



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

Research in the Great Barrier Reef

Research is an important activity in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (the Marine Park), as it provides scientific information necessary for the sustainable use, management and protection of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem. Generally research activities in the Marine Park and in Queensland Marine Parks require permission from two management agencies, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The GBRMPA and the EPA cooperate to assess and issue joint permits, where necessary. The research assessor at GBRMPA undertakes one assessment process in consultation with the EPA. Note that Queensland legislation may still require a permit under GBRMPA management arrangements.

Requirements of Researchers under Zoning

From 1 July 2004, changes occurred in the zoning and requirements for researchers. "Managing Scientific Research in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park" policy underpins these arrangements. As part of this management approach, the GBRMPA recognises that, for low impact activities, there may not be a need for individual researchers to obtain permissions if their parent organisations are accredited research institutions. Research permits will be required where the research is not deemed limited impact research and if researchers are not affiliated with an accredited research institution.

Limited impact research (both extractive and non-extractive), because it represents minimal risk to the Marine Park, will be allowed to occur 'as-of-right' (i.e. without a written permission) in the General Use (Light Blue), Habitat Protection (Dark Blue), Conservation Park (Yellow) and Scientific Research (Orange or Green with an orange border) Zones provided the researcher is from an accredited research institution (see Table 1). Any organisation wishing to become accredited will have to meet specific performance and reporting criteria designed to demonstrate compliance with appropriate environmental practices and standards set by the GBRMPA.

Table 1: GBRMPA research permit requirements for each Zone

	Zone							
	General Use	Habitat Protection	Conservation Park	Scientific Research	Commonwealth Island	Buffer	Marine National Park	Preservation
Limited Impact Research (non-extractive)+	No permit required	No permit required	No permit required	No permit required*	Permit required	No permit required	No permit required	Permit required
Limited Impact Research (extractive)+	No permit required	No permit required	No permit required	No permit required*	Permit required	Permit required	Permit required	Permit required
All other research	Permit required	Permit required	Permit required	Permit required	Permit required	Permit required	Permit required	Permit required

*If an approved Environmental Management Plan (EMP) is in place then limited impact research must be conducted in accordance with the relevant EMP.
+ Only if conducted by an accredited educational or research institution, otherwise a permit is required.

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Scientific Research Zone

The Scientific Research Zone allows for research by providing areas, primarily around scientific research facilities, that allow studies to be relatively undisturbed by extractive activities. The Scientific Research Zone been placed adjacent to all island research institutions in the Marine Park and adjacent to the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), near Townsville.

Most of the Scientific Research Zone allows public access and is shown as green with an orange outline on Zoning Maps (Figure 1a). For people who are not undertaking research, these areas are the same as Green Zones where only non-extractive activities like swimming, snorkelling and diving are allowed 'as-of-right'.

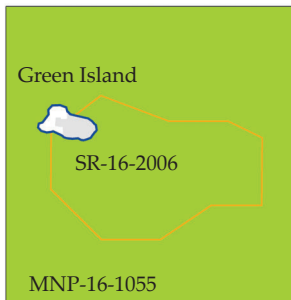


Figure 1a: Scientific Research Zone - which allows public access.

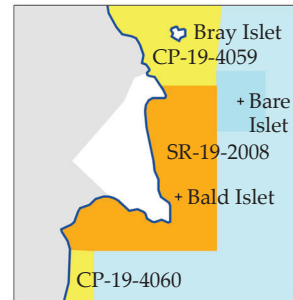


Figure 1b: Scientific Research Zone - Restricted access area.

The Scientific Research Zone adjacent to the AIMS near Townsville and surrounding One Tree Island Research Station in the Capricorn Bunker Group are Restricted Access Special Management Areas. These areas **do not allow access except for an activity associated with the operation of the research station, which is otherwise 'as-of-right' or for which the research station holds a permit. A permit from the GBRMPA is otherwise required.** These areas are shown as orange on zoning maps (Figure 1b).

What is Limited Impact Research?

Limited Impact Research includes any activity that would normally be 'as-of-right', and is of two types: Non-extractive and Extractive (Table 2). A permit is not required in the above-mentioned zones (Table 1) if the activity falls under Limited Impact Research and the researcher is associated with a research institution accredited by the GBRMPA.

