



Waterways and Wetlands

Outcome 2041:

Waterways and wetlands are healthy, resilient to change and valued by the community.

Target:

Maintain and improve the ecological health of waterways and wetlands across each of the river catchments to a good or excellent grade by 2041.





Waterways and wetlands are the living arteries of our natural environment that convey or hold water in the landscape.

They form networks within river catchments bounded by landforms such as hills and ranges. Most are naturally-occurring but they also include modified and constructed channels, lakes or other bodies of water, including canals.

Waterways are the pathways that runoff follows from high areas down through a catchment. They can transition from upland gullies to flowing streams and also pass through wetland areas.

Wetlands are local freshwater or tidal areas where water spreads out or sits in the landscape. They include vegetated wetlands, open waterbodies and groundwater aquifers.

Constructed waterbodies are human-made or highly modified bodies of water. They can result from land reclamation activities associated with urban developments or the rehabilitation of resource extraction pits (eg after sand or gravel mining), or are constructed as landscape features.

Riparian areas are important components of waterways and wetlands. They are wet fringing zones that have different physical and ecological characteristics to adjoining terrestrial habitats. Riparian areas filter out pollutants in runoff from surrounding land uses. Vegetation in riparian areas also reduces bank slumping and erosion and provides shading, temperature regulation, debris for in-stream habitats and organic matter for aquatic food-webs.

Waterways and wetlands support a wide range of habitats, including freshwater pools, riffles and riparian areas, paperbark, sedge and wallum wetlands and estuarine seagrass meadows, mangroves and saltmarsh. These habitats are home to diverse and specialised wildlife, including fish, crustaceans and shellfish, water birds, frogs, turtles and aquatic mammals. They also provide refuges and movement corridors for terrestrial wildlife.

For thousands of years the Sunshine Coast's waterways and wetlands have been integral to the livelihoods, customs and spiritual beliefs of Aboriginal peoples. Waterways have also been a focal point for explorers and settlers, critical for drinking water, food and transport. As a result, most of our local urban settlements were founded and grew alongside them.

In the present day, waterways and wetlands continue to enrich local lifestyles. They provide unique opportunities for recreational activities such as swimming, boating and fishing, and along their foreshores, for walking, cycling and social gatherings. They support the wellbeing of individuals and provide a sense of place and identity for communities. Waterways and wetlands also provide a natural advantage for the local economy by supporting important local industries such as water-based recreation and tourism, agriculture and commercial fisheries. Constructed waterbodies are managed to balance their designed purpose and risk mitigation, while maximising community benefits.



Planning for change

The drivers of change will have varying levels of impacts on waterways and wetlands and will continue to present challenges for the future.

Key impacts may include:

- poorer water quality, damage to aquatic and riparian habitats and hydrological modifications
- changes in the extent/distribution of aquatic plant and animal populations
- changes in aquatic habitat functionality and species behaviour
- increase in invasive aquatic plants and animals
- increased demand and potential conflict for community access and use of waterways for tourism and recreation activities.

To proactively respond to these likely impacts and seek new opportunities, a strong set of policy positions has been prepared to achieve the desired outcome.



Council's role

Council, the state government, natural resource managers and the community all contribute to the management of our waterways and wetlands. Council plays a key role contributing to improved outcomes through setting strategic direction, implementing planning and regulatory powers and on-ground programs. Through advocacy and partnerships council also supports the activities of other stakeholders that complement the delivery of the waterway and wetland outcome.



Waterways and Wetlands policy positions

3.1 Natural waterways and wetlands are preserved and enhanced to support healthy and diverse aquatic habitats and species:

- a The preservation and enhancement of diverse in-stream and wetland habitats and floodplain function sustain aquatic biodiversity.
- b Native vegetation in waterway and wetland riparian areas is protected and restored.
- c Water quality, hydrological processes, groundwater and floodplain function are maintained or improved.
- d Aquatic and riparian invasive plants and animals are managed strategically to reduce impacts on native species and habitats.
- e Viable populations of priority aquatic species are conserved or restored.
- f The management of waterways and wetlands incorporates the predicted impacts from climate change and natural hazards.
- g Natural waterways and wetlands are not diverted or modified.

3.2 Constructed waterbodies are minimised and managed efficiently to provide social and economic outcomes and preserve environmental values:

- a New constructed waterbodies are avoided unless an overriding need in the public interest is demonstrated.
- b Constructed waterbodies are designed, constructed and funded to minimise public risk and maintenance burdens for their full asset life cycle.
- c Constructed waterbodies are managed for their designed purpose.
- d Constructed waterbodies meet conditioned water quality objectives.
- e Water quality, hydrology and ecological processes are maintained to prevent impacts within waterbodies and on receiving waters.

3.3 Waterways and wetlands are valued, respected and used sustainably to support our lifestyle, livelihoods and sense of place:

- a Waterway and wetland values and ecosystem services are widely appreciated by the community to ensure ongoing support for their preservation.
- b Cultural heritage associated with waterways and wetlands is preserved and promoted.
- c Recreational activities and supporting infrastructure in, on or near waterways and wetlands minimise impacts on ecological health.
- d Commercial activities in, on or near waterways and wetlands complement their values and contribute to the economy.
- e Urban and rural industries are appropriately located, implement best practice environmental management and maintain or improve waterway and wetland health.
- f Impacts on private lands and infrastructure from natural processes such as erosion are the responsibility of landowners.
- g Mitigation works to protect land and infrastructure do not impact on adjacent or downstream land, infrastructure and waterway health.

Refer to Part C for technical detail and planning directions specific to the Waterways and Wetlands theme.

