



MEDIA RELEASE

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Conservationists disappointed with Moreton Bay Zoning Plan

Conservationists are united in their **disappointment** with the QLD Government's final zoning plan for Moreton Bay Marine Park, launched today.

The draft Plan offered approximately 15 percent protection (in marine national park zones) while the final Plan commits to 16 percent protection, far short of scientific recommendations of at least 30 percent.

Craig Bohm, Campaigns Director with the Australian Marine Conservation Society said, "This plan provides less than half the amount of protection that Moreton Bay needs. It exposes a whopping 84 percent of the marine park to intense fishing pressure providing little security for local marine wildlife into the future."

Simon Baltais, President of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland added, "Threatened wildlife such as turtles, dugongs and shorebirds face an uncertain future under the Plan. Coral reefs, seagrass meadows and, in fact, many special places have simply not been protected. The Plan simply does not meet international standards for marine conservation."

Toby Hutcheon, Executive Director with of the Queensland Conservation Council said, "So many concessions have been given to existing uses, such as fishing, that the conservation benefits of this plan have been severely compromised."

During the two year Moreton Bay review, the Queensland government received over 12,000 letters from concerned Queenslanders who called for a doubling of the level of protection offered in the draft Plan.

"The final Plan appears almost identical to the draft plan." Bohm said. "The government needs to be asked why the views of 12,000 people have simply been ignored."

Baltais concluded "The government must act urgently to strengthen this plan with additional conservation measures. We are calling on them now to create a new and more powerful 'watchdog' for the Park, a statutory management authority, and to spend \$10m buying out active fishing licences."

ENDS

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Conservation organisations – Australian Marine Conservation Society, Queensland Conservation Council, The Wilderness Society, Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland and WWF Australia.

Additional Points

- Conservationists, eminent marine scientists and celebrity notorieties, such as Australian author (and avid fisher) Tim Winton also called for at least a doubling of protection to over 30 percent coverage.
- The zoning plan puts lines on a map where different types of activities can occur in Moreton Bay Marine Park, not unlike a town planning scheme.
- 'Marine National Park' zones are areas of the park where fishing is prohibited but where public access is maintained. These zones have the highest conservation value.
- The conservation movement also partnered with the Queensland Tourism Industry Council and Tangalooma Island Resort to call on the government to protect 10 special areas in marine national park zones. Together they released a report called **The 10 Missing Jewels of Moreton Bay** in which these areas were identified and their values articulated. (Available here: http://www.amcs.org.au/default2.asp?active_page_id=558)
- The **10 Missing Jewels** are - the Eastern Banks, Manta Ray Bommies (off Point Lookout), the wider Flinders Reef Complex, Peel Island (south), Myora Reef and Wanga Wallen Banks (Stradbroke Island), Ormiston, Waterloo Bay – south (Lota), Green Island – east, Bird and Goat Island and China Wall (east of Moreton Island). These places represent the precious seagrass meadows, rocky reefs, coral gardens and sandy shoals which are critical to the survival of our threatened wildlife such as turtles and dugongs.
- According to the EPA, loggerhead turtles, which reside in Moreton Bay, are at risk of local extinction in Queensland in the next 40 years unless drastic action is taken.
- All 6 species of Australian sea turtle, which have been found in Moreton Bay, are threatened with extinction. On average about 20 turtles drown each year by being entangled in crab pots alone in Moreton Bay. As many as 200 turtles have died in one year in Moreton Bay according to the EPA.
- In 2007 alone, 10 dugongs were found dead in Moreton Bay Marine Park. Being hit by speeding boats is believed to be the greatest killer of dugongs in Moreton Bay.
- Dugong populations along the urban coast of Queensland are at 3 percent of their size from the 1960's according to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Researchers have identified that the Queensland's urban dugong population can only sustain less than 10 deaths per year along the entire urban coastline (south of Cooktown to the NSW/QLD border).
- One of the major impediments to securing protection in Moreton Bay has been fishing – gillnets, ringnets, cast nets, tunnel nets, trawl nets, handlines, crab pots, dilly traps and other fishing gear is used in Moreton Bay Marine Park. Conservationists believe Moreton Bay is literally saturated with fishing effort.
- Recent research in Moreton Bay by Dr Sue Pillans for her PhD found that mud crabs reached a much larger size and number within marine national park zones, protected from fishing, than outside these zones. This is good for the health of the mud crab population. She also found that several fish species also occurred in much higher densities in the marine national park zones than in other areas of the marine park exposed to intense fishing pressure.