

## DECLARATION OF INTENTIONS BETWEEN FRANCE-NEW CALEDONIA AND AUSTRALIA ON THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE CORAL SEA

The *Declaration of Intentions between France-New Caledonia and Australia on the Sustainable Management of the Coral Sea* (the Declaration), signed in 2010, confirms the intention for Australia and France-New Caledonia to work collaboratively to:

- strengthen the scientific framework for collaboration on the conservation and management of the Coral Sea and its environs;
- establish long term collaboration between the bodies and institutions responsible for the management of ocean, reef and lagoon areas of the Coral Sea; and
- strengthen regional capacity building efforts to ensure a comprehensive trans-boundary approach to the conservation of biological diversity of the Coral Sea, including natural resources, in a cooperative and complementary manner.

This newsletter will be published periodically to provide an update on the progression of activities under the Declaration.

## NATURAL PARK OF THE CORAL SEA: PRISTINE CORAL REEFS UNDER HIGH LEVELS OF PROTECTION

An important step for the future of the Natural Park of the Coral Sea has been taken! On 14 August 2018 the New Caledonian Government increased the area of the Park's pristine coral reefs and lagoons under high levels of protection to 100 percent (**1630 square**

**kilometres of coral reefs and 12,375 square kilometres of coral lagoons**).

This adds to the 15,000 square kilometers of coral reefs around the world that already benefit from this same level of protection, meaning that from now on, **16,630 square kilometres (or 11 percent) of the world's reefs are highly protected.**

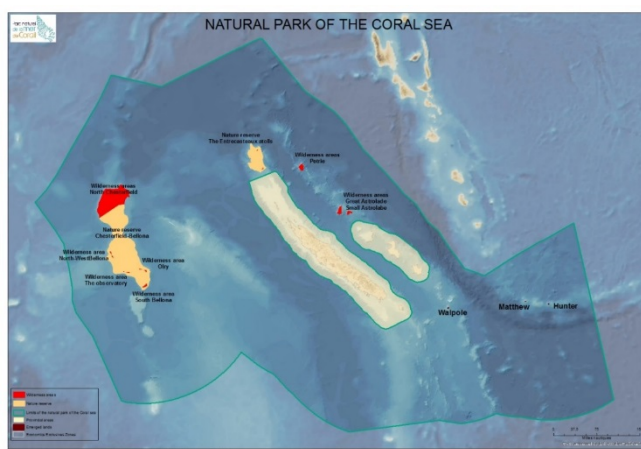


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## 28,000 SQUARE KILOMETRES OF RESERVES IN THE NATURAL PARK

This decision by the New Caledonian Government creates new reserves in the Natural Park of the Coral Sea over reefs, lagoons and islets, and surrounding waters whose total area is equivalent to about one-and-a-half times the area of Grande-Terre, the main island of New Caledonia:

- **7000 square kilometres of wilderness area**, an area equivalent to the South Province of New Caledonia.
- **21,000 square kilometres of nature reserve**, an area equivalent to the Grande-Terre.



This is a significant increase on the 0.6 square kilometres of wilderness area and 3100 square kilometres of nature reserve that existed previously.

**access and activities are prohibited**, except for approved scientific research, monitoring, and responses to maritime emergencies.

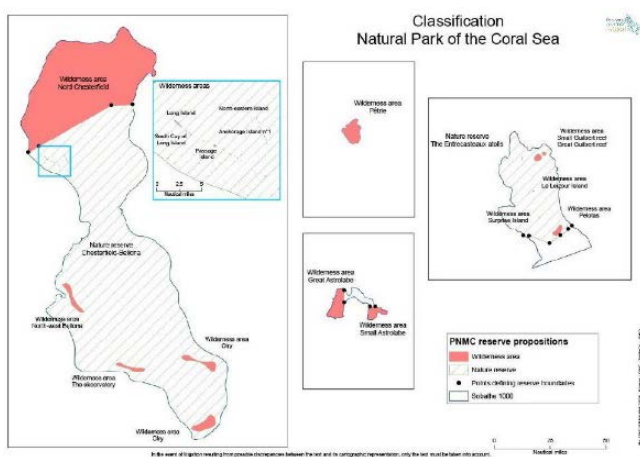
**In nature reserves (IUCN level 2 protection), all fishing is prohibited** (including for self-consumption) and **all access (by tourism professionals, scientists, boaters etc.) is subject to authorisation from the Government.**

