

Tablelands Regional
Council

REEF GUARDIAN COUNCIL ACTION PLAN


Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority



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Reef Guardian Council program

The Reef Guardian Council program (RGC program) is a collaborative stewardship arrangement between local government in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) catchment and the Authority, which recognises that local and regional approaches are central to protecting and managing the Reef and the communities it supports.

The RGC program was first launched in 2007 and in 2020 has grown to include 18 member councils covering an area of 300 000 square kilometres and a population of more than one million people.

Whether Reef Guardian Councils and their communities are large or small, they are making continuous improvements to help the Reef.

Action plans

This Action Plan records the diversity of council actions and projects that contribute to Reef health. It aligns with Queensland and Australian Government objectives to improve the long-term outlook for the Reef.

Actions are scalable reflecting each council's financial and technical capacities. To be a member, councils with a population of less than 50,000 residents must commit to at least one action for each item (climate change, coastal development, land-based run-off, direct use, heritage values), while councils with greater than 50,000 residents must commit to at least three actions per item. Examples of actions are provided in Table 1 of the Reef Guardian Council program Terms of Reference, however the program empowers councils to drive change and deliver innovative solutions to help the Reef by identifying other actions beyond those provided.

Endorsement

The council recognises the importance of the Reef Guardian partnership and values the contributions made by staff and the community 'working together today for a healthier Reef tomorrow'.

Period of Action Plan: **2024-2028**

Endorsed: **XX/XX/2024**



Climate change

Action	Description	Financial/ Resource Commitment	Partnerships	Responsible department	Project Status
Implement Climate Risk Management Strategy actions	The Climate Risk Management Strategy identifies adaptation and mitigation actions which should be implemented subject to funding	Internal and external funding	Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), Department of Environment and Science (DES)	Infrastructure and Environment	Commenced
Implement Climate Resilient Alliance actions	The Climate Resilient Councils Action Plan identifies adaptation and mitigation actions which should be implemented subject to funding	Internal and external funding	Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC), LGAQ, DES	Infrastructure and Environment	Commenced
FNQROC Natural Assets Stewardship Accord 2019-2024.	The Accord's key principle requires that 'Councils have the operational and institutional capacity to work with our communities to manage our natural assets sustainability' and requires Councils to 'deliver a net gain in habitat extent and condition in lands and reserves managed by local government.'	Costs reflected in TRC budget	FNQROC member Councils	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Natural Asset Management Advisory Committee (NAMAC)	NAMAC is an advisory committee to Council which aims to maintain ongoing formal and constructive relationships between TRC and representatives of local landholders and interests concerning natural asset management/biodiversity, regardless of tenure.	Costs reflected in TRC budget	Multiple Nature Refuges, DES, Trees for the Evelyn and South Atherton Tablelands (TREAT), Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group (TKMG), Barron Catchment Care (BCC), FNQROC, Malanda and Upper Johnstone Landcare, Queensland Parks and Wildlife (QPWS)	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Natural Asset Plan	TRC are currently developing a Natural Asset Framework. Its intent is a high-level tool which will guide the development of specific products and projects and maps out the processes, information and projects which will assist TRC and its partners to develop a Natural Asset Plan, as part of its Strategic Asset Management Plan.	Costs reflected in TRC budget	NAMAC, DES, FNQROC, QPWS, Terrain Natural Resource Management (Terrain NRM)	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing

