



## Reef protection regulations in the Great Barrier Reef regions

### Starting or expanding cropping and horticulture activities

The Reef protection regulations address land-based sources of water pollution flowing to the Great Barrier Reef. This includes agricultural and [industrial sources](#) of nutrient and sediment pollution from all six [Reef regions](#) – Cape York, Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary.

#### How do I know if I need a permit?

Growers may need to obtain an environmental authority (permit) before starting or expanding commercial cropping and horticulture in a Reef region if the activity will be on five hectares or more of land that does not have a cropping history.

A cropping history is when the land has been used for cropping or horticultural activities in at least three out of the last 10 years. There are transitional provisions that allow some extra time to develop a cropping history for any cropping that has only started in the three years prior to 1 June 2021.

There is a handy [checklist](#) to work out if you need a permit and more detailed information available in the [Application Guide](#) and [frequently asked questions](#) available online at [www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations](http://www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations).

#### How to apply for a permit

##### Step 1: Register as a 'suitable operator'

Before the department can issue you a permit, you must be registered as a 'suitable operator'.

You can apply to become a registered suitable operator by completing an application available by searching 'Online Services, Department of Environment and Science' at [www.business.qld.gov.au](http://www.business.qld.gov.au).

Alternatively, you can complete the [Application to be a registered suitable operator form \(ESR/2015/1771\) \(DOCX, 132KB\)](#) available at [www.des.qld.gov.au](http://www.des.qld.gov.au) and submit it to the Department of Environment and Science (DES) using the details provided in the form. This application form can be submitted with your permit application.

##### Step 2: Determine which type of permit application you need to make

There are three different application types for a permit:

- **Standard application:** A simplified process for growers who can meet the eligibility criteria and standard conditions outlined in the 'ERA standard'.
- **Variation application:** A flexible process for growers who can meet the eligibility criteria but want to vary one or more of the standard conditions in the 'ERA standard'.
- **Site specific application:** A comprehensive process for growers who cannot meet the eligibility criteria in the 'ERA standard'. This application requires site-specific information to be provided for the activity.

Complete your permit application through [Online Services](#) (preferred).

Alternatively, you can complete the form and submit it to the DES using the details provided in the form

- [Standard application \(ESR/2020/5273\)](#) (DOCX, 174KB)
- [Variation application \(ESR/2020/5272\)](#) (DOCX, 152KB)
- [Site-specific application \(ESR/2020/5274\)](#) (DOCX, 123KB)

#### Eligibility criteria for a standard application

You are undertaking the cropping on no more than 100 hectares (and over five hectares) in a river basin.

OR

You are relocating your banana farm to new land due to a Notice of presence of Panama disease tropical race 4.

#### Standard conditions (ERA standard)

You can view the standard conditions in the [ERA standard](#) available online at [www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations](http://www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations).

The standard conditions include measures like setbacks from natural waterways, nutrient and sediment control and record keeping.

#### Step 3: Lodge your permit application

Permit applications for new commercial cropping and horticulture can be [submitted online](#) or by post or email:

Permit and Licensing Management  
Department of Environment and Science  
GPO Box 2454  
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Email: [palm@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:palm@des.qld.gov.au)

Applications cannot be accepted at Queensland Government regional offices.

Processing times for applications vary depending on the application type. Fees also apply.

#### Need help? Register for a pre-lodgement meeting

Before you lodge your permit application, you can meet with the department to discuss your application. To organise a pre-lodgement meeting, email [palm@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:palm@des.qld.gov.au) or call 1300 130 372 (select option 4). You can also download an [Application for pre-lodgement services ESR/2015/1664](#) (DOCX, 292.3KB) available at [www.des.qld.gov.au](http://www.des.qld.gov.au).

#### Complying with a permit

Once you have a permit, you must comply with all the conditions on the permit. The conditions will require you to design and establish measures that minimise fine sediment and dissolved inorganic nitrogen from the new areas entering waterways.

For a standard application, you will be required to comply with all of the standard conditions in the ERA standard. Practical information on how to comply is available in the [Standard Conditions Guide](#) available online at [www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations](http://www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations).

For sugarcane or banana cultivation, you must also comply with the [Agricultural Environmentally Relevant Activity standard for banana cultivation](#) or [Agricultural Environmentally Relevant Activity standard for sugarcane cultivation](#) available online at [www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations](http://www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations).

#### Where can I find more information?

For more information, contact the Permits and Licensing area at the Department of Environment and Science:

**Email:** [palm@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:palm@des.qld.gov.au)

**Telephone:** 1300 130 372 (select option 4)