



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Heritage

Oceans Action Bulletin

**An Update from the Marine Division of the
Department of the Environment and Heritage**

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This Bulletin updates you on Australian Government activities in the marine environment. Please forward to any interested parties. For further information or to unsubscribe from this Bulletin, please email samantha.meyer@oceans.gov.au

New Management Plan for Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs Marine Reserve

The precious environmental and cultural values of the Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs have received further protection by the Australian Government with the release this month of a second management plan for the area.

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, said the plan would create new protection zones while still allowing recreational access.



Elizabeth Reef from the air

Senator Campbell said the Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs Marine National Nature Reserve, about 150km north of Lord Howe Island off the NSW coast, contained unique ecological communities, including some threatened species, as well as culturally significant shipwrecks.

“The region’s remote and isolated location and the previous management plan ensured the reefs remained in a relatively undisturbed and pristine state. This new management plan will continue to ensure the nature reserve’s unique environmental and cultural values are preserved,” he said.

The new plan divides the Reserve into a Sanctuary Zone at Middleton Reef, including the surrounding area, and a Habitat Protection Zone at Elizabeth Reef. This arrangement will protect the reefs while still allowing some limited uses.

A draft plan was circulated for public comment from 20 July 2005 to 30 August 2005. Following this public consultation period, the plan was amended to reflect some of the issues raised in submissions, especially those from residents from the nearby Lord Howe Island community.

“I am pleased with the level of participation in the public consultation process, especially from residents of Lord Howe Island,” Senator Campbell said.

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“Their input provided a valuable insight into the cultural association Lord Howe Island residents have with the reefs and this has subsequently been incorporated into the final plan.”

The new management plan will operate for seven years until 2013. The plan can be viewed at www.deh.gov.au/coasts/mpa/elizabeth/ or by contacting the Community Information Unit at the Department of the Environment and Heritage at ciu@deh.gov.au or on freecall 1800 803 772.

Western Australia's marine mapping mission

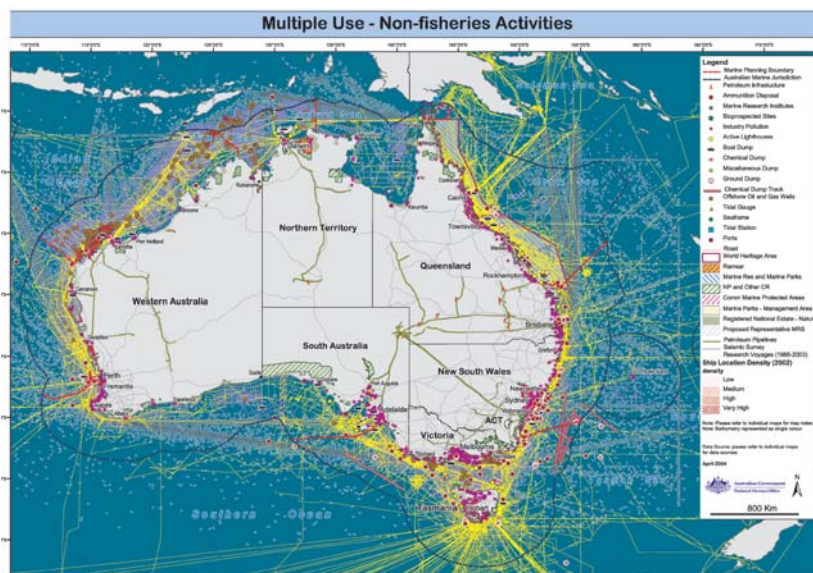
The secrets hidden in Western Australia's coastal waters will soon be revealed through a \$4.2 million project to map the State's marine habitats.

The Australian and Western Australian governments this month launched the Natural Heritage Trust-funded *Securing WA Marine Futures* initiative.

The partnership project involves five regional natural resource management groups, researchers such as the University of Western Australia and representatives from the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council, the Conservation Council and Australian and State Government agencies.

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran, said fieldwork would focus on the marine environment from Kalbarri to Esperance.

"Western Australia is internationally renowned for its diverse marine and coastal ecosystems, but we need more detailed information about what's out there so we can look after it properly," Senator Campbell said.



"The Marine Futures project will build on complementary work by my Department to provide Australia's first continuous marine habitat mapping system, extending from the coastline to 200 nautical miles offshore.

Previous mapping of marine uses by DEH

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"Data will be collected from key sites in the sub-tropical waters of the west coast down to the Southern Ocean.

"A state-of-the-art habitat map and database will be produced for coastal waters. This will not only guide regional marine planning decisions, but more importantly lead to practical projects that conserve our resources so future generations can enjoy them too."

For more information about the project phone Jessica Meeuwig 08 6488 1464.
Natural Heritage Trust details: www.nrm.gov.au

Coast to Coast Conference

Australia's biennial national coastal conference, Coast to Coast, will be held in Melbourne in just over one month's time.



The Department of the Environment and Heritage is proud to be a major sponsor of this event, which attracts more than 400 delegates from across Australia and overseas.

Presentations are organised in themes including Living Oceans, Community and the Coast, and International Relations.

Under the Living Oceans theme Ian Cresswell, from the Department's Marine Division, will outline future challenges for marine planning and the Census of Marine Life program in Australia.

Other presentations will address issues including climate change, new marine pests, declining fish populations, and coastal development.

For more information, and to view the conference program, visit www.iceaustralia.com/coasttocoast2006/

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