



Cape York region

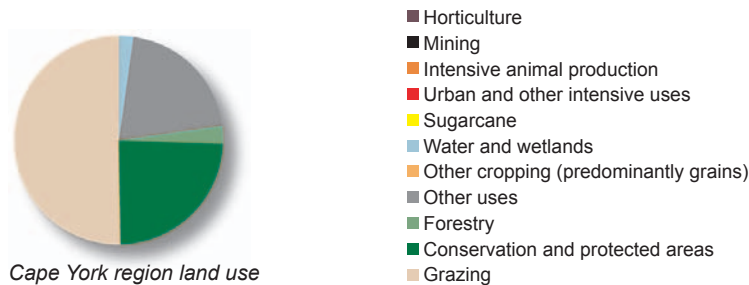
First Report Card 2009 Baseline
Reef Water Quality Protection Plan

Regional profile

The Cape York region includes 43,000 square kilometres of catchments that drain eastwards into the Great Barrier Reef. The region contains some exceptional conservation assets, including relatively intact and extensive coastal dune-fields, wetlands, rainforest, heathlands and river systems that support high levels of biodiversity found nowhere else in Australia. This region has a larger area of coral reefs than any other region and these are considered to be in good condition. A sizeable proportion of land in Cape York is under Aboriginal ownership or management. Traditional use of marine resources is very high, particularly in inshore areas adjacent to Indigenous communities.

Major catchments of the region include Jacky Jacky Creek, the Olive Pascoe, Lockhart, Stewart, Normanby, Jeannie and Endeavour Rivers.

This report card presents results up to 2009 and therefore does not include the effects of Cyclone Yasi and the more recent flood events which will be presented in subsequent reports.

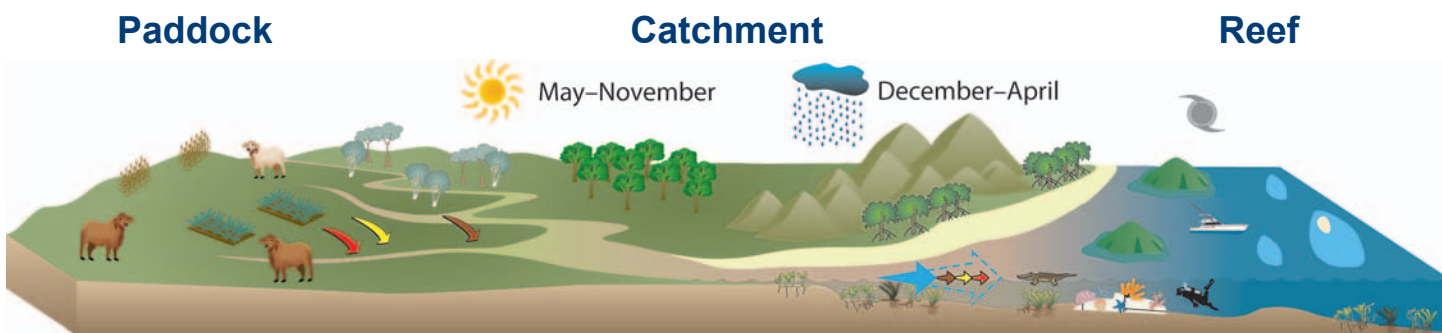


Key findings

- Cutting-edge or best management practices are used by 53 per cent of horticultural producers for nutrients, 89 per cent for herbicides and 76 per cent for soil.
- Wetlands are 100 per cent intact relative to pre-European times.



Map of the eastern catchments of Cape York and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park showing the catchment and marine monitoring sites.



The Cape York region has occasional cyclones and summer-dominated rainfall that delivers sediments, nutrients and pesticides to the inshore and sometimes offshore portions of the reef in pulsed flows. There is extensive grazing year-round, with some horticulture and other cropping. A large proportion of the land is used for conservation purposes, e.g., national parks. The outer reef is located very close to the shoreline and there are many continental islands and coral cays. Habitats include fringing and offshore reefs, intertidal, subtidal and deep-water seagrass and mangroves. Reef-based tourism, as well as commercial and recreational fishing, are an important part of the regional economy.

