

James Cook University

Code of Conduct

James Cook University Code of Conduct for Activities within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Queensland Marine Parks

This set of guidelines describes the best environmental practices James Cook University wishes to uphold whilst planning, conducting and reporting all university related activities within the Marine Park. As part of our commitment to improving the protection of our environment, James Cook University will ensure that all researchers are familiar with this code and follow it. It shall be reviewed on an annual basis to enhance its effectiveness.

(Much of this information is taken from GBRMPA and DEH best practices. Where the code of conduct differs from local laws and guidelines, the more prohibitive rule applies).

Mission Statement

James Cook University is committed to the protection and promotion of a safe and clean environment. It is proactive in improving the sustainable use of our unique natural resources and maintenance of biological diversity.

Permits & Planning

Prior to the commencement of any research activity in the Marine Park, JCU researchers must either;

- 1) gain a 'letter of authorisation' from JCU (delegated to the relevant Head of School) if their research falls under 'limited impact' (extractive) or 'limited impact' (non extractive) research (as defined in the GBRMPA Regulations 1983, see regulations 19 and 20); or
- 2) gain permission from relevant authorities (eg GBRMPA, Department of Primary Industries) for all other research.

- All researchers must agree to abide by the relevant laws, regulations and to conduct themselves using the best known practices (see GBRMPA website)
- Relevant local authorities (Rangers, Research Station Staff, Coast Guard) should be informed of any activity prior to commencement
- All activities should be planned in such a way to minimise or eliminate negative impacts to the environment and the local community within the Marine Park.
- Risk assessments of projects must be completed and followed to ensure safe practices are upheld at all times.
- Any research involving the handling of animals must have approval from the ethics committee.

Access to areas for limited impact research (extractive)

Subject to requirements of the research design and logistic considerations, research that involves collection or manipulation of the environment may only take place in the following Marine Park zones (map colours indicated in brackets):

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- General Use Zone (light blue)
- Habitat Protection Zone (dark blue)
- Conservation Park Zone (yellow)
- Scientific Research Zone (orange, or dark green with orange outline)

NOTE: Limited impact research may be conducted in these zones without a permit by accredited researchers but researchers must carry a Letter of Authorisation from James Cook University. Limited Impact research (non-extractive) may occur in all of the above mentioned zones including Buffer Zones and Marine National Park Zones (Green Zones). Any research that does not constitute limited impact research will require a permit in all zones.

Behaviour within the Marine Park

As a representative of the James Cook University researchers are required to conduct themselves in a manner that responsibly and ethically upholds the University's commitment to protection and improving the environment and community.

Communication

- Authorisation letters must be carried at all times when conducting activities in the Marine Park
- Any equipment remaining in the field must be marked with the Permittees name, institution and research project duration or, in the event that this information cannot be placed on the equipment, the researcher must record a dGPS or GPS location for the equipment. The GPS location should be lodged with the Director – Environmental Impact Management, at GBRMPA, on placement of the apparatus.
- If any queries are raised about an activity within the Marine Park, they should be answered courteously with as much information as possible
- If any objections are raised and the researchers do not have evidence of permission to be performing the activity, the activity must be ceased immediately
- When undertaking research in any part of a Scientific Research Zone in the GBRMP in the vicinity of the locations listed below, the researcher must discuss study sites with the appropriate person (as specified), and comply with any approved Environmental Management Plan for conducting research in that area:

LOCATION

- Day Reef SR-14-2001
- Yonge Reef SR-14-2002
- MacGillivray Reef SR-14-2003
- Lizard Island Reef SR-14-2004

APPROPRIATE PERSON

Co-Directors, Lizard Island Research Station
Co-Directors, Lizard Island Research Station
Co-Directors, Lizard Island Research Station
Co-Directors, Lizard Island Research Station

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- North Direction Reef SR-14-2005 Co-Directors, Lizard Island Research Station
- Green Island Reef SR-16-2006 Manager, Monkman Research Station
- Orpheus Island north SR-18-2007 Manager, Orpheus Island Research Station
- AIMS SR-19-2008 Director, Australian Institute of Marine Science
- Heron Island Reef east SR-23-2009 Station Manager, Heron Island Research Station
- One Tree Island Reef SR-23-2010 Station Manager, One Tree Island Research Station

