

Proposed Fish Habitat Area (FHA) Revocation – Bassett Basin

February 2025

FACT SHEET

Overview

The proposed alignment for the future Mackay Port Access (MPA) runs parallel to the existing Queensland Rail Harbour Rail Line corridor, commencing at the Bruce Highway, Glenella and continuing east to the Mackay Port.

The proposed alignment passes through the Bassett Basin, which is an area containing significant environmental, cultural and heritage values.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) is committed to minimising and mitigating environmental and cultural heritage impacts resulting from the project's delivery.

The future MPA will provide a range of economic, social and transport efficiency benefits to the Mackay/Whitsunday region.

The MPA project is aimed at providing a direct link for freight movements from the Mackay Port to the Mackay Ring Road, and west to the Bowen Basin coal fields.

Photo: Vines Creek estuary within the Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area





Cultural Significance

The Bassett Basin is located within Yuwi Country. Cultural heritage and environmental surveys with Yuwi representatives have been undertaken and continue to occur to improve knowledge of the basin's cultural significance. Land within the basin has a range of traditional resources present such as clams, mud crabs and a wide variety of fish species.



Declared Fish Habitat Areas

The Bassett Basin forms part of Queensland's network of declared Fish Habitat Area's (FHA). There are currently 72 declared FHAs in this network, protecting approximately 1.2 million hectares of estuarine and inshore fish habitats along the Queensland coast from development related impacts.

FHAs are declared and managed under the *Fisheries Act 1994* and are a key component of the state's overall strategy for sustaining fish stocks and maintaining productive recreational, commercial and traditional fisheries.

The FHA management allows for, and encourages, continued community use and enjoyment of these declared areas, including legal fishing and boating. A FHA can be declared as either a management A or management B area. Management A areas are more restrictive and generally prohibit private or public development works. Management B areas are less restrictive and allow for the approval of some forms of low impact development. Management B areas are declared in locations where existing or planned uses require a greater level of management flexibility. More information about declared FHAs is available via the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) Parks and Forests webpage: <https://parks.desi.qld.gov.au/management/managed-areas/fha>



Bassett Basin FHA

The Bassett Basin encompasses a large estuarine complex situated within North Mackay, along the northern bank of the Pioneer River, opposite Mackay City. The area was declared as a management B FHA, on 13 April 1995. In 1999 the boundary of the FHA was adjusted to revoke a 6.5-hectare area for the construction of the Joint Levee Road. This partial revocation was offset by the inclusion of an additional 22 hectares of high-quality habitat to the FHA.



Photo: Salt Couch replanting trial



Photo: Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area



Photo: Estuarine vegetation within the Fish Habitat Area

The Bassett Basin is dominated by mangrove communities and intertidal mud flats, with areas of saltmarsh and melaleuca wetlands. The waterways and flats within the FHA directly support recreational fishing for species such as whiting, bream, flathead and bait species. While most of the commercial fishing in the local area is conducted outside the declared FHA (targeting species such as mullet) within the main Pioneer River estuary, the habitats and ecological processes within the FHA are critical to supporting the lifecycle of those commercially targeted species.

TMR has undertaken extensive field studies to map regional ecosystems, essential habitat areas, water mouse suitable habitat, and watercourse and drainage features. Geotechnical investigations to sample and test underlying soil and geological features have been undertaken as well as the installation of automatic and manual tide gauges to monitor tide influence and seasonal patterns. In collaboration with Pioneer Catchment Landcare, a salt couch pilot study was undertaken in the Bassett Basin to identify best practice methodology for salt couch rehabilitation.



Revocation Proposal

TMR is proposing to revoke approximately 20 hectares from the 650-hectare declared Bassett Basin FHA. The proposed revocation area is a linear corridor that runs parallel and immediately adjacent to the existing Queensland Rail Harbour Rail Line corridor, then deviates away to run parallel and immediately adjacent the disused Bayersville Landfill site to Harbour Road.

Similar to the previous revocation process conducted in 1999, TMR is proposing to mitigate potential impacts to the FHA from the revocation of this area, through the addition of quality, connected areas of fish habitat to the FHA. TMR is proposing to add eight additional areas, totalling 42.5 hectares, to the FHA. The addition of these areas would result in an overall increase of 22.5 hectares to the area of the Bassett Basin. The additional areas will be of a suitable ecological value for the fish communities and broader ecological habitat.

A greater appreciation of the locations for the proposed revocation area and additional sites can be obtained by examining the [FHA Proposal Map](#).



Photo: Cast netting in Vines Creek



Revocation Assessment Study

Environmental and cultural heritage studies have been completed for both the proposed revocation area and the areas proposed to be added to the FHA. The findings from these studies highlight that the proposed revocation area contains vegetation communities dominated by mangroves and saltmarsh of good condition, with a low abundance and diversity of macroinvertebrate communities. Due to the location bordering existing rail and landfill, the area does not have significant fishing value and has not been identified as a fishing 'hotspot'.

The environmental values and fish habitat quality of the eight areas proposed for addition to the FHA have been assessed to contain suitable and valuable fish habitats. Incorporating these areas as declared FHA will safeguard the valuable habitat areas from future development and ensure continued enjoyment for community use.

The abovementioned environmental studies, along with the outcomes of this community consultation process and other project design and justification details, will be included in a Revocation Assessment Study which will be submitted to DETSI for assessment. The Revocation Assessment Study will be a key document that informs the final decision regarding the proposed FHA revocation.



Highlights

Declared FHAs protect key fish habitats from the impacts of coastal development to sustain existing and future fish stocks and allow continued community use and enjoyment.



Have your say!

TMR welcomes all comments from interested individuals and organisations regarding its FHA revocation and addition proposal. To have your say visit: **<https://www.yoursay-projects.tmr.qld.gov.au/mackay-port-access-FHAp Proposal>**

Alternatively, you can provide feedback by phoning or emailing the project team via the contact details below.

Contact us

To find out more about the proposal and provide feedback:

Email: mpaenvironment@tmr.qld.gov.au

Visit: <https://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/projects/mackay-port-access-bruce-highway-to-mackay-slade-point-road-stage-1>

Phone: (07) 4951 8555 (Monday – Friday)

Mail: Department of Transport
and Main Roads,
PO Box 62,
Mackay QLD, 4740.

**Contact us for available
alternate accessible formats.**

Phone: (07) 3066 7204 **or Email:**
Comm_Services_External@tmr.qld.gov.au

13 QGOV (13 74 68)

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