**Also prohibited are domestic animals, bivouacking and picnics ashore, motorised water sports, fishing, hunting, foils and aerial activities, whether motorised or not. No levy is allowed and the introduction of paid access rights is under study.**



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## CLASSIFICATION OF RESERVES



Please visit our website <https://mer-de-coral.gouv.nc/en> to access detailed maps of the Park.

## MANAGING TOURISM IN THE PARK

Professional tourism activities in the Natural Park of the Coral Sea are also regulated. An order now sets the framework in which these activities may be carried out in nature reserves, and establishes in particular, a personalised authorisation system.

## USE OF THE NEW RESERVES

This decision creates new rules for use of the new reserves for professionals and individuals. **In wilderness areas (IUCN level 1 protection), all**

Indeed, any tourism operator wishing to organise a tour in the Natural Park of the Coral Sea will need prior authorisation from the New Caledonian Government, accompanied by prescriptions adapted to the activity. The ultimate goal is to have

sustainable tourism that is effectively managed and that complies with good practice. Any use that may have an impact on the Park's biodiversity will be prohibited.

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## WHAT TYPES OF BOAT REQUIRE AN AUTHORISATION?

Access to these reserves is now prohibited for any vessel with a capacity of more than 200 passengers. *"Tourism in our waters was not regulated. Until now, any cruise could be organised in the Park area without making the request,"* said Philippe Germain, the President of the New Caledonian Government. *"Since this morning, it's over. There will be rules to observe. And the first will be to obtain an authorisation."*

After assessing requests, "expedition" cruises carrying up to 200 passengers will be able, under very strict conditions (e.g., specifications, observers on board, visits to sites in small groups, etc.), access the nature reserves but not the wilderness reserves.

*"The conditions put in place must ensure that these expeditions do not affect the biodiversity and the space to discover"* said Philippe Germain.

Access requests for charter-type vessels, which can carry 1 to 12 passengers, will also be studied on a case-by-case basis and subject to an authorisation decree governing on-site activities.

**Regardless of the number of passengers transported, personnel trained in regulations and good practices in the Natural Park must be present on board each vessel.**

## ENTRECASTEAUX: THE FIRST ACTION PLAN RESULTING FROM THE PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN



© Entrecasteaux, Huon Islet DAM-NC SPE

A new five-year action plan for the Entrecasteaux Atolls, linked to the 2018–2022 Natural Park of the Coral Sea management plan, replaces the existing management plan which concluded at the end of 2018.

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## PARTICIPATORY WORK

The action plan dedicated to the Entrecasteaux Atolls strengthens the protection in force since the inscription of the UNESCO World Heritage site in 2008. It is the result of participatory work conducted in the first half of 2018, notably through two one-day workshops organized by the Maritime Affairs Department. These workshops brought together scientists, experts, members of associations, as well as all members of the park management committee, to write and validate the Entrecasteaux 2018–2022 action plan. Its adoption was then the subject of a Government order.

## MAINTAINING THE EXCEPTIONAL CHARACTER OF THE UNESCO PROPERTY



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Under this action plan, monitoring of green turtles, seabirds and coral reefs that has occurred over the past 10 years will continue, to improve our knowledge about the Atolls. Invasive species will be controlled and, if necessary, eradicated. The drafting of a guide of good practices and the participation in the Festival of the Sea in Poum, a town located at the extreme north of New Caledonia, provides an opportunity to involve and educate local people.