Boating

- Always use moorings where possible
- All vessels used in connection with the research must be clearly marked "Research Vessel" while being used for those activities in the Marine Park.
- When anchoring away from moorings ensure the appropriate type of anchor and length of rope and chain are used.
- Anchor on sand and mud.
- Stay alert for dugong in shallow inshore areas especially over seagrass beds. Refer to 'Dugong Watching'
- Be extremely careful in the Whitsundays from June to October to avoid disturbing humpback whale mother/calf pairs. Refer to 'Whale Watching'
- Stay alert for sea turtles especially during September and October when mating behaviour brings them closer to the surface. Refer to 'Turtle Watching'
- Go slow near any islands and cays where seabirds are nesting or roosting. Be aware of any boating restrictions. Refer to 'Bird Watching'.
- Use care when approaching shorelines, beaches and reef edges. Proceed slowly and choose carefully where to come ashore or leave your vessel/tender.
- Take care when transferring fuel to minimise the risk of fuel and oil spillages. Where possible, refuel onshore or in port instead of at sea.

Fishing

To ensure fish stocks are protected and remain sustainable the following practices are to be observed.

- Abide by Zoning Plans and size and bag limits, seasonal and area closures and tackle restrictions
- All fishing apparatus and equipment to be used for limited impact research should be authorised under Queensland fisheries legislation for recreational use. Any gear that does not adhere to this requires a permit.
- Return unwanted fish carefully and quickly to the water
- Do not throw away fishing line as it can kill marine animals
- Do not fish in areas where fish are gathering to spawn

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- Report observed fish kills (mass fish deaths) and illegal fishing incidents to GBRMPA

Snorkelling & Diving

Sufficient experience, training and knowledge should be gained before performing any activities within potentially fragile marine environments.

- Inexperienced divers and snorkellers must first practice away from corals and sensitive areas
- Take care to avoid touching coral or stirring up sediment near coral.
- Do not harass, prod, chase, ride or block the path of any marine organisms
- Use appropriate equipment which should be secured so it cannot drag on corals or damage organisms.

Reef Walking

- Care must be taken when walking on the reef not to step on living organisms
- Stick to marked trails or sand channels as much as possible, avoid straying and always wear shoes
- Observe animals rather than handle them. Some animals are dangerous
- Always return any organisms or disturbed coral boulders to the original position they were found in
- Do not pick up anything attached to the reef flat

Spear fishing as Part of a Research Program

- Spear fishing for the purposes of limited impact research (not using a powerhead, firearm or light or underwater breathing apparatus) is allowed in the General Use Zone, Habitat Protection Zone and Conservation Park Zone.
- You must not spearfish in Public Appreciation Special Management Areas of the Conservation Park Zone (yellow zone with a pink dotted line around it) unless you have an endorsement on your authorisation letter. This may only be allowed by the delegate of James Cook University (in the form of an endorsement on the Authorisation letter) provided that it can be demonstrated to James Cook University that:
 - (a) the research is relevant to, and a priority for, the management of the Marine Park; or
 - (b) the research cannot reasonably be conducted elsewhere. This means that the research:
 - is in proximity to research stations (e.g. within a 20km radius or the distance a small vessel can travel); or
 - is part of a long-term ongoing monitoring program for which permission had been granted prior to 1 July 2004.

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Netting as Part of a Research Program

Fence nets, seine nets and/or barrier nets may be used as a collection method for limited impact research in accordance with the regulations.

- Nets must be attended at all times by the researcher.
- All fishing apparatus and equipment to be used for limited impact research should be authorised under Queensland fisheries legislation for recreational use. Any gear that does not adhere to this requires a permit.
- All undersized or non-target specimens caught in nets should be retrieved from the net with care so as to minimise damage to the organism, and be returned to the water carefully and quickly.
- Nets should only be deployed on bare reef rock and/or sand areas so as to minimise disturbance to benthic fauna and flora.
- Nets deployed in the Marine Park should not pose a risk to navigation and other users of the Marine Park.

Tagging Fish as Part of a Research Program

Manipulation of reef fish has the possibility of increasing stress to the animal and may affect their survivorship. However, the standard methods of tagging have been widely used and are likely to have minimal impact on the survivorship of study species.

- Only animals species mentioned in the limited impact research collection tables (Table 19-1 and 19-2) in the GBRMP Regulations may be manipulated using fish tagging devices. If you need to manipulate more than what is listed in the tables or a species which is not listed you will require a permit.
- The size of fish tags to be used should complement the size of the fish that is being tagged to avoid any undue stress on the fish from an oversized tag.
- The use of fluorescent elastomer (rubber) tattoos is common and should be injected just under the skin of fish via a small syringe and are usually 2-5 mm long and 0.5 mm wide.
- Manipulation of fish is viewed as collection and as such the numbers recommended for collection of reef fish also apply with tagging.
- Survival of non-target reef fish caught on line is usually improved if the researcher uses barb-less hooks.

