

Coral Sea Heritage Park Myths *Busted!*

Recently a number of conservation and other organizations, scientists and prominent community leaders proposed that the Coral Sea east of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park be considered as a highly protected marine park. If created by the government, the Coral Sea Heritage Park would be the largest protected marine park in the world - and establish Australia as a world leader in ocean conservation leaving a lasting legacy for future generations. Unfortunately, considerable misinformation regarding the proposal has been circulating. Below are our responses to the myths that have been made in the press by some of those opposing the proposal.

MYTH	FACT
The Reef will be off limits to recreational fishing if fishing is banned in the Coral Sea east of the Marine Park.	The proposed Coral Sea park deals solely with the region east of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP), and east of Torres Strait. There is no overlap between these areas. The Coral Sea Heritage Park would be created under different legislation than the GBRMP and have completely different management.
The GBRMP zoning plan will be reviewed in 2011. If the Coral Sea Heritage Park is off limits to all types of fishing, then this could be extended to the GBRMP as a result of the next rezoning.	The rezoning of the GBRMP is totally unrelated to the proposal for a Coral Sea Heritage Park. There is the potential for a review of the GBRMP zoning plan anytime after July 2011, but the Federal Environment Minister must agree to a review. This is a completely separate process with no certainty a review will occur in 2011. Conservation groups will call for improvements in conservation and protection if necessary during the Reef rezoning. But, like everyone else, they will have to cross that bridge when they get to it.
You won't be able to go down to the beach and put a line in the water to catch a fish.	The proposed park is in the deep open ocean - remote and far from land. The proposed boundary would start at the eastern boundary of the GBRMP, about 80 kms east of Cairns and would not affect coastal waters <i>or</i> the GBRMP at all.
This could be the end of a lot of tourism in FNQ.	Parks are good for tourism. In FNQ, parks are a major job generator. Cairns is a tourism city. Osprey Reef in the Coral Sea is recognized as one of the world's top 10 best shark dives. A Coral Sea Heritage Park can only lift this global recognition. There is great potential to generate high value tourism opportunities from this market. Increasingly Australians are visiting sites of great historic significance to the nation. The Coral Sea has major potential as part of a northern military tourism strategy.
This could be the end of a lot of charter boat industries in FNQ.	The vast majority of charter fishing occurs between Cairns and Lizard Island, along the Ribbon Reefs, within the GBRMP. These fishing areas will <i>not be affected</i> by the Coral Sea Heritage Park.
The groups that push this do not think of the consequences for people living along the eastern	Most of the people working for this proposed park live along the eastern seaboard and are part of these coastal

seaboard.	communities. The long term future of these coastal economies will benefit from protecting the marine environment, as the world's oceans and marine life become increasingly threatened and depleted.
If the Coral Sea were closed to fishing it would result in huge compensation costs, not just in relation to commercial fishing but recreational and charter fishing as well.	The cost of any financial assistance for charter operators as a result of the Coral Sea Park proposal would be low, if it is necessary at all. A study ¹ of recreational and charter fishing in the eastern tuna and billfish fishery found fairly low returns. In 2001-02, the entire Queensland charter sector made a net return of \$187,000. It is highly doubtful that any financial assistance would be required for the recreational fishing industry. The GBRMP zoning plan that closed one third of the marine park to all fishing came into effect in 2004. Even so, boat registrations in Queensland increased 10.4% from 2003 to 2006.
Closing the Coral Sea to fishing east of the GBRMP is an attack on our lifestyle, culture and recreation	Recreational and charter fishing in the Coral Sea east of the GBRMP is very limited because it is time consuming and expensive to pursue. It is remote and in the open ocean.
CAFNEC, the Pew Environment Group (Australia) and other conservation groups are ideologically opposed to fishing.	The conservation groups proposing the new park support sustainable fishing. With less than 0.1% of the world's oceans currently protected from fishing, more than 99.9% remain open to fishing. The groups believe there is a need to set aside more areas as marine sanctuaries.

More Information

It's very expensive to take a charter boat to the Coral Sea and requires several days on a powerful boat to make the distant trip practical. It's a pursuit for the wealthy few not the casual weekend angler. Sometimes game charter operators north of Cairns will go beyond the GBRMP boundary, depending on how wide the currents are flowing.

Under the proposed Coral Sea Heritage Park, commercial longlining and other commercial fishing would cease in the Coral Sea to the east of the GBR Marine Park. This will be good for fishing in the Reef. Oil and gas exploration and all other extractive industries also would be prohibited.

The Coral Sea Heritage Park campaign is made up of a broad number of non-government organisations and prominent individuals. Pew, like many other international organizations, has a local presence here and works closely with many different national and regional groups.

Conservation and other groups developed the Coral Sea proposal after consultation with experts and stakeholder groups. After more than a year of consultation, the Coral Sea campaign was publicly launched on 10 September 2008.

For further information: Steve Ryan, Marine Campaigner, Cairns and Far North Environment Centre, ph 07 4222 1047 www.cafnec.org.au.

¹ The study was by Galeano *et al* (2005), commissioned by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, quoted in a Bureau of Rural Sciences report (2007), commissioned by the Department of Environment Water Heritage and the Arts, entitled: *Regional Profile: East Marine Region*.