

FAQs - Clarence River proposed management actions

Who looks after boating on NSW rivers?

The Maritime Management Centre (MMC) - a branch of Transport for NSW (TfNSW) - leads the strategic policy direction for maritime issues in NSW. MMC directs initiatives that support the Government's objectives for boating safety, maritime property and waterways management.

The Transport for NSW Maritime Program is led by MMC and delivered by Roads and Maritime Services (RMS). MMC works side-by-side with RMS who are responsible for policy implementation, delivery and compliance.

What is this consultation about?

The NSW Boating Wash and Riverbank Erosion Management Strategy is a pilot project about improving the management of boating in areas that may be subject to significant riverbank erosion issues, particularly on the Tweed, Clarence and Williams Rivers.

Last year, we spoke with communities in these three areas to seek local input and test options for managing riverbank erosion issues.

The outcomes of the consultation, alongside scientific evidence, have informed the development of a set of proposed management actions for the Clarence River. The actions seek to accommodate all river users and local residents, while ensuring sustainable enjoyment of the river for years to come.

We are now seeking further feedback from the community on the proposed actions, with a view to implementing the Management Plan from September 2015.

What is the draft Management Plan?

The draft Management Plan includes a set of twelve proposed management actions which seek to accommodate all river users and local residents, while ensuring sustainable enjoyment of the river for years to come. The actions represent a compromise to meet the environmental needs of the river consistent with the precautionary principle, and to provide certainty for boaters and local businesses to use the river for recreation and commercial benefit.

The proposed actions are all temporary measures which will be in place for a period of two years from September 2015 to September 2017. At the end of this period the effectiveness of the Plan will be assessed by a specially formed Committee established to implement the Plan, monitor the river state, consult with stakeholders and the community, and recommend any changes.

Why is a Management Plan needed?

Riverbank erosion management is a significant issue for the future health and stability of our river systems. Waterways are often the heart of the cities and towns that surround them and are enjoyed by local residents, boaters and local businesses for recreation and commercial benefit.

Last year, we spoke with communities across 11 river regions in NSW to inform Regional Boating Plans (RBPs). One of the key actions arising from the RBP process was the need to develop a state-wide policy for managing and mitigating boating-related erosion issues.

There are a range of reasons for riverbank erosion including flooding, high wash boating activities, resource extraction, wind waves, loss of vegetation, sea level rise, stock access and natural environmental changes.

The draft Management Plan seeks to balance the environmental needs of the river while ensuring boaters, businesses and local residents can enjoy the river for years to come in a sustainable and responsible manner.

How has the draft Management Plan been developed?

The draft Management Plan has been informed by assessing the scientific evidence outlined in the 2014 University of NSW Water Research Laboratory Report*, expert Roads and Maritime boating knowledge, strategic Maritime Management Centre management advice and public and stakeholder consultation responses.

*A full copy of the report is available at <http://maritimemanagement.transport.nsw.gov.au/>

How have you consulted the community?

In October and November last year, the MMC undertook a program of consultation with the Clarence River community about riverbank erosion management and sought feedback on potential mitigation measures.

The consultation involved a targeted forum with key stakeholders and a community drop in session as well as informal conversations and briefings. We also spoke with local councils and authorities that have a role in looking after, managing or caretaking in and around the Clarence River.

We are now seeking further comment from the community on the draft Management Plan.

How has community feedback been used?

The information gathered during consultation included:

- what the community values about the Clarence River
- local knowledge and input on boating and recreation activities
- local knowledge and input on riverbank issues including erosion causes and contributing factors
- feedback on erosion management infrastructure options

All feedback from the community has been considered alongside scientific evidence to inform the draft Management Plan. We are now seeking further comment from the community about the proposed actions in the draft Management Plan.

Why are there no new restrictions for most of the River?

The WRL Report confirms the majority of this stretch of river is suitable for wake generating activity under assumed tolerances, provided activities occur towards the middle of the river and riverbank remediation occurs at key sites.

This provides for approximately 35km of uninterrupted river with no new boating restrictions, based on:

- key findings from WRL report
- the importance of the river for all users
- social and economic values of the river
- the need for remediation work at key sites
- addressing behavioural issues through education and compliance
- encouragement of boating towards the middle of the river or appropriate shoreline.

Why are some temporary boating restrictions required?

The WRL Report identifies these sections as highly eroded and too narrow to focus wake-generating activities into the middle of the river to effectively limit erosion.

The no slow tow restriction is a two year temporary restriction while riverbank remediation is undertaken and its effectiveness will be subject to review.

When will the plan be implemented?

It is intended that the proposed actions outlined in the Plan will commence on 1 September 2015. This coincides with the new regulatory mechanisms on which the Plan is based. Proposed temporary restrictions would be in place for a period of two years until September 2017, subject to review by a specially formed committee.

Preliminary investigations to scope bank remediation works are currently underway.

During implementation RMS will increase the number of boating safety officers and education officers, particularly during peak boating season.

How can I provide feedback on the draft Management Plan?

MMC will be holding an information session to present the proposed actions, and answer questions from interested stakeholders.

Date: Friday 10 July 2015

Start: 5.00pm for 5.30pm start

Finish: 7pm

Venue: Grafton Community Function Centre, 59 Duke Street, Grafton

RSVP: maritime@transport.nsw.gov.au

Information on the draft Management Plan will also be available on our website. Comment on the proposed actions should be provided to maritime@transport.nsw.gov.au by 24 July 2015.

What happens next?

Following this round of consultation, MMC will consider feedback received and refine the draft Management Plan before sharing a final Plan for implementation with stakeholders.

MMC and other stakeholders are also progressing investigations to scope a program of works for riverbank remediation activities.

We will continue to keep all stakeholders updated as the project progresses.