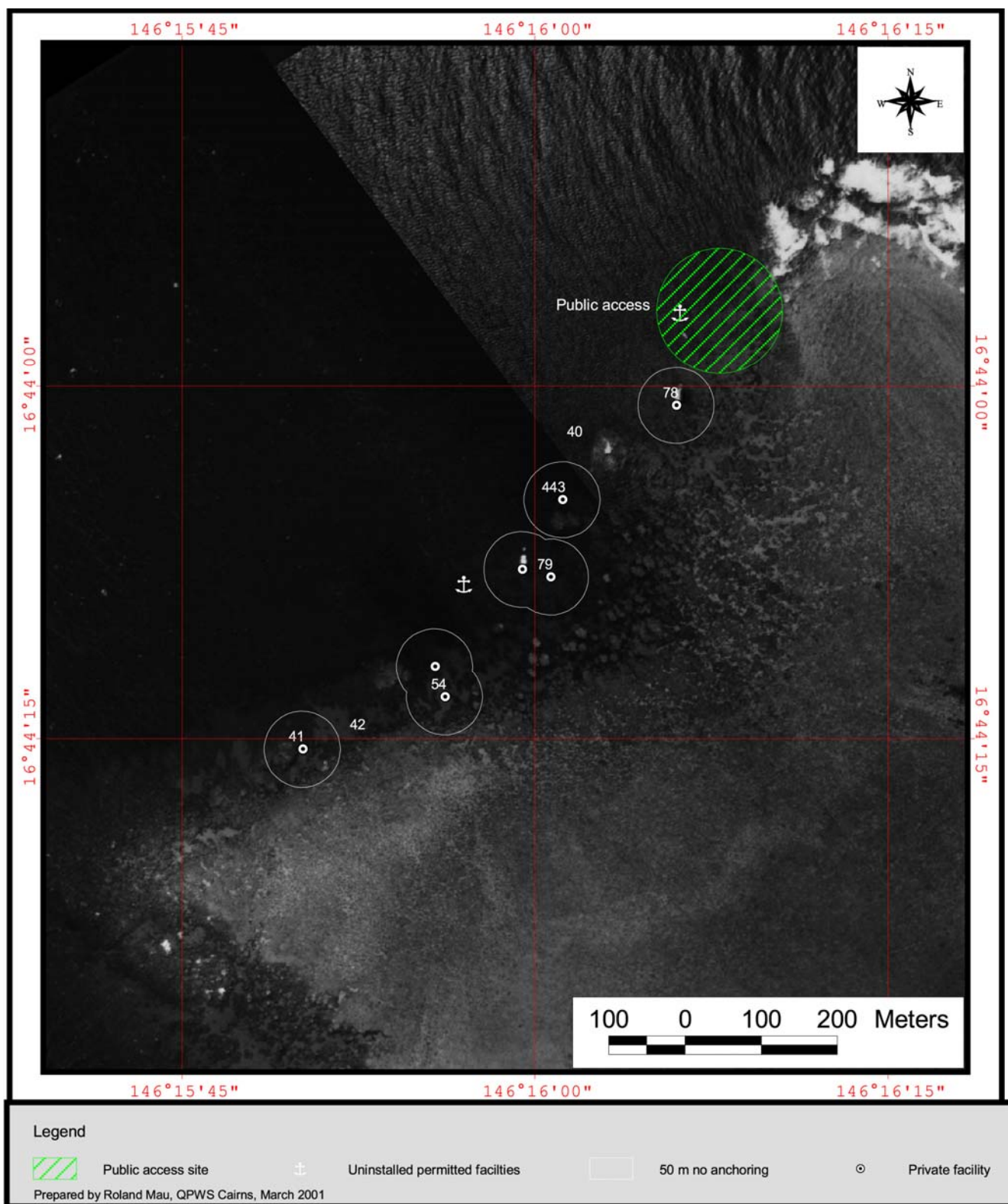


Figure 2: Flynn Reef Site Map