

Wetlands of the Great Barrier Reef catchments

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- The Queensland Government is committed to protecting the 15,000 square kilometres of wetlands in the catchments of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR).
- Wetlands are part of the broader landscape and connect catchments to the Reef.
- Wise management of wetlands is vital for protecting the world recognised values of the Great Barrier Reef.
- As many wetlands are located on private property, working in partnership with landowners to achieve the best outcomes for everyone and the environment is a priority.



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Water quality

- Wetlands help improve water quality by transforming and retaining pollutants such as nutrients, sediments, pesticides and herbicides.
- Wetlands help capture the first flush of pollutants after heavy rain.
- Wetlands slow the flow of water, reducing soil erosion and the sediment load flowing out to the reef.
- Both natural and constructed wetlands have a part to play in water quality improvement.
- Wetlands are only part of the water quality solution for the GBR which includes best management practices for farms, towns and other areas.

Wetland values

- Wetlands are highly productive ecosystems providing habitat for many species.
- The habitat and resources provided by wetlands are an important part of the food chain for many species including fish, birds and frogs.
- Wetlands provide pathways for the movement of fish and other aquatic species.
- Many wetlands have cultural values for Indigenous people for food, medicine, cultural activities and as story places.
- Important water resources for drinking, crop irrigation, watering stock and aquaculture are provided by wetlands.
- Wetlands can provide a buffer to extreme weather events such as storms, cyclones, and extreme high tides.
- Rising seas and carbon dioxide levels, and other climate change impacts can also be buffered by wetlands.
- The impacts of flooding can be reduced by wetlands.
- Wetlands have tourism and recreational values like fishing, boating and bird-watching.



Wetlands are more than wet lands

- Wetlands show evidence of adaptation of soils, animals or vegetation to periodic waterlogging. Not all wetlands however, are wet all the time, some can dry out completely.
- Swamps, marshes, rivers, billabongs, lakes, mudflats, mangroves, coral reefs, farm dams and groundwater systems can be wetlands. Farm drains and sediment traps can also be an important part of wetland areas.
- Threats to wetlands include weeds and feral animals, land development, drainage and excessive water extraction, nutrients, pesticides and sediments, uncontrolled fire, and climate change.
- A changing climate can impact wetlands by altering wetting and drying cycles, increasing fire frequency and intensity, and causing rising sea levels that lead to loss of freshwater wetlands.