

Stewart catchment water quality targets

Catchment profile

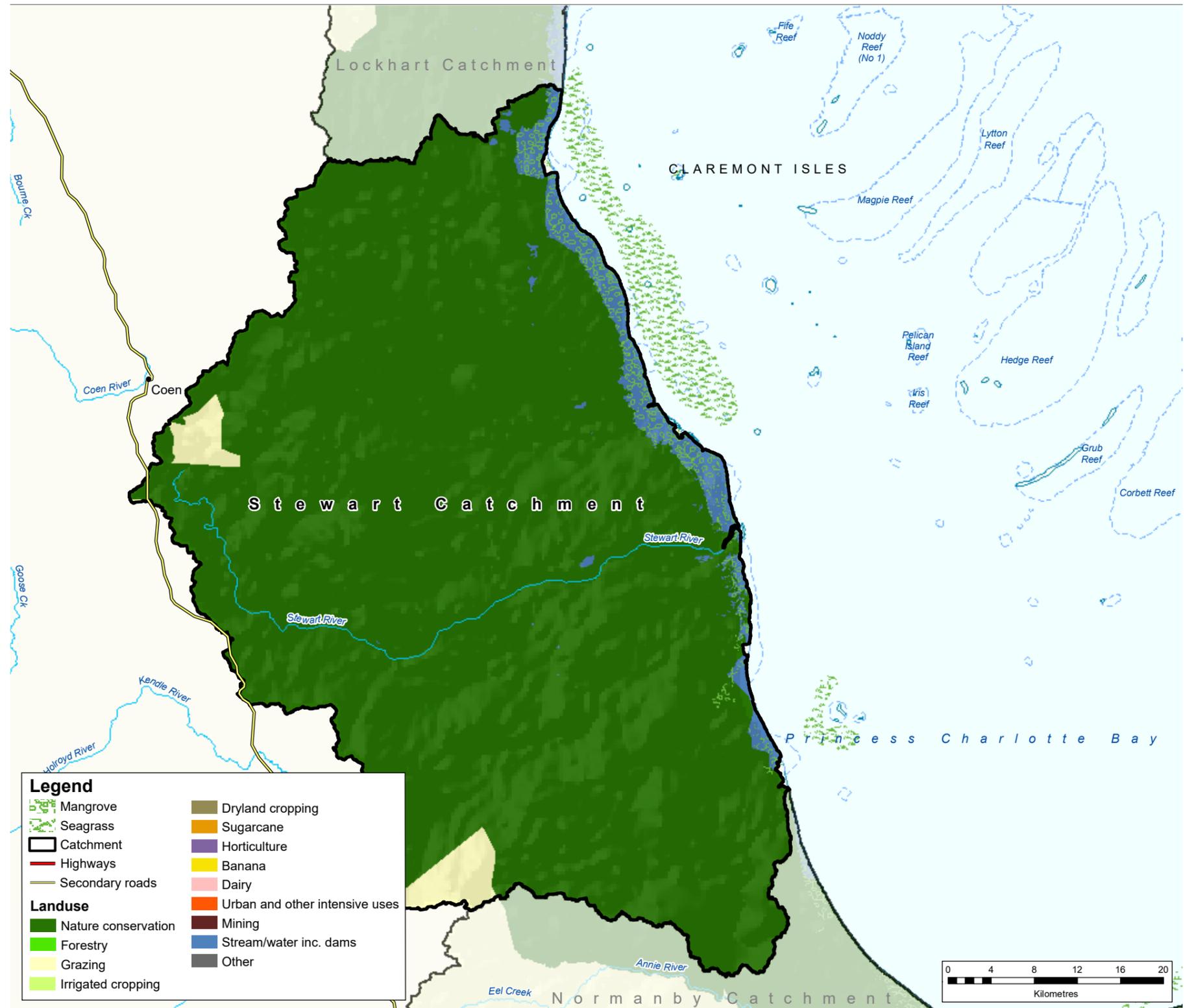
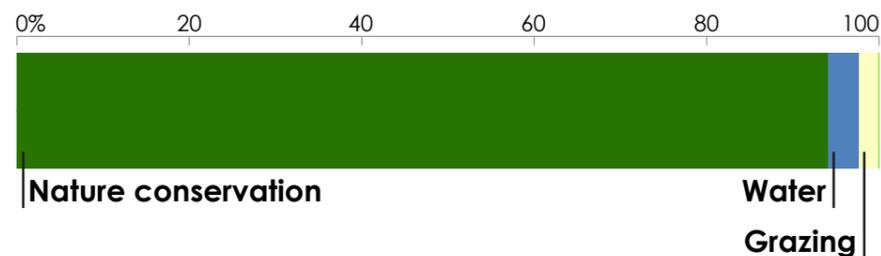
Under the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan, water quality targets have been set for each catchment that drains to the Great Barrier Reef. These targets (given over the page) consider land use and pollutant loads from each catchment.