Table 2: Activities classed as limited impact extractive and non-extractive research

Extractive Research	Non-extractive Research
The taking of an animal, plant or marine product by limited research sampling (See Table 3); or	Research that does not involve the taking of animals, plants or marine products.
The installation and operation of minor research aids (see Table 4) that do not pose a threat to safety or navigation and that are installed and used in accordance with the limitations set out in new regulations (2004); and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual surveys, other than of cetaceans. Research that does not involve an activity that would, if it were not part of a research activity, require permission. Social research that does not involve the conduct of archaeological excavations; and
Research that is a component of an educational program or a research project conducted by an accredited educational or research institution; and	Research that is a component of an educational program or a research project conducted by an accredited educational or research institution; and
If the research is conducted in the Scientific Research Zone, and if the GBRMPA has approved an environmental management plan in writing for the research station adjacent to the area - research that is conducted in accordance with that plan.	If the research is conducted in an area in the Scientific Research Zone, and if the GBRMPA has approved an environmental management plan in writing for the research station adjacent to the area - research that is conducted in accordance with that plan.

Generally there are four different limited impact extractive collection categories (Table 3). For the purposes of limited impact research a **location**, as mentioned in Table 3, is defined as a discrete, identified reef, or a continuous non-reef area of up to 10 square kilometres. **Site** means an area of 3000 square meters within a location.

Table 3: Summary table of limited impact collection limits based on the species tables in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations (<http://scaleplus.law.gov.au/html/pastereg/0/85/top.htm>).

Category	Parts of Table Number 70-1 in Regulations ¹	Annual limit per research project	Per location/site
1	2	20	5
2	3	50, and none longer than 1000mm	10
3	4	50	10
4	5	500	100
5 (plant species)	-	200	50

NOTE: Any species not mentioned in parts 2-5 of the table 19-1 is 200 in total and no more than 50 per location.

Table 4: A list of minor research aids that can be used under Limited Impact Research and a limit on the installation of minor research aids

Minor Research Aids
Apparatus and equipment authorised under Queensland fisheries legislation for recreational use, Fish tags
Stakes less than 12mm in diameter
Data loggers for attachment to marker buoys, bolts or dive weights
Non-fixed plankton nets
Water sampling devices that are not motorised nor pneumatically nor hydraulically operated
Sediment sampling devices that are not motorised nor pneumatically nor hydraulically operated
Sub-surface marker buoys less than 100mm in diameter
Surface marker buoys less than 200mm in diameter
Bolts or dive weights for attachment to data loggers

Any other research either falling outside these limits or conducted by a researcher not associated with an accredited research institution will require a GBRMPA permit.

¹ These numbers will change as at 1 July when the consolidated old and new Regulations are available. Regulations available prior to this date at <http://scaleplus.law.gov.au/html/pastereg/0/85/top.htm> include the new amendments as notes at the end only.

Accredited Institutions

A pre-requisite to the GBRMPA considering the accreditation of an educational or research institution will be the institution entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the GBRMPA.

In accordance the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 1983* (after 1 July 2004), the GBRMPA may accredit a research institution, by notification in the Gazette, if it is satisfied that the institution:

- (a) has adopted appropriate environmental practices and standards (including instruction and training of personnel)
- (b) has an ongoing commitment to improve those practices and standards.

Once an Institution is accredited, all employees and affiliated staff conducting research under the auspices of the Institution are allowed to conduct limited impact research² without a permit subject to compliance with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the Zoning Plan, associated regulations, and all other legislation having application to research activities in the Marine Park.

The Institution shall issue each researcher or other personnel undertaking research by or on its behalf in the Marine Park, with a letter of authorisation on the letterhead of the Institution³. Prior to issuing such letter of authorisation, the Institution must be satisfied that the researcher or other personnel is aware of the requirements of this MOU, the Zoning Plan, associated regulations, and other relevant legislation.

For further information see:

www.gbrmpa.gov.au

or contact the GBRMPA Research Permit Assessor
at **1800 990 177**.

² The nature and extent of this research needs to comply with the requirements of the limited impact research (extractive) and limited impact research (non-extractive).

³ The letter of authorisation serves as an indication to compliance officers that researchers and/or other personnel are undertaking research under the auspices of an accredited educational or research institution for the purposes of the Zoning Plan. If a letter of authorisation cannot be produced when required, the researcher or other personnel is liable to be prosecuted for contravention of the Zoning Plan.