Float and Buoy Use under a Research Program

Floats and buoys may be used for limited impact research in accordance with the regulations and are limited by the number at each location.

- Marker buoys should be secure.
- It is recommended that buoys are sub-surface where possible and that GPS are used to mark their location.
- The researcher should ensure that marker buoys do not pose a risk to navigation or other users of the Marine Park (e.g. Marker buoys should not be deployed in vessel traffic areas).

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Collection of Sediment and Water Samples as Part of a Research Program

A quantified amount of sediment and water may be collected as part of limited impact research in accordance with the regulations.

- Sediment sampling devices should be deployed or used in areas that have least impact on benthic flora and fauna.
- All non-target organisms and by-catch should be returned alive to their place of capture immediately.

Collection & Containment

- Researchers must abide by limits for collecting as per their permit or as specified in Zoning Plans, limited collecting tables (see Appendix) and other local guidelines and restrictions.
- Collection is not allowed in some zones (see GBRMPA zoning plans)
- All collection and subsequent containment of organisms must be performed responsibly and ethically.
- Return all organisms carefully to the location they were collected from.
- Any organisms that are not being returned must be killed swiftly and with minimum stress
- Sharing of organisms is encouraged to avoid unnecessary exploitation of common resources.
- Limit collection to only that which is needed for the activity
- Handling some animals may be dangerous
- A list of all samples collected when working from OIRS must be submitted on a collection form with the permit number clearly marked, following each field trip.

Note: Manipulating or picking up and replacing any plant, animal or marine product is considered collection under GBRMPA Regulations 1983. As such, any limit on the collection of specimens also applies to the manipulation or organisms. For example, if you pick up and put down one echinoderm, this counts as one specimen collected under your permit and the limited impact (extractive) collection limits.

Island Visits

- No feeding of wildlife
- No litter or graffiti
- No introduced plants or animals
- No fires
- No camping without permits
- No interference with cultural or natural resources
- No damaging of vegetation or dune habitats, use existing tracks
- No excessive noise
- Do not disturb nesting birds or turtles

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Field Equipment

- Within 30 days of conducting the research project in the Marine Park, all equipment and material used in connection with the project must be removed from the Marine Park (with the exception of longer term projects where permission has been given eg. data loggers). If for any unforeseen circumstances the researcher and/or Institution may not be able to remove the research equipment and material, the GBRMPA must be notified, in writing, within the 30 day period providing reasons for the delay and providing a timetable for the removal of the equipment and material.
- All equipment should be designed so as not to pollute the environment in any way (ie. Use stainless steel instead of steel which will rust).
- Equipment left in the field should not be obtrusive or a safety hazard

Whale& Dolphin Watching

Whales and dolphins are protected and must not be killed, taken, injured or interfered with in anyway. Follow Department of Environment and Heritage Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin watching (Appendix 1).

Turtle Watching

Turtles are protected under Australian Law. Any disturbance of them is an illegal act. Please follow Department of Environment and Heritage Guidelines when observing them (Appendix 2).

Bird Watching

Many areas in Marine Parks contain critical nesting sites for seabirds. Disturbing birds can result in high mortality of chicks and eggs as stressed birds often leave nests unprotected. Please follow Department of Environment and Heritage Guidelines when observing them (Appendix 3).

Monitoring and Reporting

- Please report any illegal or disturbing activity observed within Marine Parks to the appropriate authorities
- Any activity conducted in the Marine Parks must be carefully monitored to ensure negative impacts on the environment are kept to a minimum. If excessive damage is observed, the activity must cease immediately and be reassessed.
- Specimen records and site registration are required to be completed within two weeks after returning and forwarded to Executive Officer, Research Office, JCU.
- Failure to follow this Code of Conduct may result in severe penalties and fines

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Appendices

Whale watching guidelines
Turtle watching guidelines
Seabird observation and protection guidelines
List of Appropriate web sites and authorities
JCU Diving and Boating Regulations

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Letter of Authorisation

The bearer of this letter has permission to conduct limited impact research (extractive and non extractive) within the Marine Park and has understood and agrees to abide by the James Cook University code of conduct.

(The letter must have the letterhead of the University and Names and signatures of the user, supervisor and relevant James Cook University authority, project details including specimens to be collected or manipulated and the locations where the research will take place.

NOTE: if any Public Appreciation Special Management Areas are to be entered for limited spear fishing then they should be specifically listed and endorsed on this letter).