In line with the operation “The Caledonians have the floor”, which focused on the management plan of the Natural Park of the Coral Sea in February 2017, public consultation was organised, from 28 June to 12 July 2018, on this draft decree, but also on the two others drafts decrees establishing reserves and framing professional tourism in the Park.

## PARKS AUSTRALIA: MANAGING AUSTRALIA'S CORAL SEA MARINE PARK

On 1 July 2018, an additional 2.3 million square kilometres of Australia's ocean was protected under

Australia's world-leading marine park management system. Five new management plans came into effect, bringing all 58 Australian Marine Parks under protection.

This means that Australia is now actively managing the largest representative network of marine parks in the world – around 2.8 million square kilometres of ocean. When you include the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve (managed by other Australian Government agencies), this figure increases to 3.2 million square kilometres or 35 percent of Australia's marine jurisdiction.

The [Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan](#) is now in place and covers management arrangements for the 989,836 square kilometres of one of the world's largest marine parks. It protects 16 different seafloor environments (including seamounts, canyons and plains), 34 reefs and 56 cays and islets, 15,000 square kilometres of reef systems and an abundance of corals, reef fishes, sea stars, clams and sea cucumbers. It sets out the zones and rules for activities within the marine park and represents a careful balance that increases protection while allowing sustainable use.

Stakeholders played an important role in the development of the management plan. Comments from two statutory public consultations, independent recommendations from the Commonwealth Marine Reserves Review, advice from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, and consultation with relevant Commonwealth, state and territory agencies were all taken into consideration when drafting the plan.

It is an exciting time for Parks Australia, moving from a planning phase into active management. We are

looking forward to forging new relationships and working in partnership to develop new initiatives.

In the coming months, we will be focused on establishing a Coral Sea Marine Park Advisory Committee and drawing on the experience and expertise of stakeholders to guide and advise on the implementation of management programs and actions in the Coral Sea Marine Park.

A \$35 million package to assist industries and communities transition to the new Australian Marine Park management arrangements has been announced by the Australian Government. The Package will provide assistance and grants to affected commercial fishers and other users to support their transition to the new operating environment.

**For more information about Australian Marine Parks and their management arrangements, please visit [parksaustralia.gov.au/marine](http://parksaustralia.gov.au/marine)**

## MONITORING REEF HEALTH IN THE CORAL SEA MARINE PARK

In April 2018, Parks Australia and James Cook University scientists began a three year program to monitor the health of some of Australia's remotest and most pristine coral reefs in the Coral Sea Marine Park. The project will include more than 100 days of *at-sea* monitoring during which time the team hope to survey the health of 20 large reef ecosystems each year.

The project is a significant commitment to increase our knowledge of the biodiversity in the Coral Sea Marine Park and inform our management actions. The data collected through the project will build on the baseline information we already have for the park and

will offer insights into coral reef ecosystem function and connectivity, health and resilience (including recovery from bleaching and weather events), and marine debris levels and potential impacts.

Early results from the voyages completed in 2018 indicate good coral cover, evidence of reef connectivity with New Caledonia and the Great Barrier Reef and new coral species. Fish diversity has also been high. Unfortunately, marine debris continues to be found on most of the reefs visited.



*© Daniela Ceccarelli. Surveying a reef in the Coral Sea Marine Park*

We will be publishing regular updates on the project via our social media accounts and the Australian Marine Park Science Atlas.

## AUSTRALIAN MARINE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEES

To support the new Australian Marine Park management plans, Parks Australia is establishing new advisory committees.

Through these committees, we will engage marine park stakeholders on the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of management programs and actions around Australia.

They will also help deliver against our goals to create enhanced opportunities to use or benefit from marine parks and strengthen partnerships with traditional owners, marine park users, local and regional community members, and other marine stakeholders.

To support these objectives, Parks Australia will be strengthening and diversifying engagement efforts and the new advisory committees will play a central role.