Emerging carbon economy	Provision of advice for the emerging carbon economy (Cassowary credit methodology) based on 31 years reforestation experience through the TRC Community Revegetation Nursery.	Costs reflected in TRC budget	Terrain NRM	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Building landscape resilience to support industries through the creation of lower cost restoration techniques	Ongoing work to restore habitat for sustainable land management through the TRC Community Revegetation Nursery.	Costs reflected in TRC budget; external funding	Multiple Nature Refuges, DES, TREAT, TKMG, BCC, FNQROC, Malanda and Upper Johnstone Landcare, QPWS, Southern Atherton Tablelands Revegetation Alliance (SATRA), Griffith University	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Land restoration Fund (LRF) Permanent Tropical Reforestation with Native Conifers, Riparian and High Biodiversity Rainforest Plantings	TRC is a partner in the LRF pilot program which seeks to demonstrate how carbon farming activities can sequester or abate greenhouse gas emissions, alongside environmental, social and economic, and First Nations co-benefits. The project aims to demonstrate economically efficient and biodiverse rainforest restoration on the Atherton Tablelands in partnership with landholders using a mix of native conifers and rainforests species.	External funding	DES LRF, Native Conifer Carbon Sink Pty Ltd and local landholders.	Infrastructure and Environment	2019-2025

Land-based run-off

Action	Description	Financial/ Resource Commitment	Partnerships	Responsible department	Project Status
Wet Tropics Waterways Partnership	TRC continues to be active in the Wet Tropics Waterways Partnership. The Partnership, comprised of over 50 organisations, aims to improve the condition of freshwater and estuary waterways that flow into the GBR. An initiative of the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan, the partnership provides a means of measuring the effectiveness of land management practices across the catchment, their cumulative benefit on water quality and the prioritisation of further actions.	Internal funding	Terrain NRM	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Environmental licensing and compliance	TRC is licensed under the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1994</i> to discharge treated wastewater at an acceptable environmental standard into waterways. TRC strives to not only meet but exceed the minimum standard required by environmental licences. As an Environmentally Relevant Activity (ERA), wastewater treatment must adhere to strict permit requirements. As part of its licencing requirements, TRC conducts routine water quality monitoring above and below wastewater treatment plant discharge points and reports this information annually to the Queensland Government.	Internal funding	DES, Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA),	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Water pollution incident investigation	Responding to pollution incidents which have potential impact on water health.	Internal funding as part of TRC regulatory role	DES	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Development of a storm water drainage strategy for Tolga, Tandara, Rangeview area	Development of an overarching vision for the long-term management of stormwater and a level of service to cater for future growth, while maintaining and improving current infrastructure. The strategy aims to maximize environmental health of waterways, social amenity, pollution control and minimize impacts of climate change.	Externally funded by the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments through the Queensland Resilience and Risk Reduction Fund supplemented by internal funding	Queensland Resilience and Risk Reduction Fund	Infrastructure and Environment	Draft strategy developed

Implement Peakes Gully Drainage Strategy	Implementation of a specific strategy for the management of stormwater drainage in the Peakes Gully catchment.	Internal and external funding		Infrastructure and Environment	Commencing 2027
Atherton sewerage treatment plant upgrade	Improvement of receiving environment water quality by progressing the upgrade action plan and initiatives.	External and internal funding	DES	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Recycled water treatment monitoring	Ongoing environmental monitoring where there is re-use within the catchment to ensure land base applications meet quality guidelines.	Internal funding	DES	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Feral pig management	Reduction of environmental and economic impact of feral pigs through trapping and baiting. BCC also manages a project investigating the use of various trapping techniques and Global Positioning System technology on the Tablelands.	Internal and external funding	Various land holders, BCC	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Provision of public wash down bay and TRC slasher operator wash down facilities	A weed seed spread prevention public wash-down bay is available at Millaa Millaa. Dedicated wash-down water tanks are also established at priority sites along roadside slashing routes for TRC operators to wash down their equipment before moving on to other areas. Slashing operators from the Malanda and Ravenshoe depots also work with Land Protection Officers to schedule weed treatment in conjunction with slashing schedules.	Internal funding	Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR)	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing

Direct use

Project Name	Description	Financial/ Resource Commitment	Partnerships	Responsible department	Project Status
Identify, protect and promote important fish habitats	Ongoing contribution to planning development assessment and compliance regarding aquatic matters including research and development.	Internal funding	TropWATER, James Cook University, Biosecurity Queensland, LGAQ	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing

