

# Update of the Wetlands in the Great Barrier Reef Catchments Management Strategy

The [Wetlands in the Great Barrier Reef Catchments Management Strategy 2016-2021](#) (Reef Wetlands Strategy) was developed to support the [Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan](#) (Reef 2050 Plan) and the [Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan 2017-2022](#).

The Reef Wetlands Strategy provided a framework for wetland management in the Great Barrier Reef (Reef) catchments. It identified goals, objectives, and activities to guide wetland management that improved the health of the Reef and achieved positive conservation and agriculture outcomes.

The Reef Wetlands Strategy also supported other strategies and commitments, including:

- international biodiversity, wetland and waterbird agreements (e.g., [Convention on Biological Diversity](#), [Ramsar convention](#), [Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement](#), [China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement](#), [Republic of Korea-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement](#))
- [Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019 – 2030](#) (Australia's National Biodiversity Strategy)
- Queensland State strategies and programs, including [Queensland Reef Water Quality Program](#) and the [Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy 2017–2030](#).

An updated Reef 2050 Plan was released in December 2021, which focuses on ensuring that the plan continues to identify key threats and actions to support the health and resilience of the Reef.

The updated Reef 2050 Plan recognises the importance of the Reef Wetlands Strategy and contains an action to review, update and continue implementation of the Strategy. The Reef 2050 Plan also recognises the importance of a whole-of-catchment approach to manage wetlands and improve water quality.

Over the five-year implementation of the Reef Wetlands Strategy, knowledge of wetland importance and management has grown. An evaluation of the Strategy, informed by its users and other stakeholder groups, has shown that over 60 organisations are delivering relevant wetland activities and using it to inform the development of their own strategies and work programs, including Natural Resource Management plans.

The evaluation of the Reef Wetlands Strategy also confirmed it was an effective and useable document with a clear structure and appropriate themes, goals, objectives and activities, and supported the development of an updated Strategy.

In response to findings of the evaluation and the commitments outlined in the Reef 2050 Plan, the Department of Environment and Science is developing an updated Reef Wetlands Strategy. The project commenced in April 2022.

Stakeholder advice already received will guide the updated Strategy's development, including:

- maintaining a similar format, structure and level of information and largely retaining the existing themes
- clearly articulating the role of wetlands in water quality management
- retaining and building on a whole-of-systems, values-based approach to wetland management
- becoming a more “humanised” document that resonates with stakeholders and is user friendly
- having more focus on stakeholder engagement, and
- embedding climate change throughout the Reef Wetlands Strategy.

Stakeholders within Reef catchments will continue to be involved in the updated Strategy's development and implementation. This includes working with Reef Traditional Owners to ensure the updated Strategy reflects the cultural values and opportunities for partnerships with First Nations Peoples and Custodians of the lands. Their knowledge of issues impacting wetlands and experience in wetland management will contribute to an improved Reef Wetlands Strategy that will benefit the health of wetlands, the Reef and the Queensland economy.

There are a number of Australian and Queensland government funding programs that contribute to implementation of the Strategy. Development of the updated Strategy will seek opportunities to leverage additional and new investment opportunities in the future.