Across the six Australian Marine Park networks, the committees will offer a key mechanism to engage with interested groups, facilitate active participation in the management and use of the marine parks and share important knowledge, skills and expertise.

These collaborations will be critical to achieving Parks Australia's management vision that our marine parks are healthy, resilient and well-managed.

For more information, visit our website or email [AMPAdvisoryCommittees@environment.gov.au](mailto:AMPAdvisoryCommittees@environment.gov.au)

## NEW WEBSITES – BOOKMARK THEM TODAY!

We are excited to announce that Australian Marine Parks have a brand new home on the web – you can now find us at [parksaustralia.gov.au/marine](http://parksaustralia.gov.au/marine).



For each of our 58 marine parks, there is detailed information, downloadable maps, a copy of the management plan or information on how to apply for a license using the new online portal.

Current highlights in the Coral Sea Marine Park segment include a short video from scientists involved in the new coral reef health project, an introduction to Osprey Reef and all its weird and wonderful residents and a trip to the depths to learn what's been done to map the park's seamounts and submarine canyons.

Be sure to subscribe to stay up to date will all our marine park news!

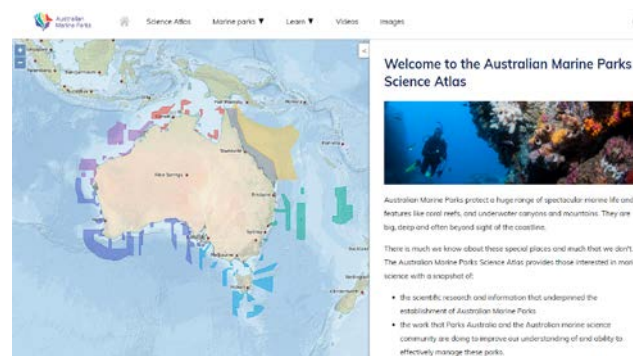


### Stay in touch

Subscribe to receive important updates about your marine parks.  
Enter your email address and click "join now".

We've also recently launched the Australian Marine Parks Science Atlas - an interactive mapping tool that showcases emerging science happening in our marine parks, including the Coral Sea Marine Park. To find out more, visit [atlas.parksaustralia.gov.au/amps](http://atlas.parksaustralia.gov.au/amps)



## GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AUTHORITY: CROWN-OF-THORNS STARFISH CONTROL PROGRAM

Crown-of-thorns starfish are voracious live coral predators and can eat up to 250 square centimetres (about the size of a food platter) of coral per day.

While they naturally occur on coral reefs in Australia, there have been four major recorded outbreaks on the Great Barrier Reef since the 1960s.

All of these outbreaks have started in the region offshore from the wet tropics catchment, on reefs between Lizard Island and Cairns.



© Commonwealth of Australia (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority)

Understanding the causes of these outbreaks has been a major area of research focus over the past 40 years—there has been a significant evolution in the understanding of the outbreaks, the methods used to control the outbreaks, and whether humans should intervene.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority works closely with key partners to manage the ongoing

mitigation and monitoring of crown-of-thorns starfish on the Reef.

Since 2012, the Authority has operated a control program with tourism and research stakeholders with one to two vessels targeting high value reefs in the Marine Park.

In August 2018, the Authority boosted its capacity for crown-of-thorns starfish control by adding additional control suppliers to provide more vessels and trained crews. The expanded control program will cover larger areas of the reef, enable quicker response to starfish outbreaks, and collect improved and timely data to best direct crown-of-thorns starfish management efforts.



© Commonwealth of Australia (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority), photographer: Daniel Schultz

In addition to culling the coral-eating starfish, suppliers may also be enlisted to help with coral reef surveillance and provide support for research and development into new tools to enhance starfish control and protect coral cover.

Ramping up crown-of-thorns starfish control in the Marine Park is a key initiative in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's [Reef Blueprint for Resilience](#). The blueprint signals the actions the Authority will take with its partners, to strengthen the Reef's resilience.