The Stewart catchment covers 2743 km² (6% of the Cape York region). Rainfall averages 1216 mm a year, which results in river discharges to the coast of about 1162 GL each year.

The Stewart catchment lies in the central section of the Cape York region. The main waterway, the Stewart River, and a number of sub-catchments, Rocky River, Massey River and Breakfast Creek, begin their descent eastwards to the sea from the rainforests of the McIlwraith Range. These sub-catchments capture the waters draining from the central and north region of the Stewart catchment, before discharging to estuaries bordering the coast of the Coral Sea. The Balclutha and Running Creek sub-catchments capture the southern section. The majority of the Stewart catchment is reserved for nature and cultural conservation, with a very small proportion being for agricultural land use.

Land uses in the Stewart catchment

The main land uses are nature conservation (94%), water (4%), and grazing (2%).



2025 water quality targets and priorities

End-of-catchment anthropogenic load reductions required from 2013 baseline

Dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN)	Fine sediment	Particulate phosphorus (PP)	Particulate nitrogen (PN)
maintain current load	6% 2 kilotonnes	6% 2 tonnes	6% 7 tonnes

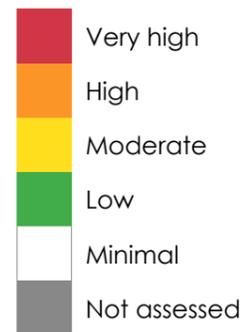
The 2025 targets aim to reduce the amounts of fine sediments, nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) and pesticides flowing to the reef. Where there are minimal anthropogenic pollutant loads, the aim is to maintain current water quality so there are no increases in loads. Each target for sediment and nutrients is expressed as: (a) the percentage load reduction required compared with the 2013 estimated load of each pollutant from the catchment; and (b) the load reductions required in tonnes. Progress made since 2013 will count towards these targets. [Previously reported](#) progress between 2009 and 2013 has already been accounted for when setting the targets. The pesticide target aims to ensure that concentrations of pesticides at the end of each catchment are low enough that 99% of aquatic species are protected. The targets are ecologically relevant for the Great Barrier Reef, and are necessary to ensure that broadscale land uses have no detrimental effect on the reef's health and resilience.

A high percentage reduction target may not necessarily mean it is the highest priority. The priorities (ranked by colour) reflect the relative risk assessment priorities for water quality improvement, based on an independent report, the [2017 Scientific Consensus Statement](#). The priorities reflect scientific assessment of the likely risks of pollutants damaging coastal and marine ecosystems.

Pesticides

To protect at least **99%** of aquatic species at the end of catchment

Water quality relative priority



Modelled water quality pollutant loads

The Stewart catchment has minimal anthropogenic dissolved inorganic nitrogen loads and very small loads of fine sediment.

Fine sediment



Most anthropogenic fine sediment loads come from streambank erosion and grazing areas.

Types of sediment erosion



Most sediment erosion comes from hillslopes and streambanks in the Stewart catchment.



Australian Government



Queensland Government