

Technical Information Sheet #5

>> Representative Areas Program background and history

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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.

What is the Representative Areas Program?

The objective of the Representative Areas Program is to help:

- maintain biological diversity;
- allow species to evolve and function undisturbed;
- provide an ecological safety margin against human-induced disasters;
- provide a solid ecological base from which threatened species or habitats can recover or repair themselves; and
- maintain ecological processes and systems.

A representative area is an area that is typical of its surroundings at a chosen spatial scale.

The physical features, oceanographic processes and ecological patterns within a representative area reflect those of the surrounding habitat.

Adequate protection of representative areas in no-take areas (locally known as Green Zones in the Great Barrier Reef) is widely accepted, in Australia and around the world, as the best way to achieve the objective listed above.

During the first stage of the Representative Areas Program (RAP), 70 areas of differing marine diversity (called bioregions) were identified throughout the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/rep_areas/documents/bioregions_2001_06.pdf).

The exact area and location of new Green Zones in the Marine Park will not be known until both phases of community participation are complete. In developing a new network of Green Zones, the GBRMPA will consider a number of factors including:

- advice of local community experts;
- advice from scientists and Traditional Owners; and
- the need to ensure the existing levels of protection per bioregion will not be reduced.

An independent Scientific Steering Committee has developed a package of 11 biophysical principles. If all these principles were implemented in full, around 25% of the Marine Park would be in Green Zones. Currently, less than 5% of the Marine Park is in Green Zones.

Within each bioregion, it is likely that there will be a number of different Green Zone options to achieve the necessary habitat protection. Local advice will enable the new Green Zones to be located where they will cause the least detrimental impact on reef users.

The GBRMPA is concerned about the potential impacts on existing users but confident that community consultations will minimise impacts on users who, we believe, will reap the rewards of a better protected Marine Park.

<u>Phases of the Representative Areas Process</u>	Stakeholder involvement and communication
Classification The Representative Area Program maps the diversity of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area into bioregions using biophysical data and expert opinion.	✓
Review The GBRMPA determines the extent to which the existing zoning protects the biodiversity shown by the bioregions.	✓
Formal Community Participation Phase 1 Advise the public of the proposal to review the existing zoning to better protect biodiversity and invite comments on the sorts of information to be considered when developing a new representative area network.	✓✓
Identification Extensive community consultation to identify networks for potential inclusion (ie candidate areas) which will achieve the objectives of RAP and which could be incorporated into a new representative area network.	✓✓
Selection Extensive community consultation to assist in selecting amongst the options of networks of candidate areas. Assessment of social, economic, cultural and management implications to assist in choosing the most appropriate candidate sites and levels of protection.	✓✓
Draft Zoning Plan is prepared, taking all community consultation into account.	✓
Formal Community Participation Phase 2 The Draft Zoning Plan is made available for public comment.	✓✓
Development of a revised zoning plan taking consideration of all public comments.	
Ministerial approval and Commonwealth Parliamentary approval (15 sitting days) before it can become law. The new zoning plan comes into effect on a date chosen by the Minister.	

For more information, please, contact:

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