Environmental Heritage and Social Values

Project Name	Description	Financial/ Resource Commitment	Partnerships	Responsible department	Project Status
TRC Community Revegetation Nursery	Since 1989, more than 935,000 trees have been planted, resulting in the creation of environmentally significant wildlife corridors that link isolated remnants of vegetation. This includes the creation and enhancement of habitat for threatened animals, enhanced shade shelter belts on agricultural land and improved soil stabilisation and water quality in GBR Catchments (targeting the Barron and Johnstone systems)	Internal and external funding	Community groups, private landowners, DTMR, DES, universities, and WTMA	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Wildlife passages – multiple projects	The establishment of significant corridors of natural habitat through tree planting has created important wildlife passages in the region such as: 'Making Connections Corridor' project restoring 40ha of upland rainforest for climate refugia; Peterson Creek Wildlife Corridor linking Curtain Fig National Park (NP) to the Lake Eacham section of Crater Lakes NP; Toohey Creek Wildlife Corridor linking the Lake Barrine section of Crater Lakes NP to Gadgarra NP; Upper Johnstone River revegetation between Bromfield Swamp and Malanda Falls Conservation Park.	Internal and external funding	Community groups, private landowners, QPWS, DTMR, DES, universities, and WTMA	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
TRC Planning Scheme's Strategic Framework implementation	Positive environmental outcomes are achieved in relation to: Habitat and biodiversity—recognition and optimal management of regional, State and national values including habitat linkages and remnant vegetation: Watercourses	Internal funding	Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (DSDILGP)	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing

	and wetlands—physical condition, ecological health and environmental values of surface and ground water are protected and improved. Water resources—Barron Basin, Lake Tinaroo and Atherton Basalt aquifer are not compromised by land use or development.				
Tablelands Biosecurity Plan 2019-2024	The plan was formed by the Tablelands Pest Management Advisory Committee (TPMAC) with representatives from community groups, and local and State government, and reflects community expectations with agreed action plans for twenty plant and five animal pest species	Internal funding	Department of Resources (DOR), Biotropica, QPWS, Malanda and Upper Johnstone Landcare, DES, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, BCC, Malanda Beef Plan Group, TREAT, FNQROC	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Mabi forest management	TRC is responsible for around 40ha of Mabi Forest at Tolga Scrub and Picnic Crossing Reserve. Due to its limited distribution, vulnerability to ongoing threats, loss and decline in species and reduction in community integrity, Mabi forest is listed as critically endangered under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> and endangered under the Vegetation Management Act 1999. Two nationally vulnerable flora species plus the nationally vulnerable Spectacled Flying-fox occur here.	Internal and external funding	BCC, TREAT, TKMG, Yungaburra Land Care, Tolga Bat Rescue and Research	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Tepon-Wondecla Nature Refuge	TRC holds a conservation agreement with DES to manage Tepon-Wondecla Nature Refuge which contains endangered and of concern regional ecosystems under the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i> . An adjoining wetland on Unallocated State Land is also of significance.	Internal funding	DOR, DES	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing
Community environmental education and engagement	The TRC Land Protection Unit and Community Revegetation Nursery supplies environmental education material to schools and community groups, has environmental education stalls at regional	Internal funding	Various partners	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing

	show days and hosts volunteers including secondary and tertiary students. Information is also provided to the community via printed, broadcast and social media, and e-newsletters.				
Proactive fire management	Ongoing fire management is critical for the protection of life, property and the integrity of natural ecosystems. The Land Protection Unit contributes to the Tablelands Local Disaster Management Plan and has a five-year strategy for operational burning and wildfire mitigation in the region.	Internal funding	DOR, Rural Fire Service Queensland, QPWS, DES	Infrastructure and Environment	Ongoing