© The State of Queensland 2011. Published by the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan Secretariat, August 2011. Copyright protects this publication. Excerpts may be reproduced with acknowledgement to the State of Queensland. Photos: Cape York Sustainable Futures.

www.reefplan.qld.gov.au



Australian Government



Land practice results

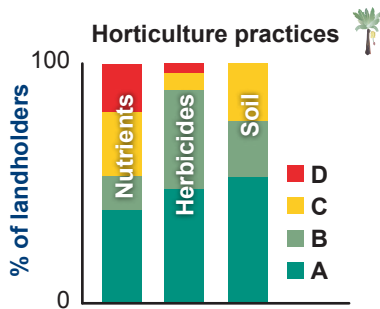
The adoption of improved management practices is presented using the following framework:

A – Cutting-edge practices

B – Best practices

C – Common practices

D – Unacceptable practices



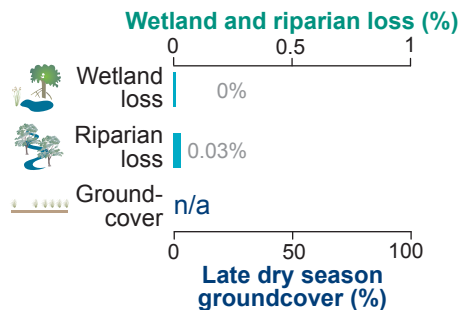
Cutting-edge (A) or best management (B) practices are used by 53 per cent of horticulture producers for nutrients, 89 per cent for herbicides and 76 per cent for soil.

Management practice adoption data for grazing (the predominant agricultural industry) is not available at this time.



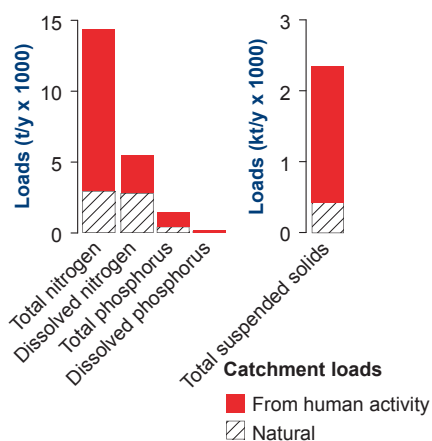
Catchment results

Catchment indicators include wetland and riparian loss, groundcover and catchment loads.



There was no loss of wetlands between 2001 and 2005. The loss of riparian vegetation between 2004 and 2008 was 199 hectares (0.03 per cent). Data for late dry season groundcover is not available for the Cape York region.

Catchment loads



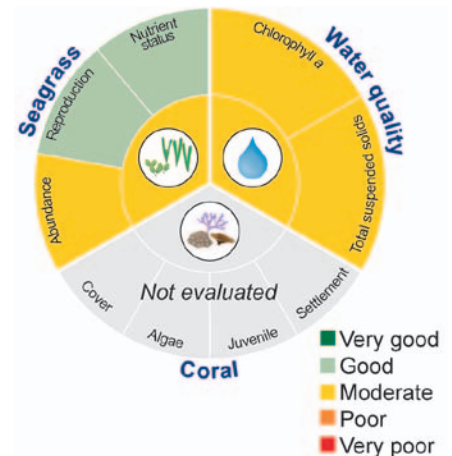
The estimated total nitrogen loads leaving the Cape York region are 14,000 tonnes per year, of which 11,000 tonnes are from human activity. A large proportion of this is in the form of particulate nitrogen with 8900 tonnes per year.

The pesticide loads are not estimated for the region due to a lack of adequate monitoring and modelling data.

Confidence in baseline load estimates differs across regions due to varying levels of data comprehensiveness. The estimates for the Cape York region are based solely on modelling with limited water quality monitoring data; therefore, confidence in this region's baseline load estimates is low.

Marine results

Marine results are moderate for water quality and moderate to good for seagrass. Further validation of remotely sensed water quality data for the Cape York region is required to verify this assessment. Coral was not evaluated in this region.



Water quality: Although water quality data has been used to derive the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Water Quality Guidelines, there are no ongoing water quality monitoring sites in this region. Water quality results are moderate for both chlorophyll a and total suspended solids.

Seagrass: At the one station monitored in the region, seagrass reproduction and nutrient status are good. However, the moderate abundance score resulted in overall moderate condition.

Coral: The Marine Monitoring Program does not conduct coral monitoring in the region.

What is being done?

Cape York Sustainable Futures is working with producers in the grazing and horticultural industries to implement management practices which improve the water quality of agricultural runoff. To complement this, a study is also being done to identify the main sources and sinks of sediment within the Laura/Normanby catchment.