Proposed projects subject to funding

Project name	Description
Climate Risk Management Strategy (CRMS) projects, including the projects identified below	Council has adopted the TRC CRMS which contains mitigating, adaption and transition actions. These actions inform discrete projects; while some projects are well developed, others are still incipient. Projects of such nature are often not achievable without adequate funding.
Climate Resilient Alliance (CRA) projects, including the projects identified below	Council has endorsed the CRA which contains mitigating, adaption and transition actions. These actions inform discrete projects; while some projects are well developed, others are still incipient. Projects of such nature are often not achievable without adequate funding.
TRC and community/industry-led emissions reduction projects	Identify, action and promote opportunities to reduce TRC emissions across priority sources including electricity (develop energy management plan and emissions reduction strategy, purchase and install solar power infrastructure), fleet (purchase Battery Electric Vehicles and charging stations), waste (resource recovery trial – composting and biogas –community/farming/food industry partnership
Solar panels	Purchase and installation of solar panels will assist in reducing TRC greenhouse gas emissions and complement its Energy Management Plan, which is currently under development.
Battery electric vehicles and plant trial	Purchase a battery electric vehicle (BEV) to trial, develop and assess opportunities for fleet transition to zero emissions, and to promote zero emissions vehicles to the Tablelands community. Investigate, purchase and promote zero emissions plant (e.g. lawnmowers and landscaping plant, construction plant)
Charging stations	Purchase and install public BEV charging stations in strategic locations in the Tablelands, including Priors Creek precinct.
Native tree community revegetation program	Develop and promote a community native revegetation program building on the existing capacity of the Community Revegetation Nursery and in collaboration with community organisations, including e.g. conducting two tree giveaway events per year to increase awareness of the role of revegetation as a climate change mitigation action, increase native tree planting, and in turn sequester carbon through revegetation.
Community feral pig management program	This project will build on existing feral pig control activities (including the findings of the BCC project) by creating capacity for landholders to actively manage feral pigs. The project involves the purchase of remote life viewing equipment and remote triggered traps and the training of Land Protection staff and landholders in the effective use of such traps and associated feral pig management techniques.
Washdown bay enhancement project	Upgrade existing weed seed spread prevention washdown bay from handheld hose to automatic equipment. This will ensure better uptake, higher usage, better quality washdowns which in turn will reduce weed seed spread, prevent new infestations along waterways and in turn will reduce runoff and chemical usage in riparian areas.
Spray trailer	Purchase a dedicated spray trailer which will be loaned to landholders, community organisations involved in remediation and revegetation projects and which increases TRC's capacity to respond to biosecurity emergencies.

Priors Creek erosion control and water quality improvement	Carry out erosion control works, revegetation and maintenance to repair existing erosion and prevent further creek bank erosion in the Priors Creek area, which will result in improved waterway health and reduced sediment.
Soil conservation and stormwater drains improvements	Build, re-instate, maintain and de-silt soil conservation and other stormwater drains in the wider Tolga area to improve sediment control and increase stormwater quality.
Drainage improvements	Re-design drainage of Tolga Racecourse to incorporate improved sediment control and increase stormwater quality.
Detention basins	Construct, improve, maintain and de-silt detention basins in the Spring Creek, Griffin Road and Atherton Industrial Estate areas to capture sediment and increase stormwater quality
Roadside vegetation trial	Cost-benefit trial of low growing shrubs and herbaceous plants along roadsides to reduce or eliminate the need for spraying, mowing and slashing. This project will result in reduced emissions, increased carbon sequestration, better filtration of road run-off, visual amenity and decreased chemical use and weed seed spread.
Water quality- Riparian restoration	Working with and supporting landholders to revegetate banks along waterways and fence out livestock. Landholder grants for materials and plants with agreement establishing landholder's contribution (material, completing the work and maintaining planting and fences).
Water quality – Erosion control	Reduce erosion and stabilise creek beds in TRC managed areas through revegetation and bank stabilisation