

Fish Habitat in SEQ

Any recreational fisher knows that fishing is all about the experience – relaxing with friends, connecting with nature, escaping the hustle and bustle and enjoying some down time in beautiful places. Recreation fishing however would not be possible without healthy fish habitats.

Healthy, balanced aquatic ecosystems such as seagrass, mangroves, coral reefs and saltmarsh are essential for fish. They provide habitat, food, shelter and nursing grounds. Connectivity between marine and freshwater systems is also critical for many of our fish species.

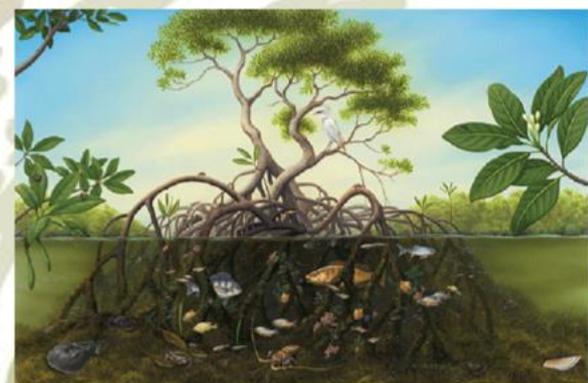
Seagrass meadows in Moreton Bay stabilise the sea floor and provide food for dugongs, turtles and critical fish habitat.

Mangroves filter sediment carried by rivers improving water quality and provide marine habitats. Mangroves protect coastal areas from erosion, support marine food chains in areas both adjacent to and remote from the mangrove areas themselves, maintain coastal water quality, and provide significant structurally complex habitats for invertebrates and juvenile fish (often species of commercial and recreational importance)

In SEQ **saltmarsh** is uniquely adapted to our subtropical environment. Plants include marine couch, samphire or succulent herbs and other salt tolerant plants and animals that are found mostly along the upper intertidal zone of coastal waterways and estuaries.

Moreton Bay is the southernmost **coral** stronghold on mainland Australia's east coast with reef-building corals occurring principally on natural reefs at Peel Island, Green Island, Myora, St Helena Island, Mud Island, Wellington Point/Cleveland and Flinders Reef.

Unfortunately, we know that fish habitat is increasingly under threat in SEQ. This is mainly due to a decline in water quality, loss of the extent and quality of fish habitat and a loss of connectivity across our catchments for fish species to travel to breed and reproduce.



Fish Habitat Threats

Moreton Bay has lost over 20% of seagrass habitat since European settlement, most of it at the mouth of the Logan River, Deception Bay and Bramble Bay. The main causes of seagrass loss in Moreton Bay are related to suspended sediment and increased nutrients, although direct removal for coastal development has caused localised losses.

Over 50,000 dump trucks worth of sediment enters the region's waterways each year!

Only 43% of natural estuarine wetland (mangroves and saltmarsh) remains in the southern catchments with a substantial loss of mangroves along the western shoreline of Moreton Bay occurring following European settlement. Extensive natural oyster beds occurred intertidally and subtidally but these are now almost extinct in our waterways and the health of riparian zones (vegetation along the edges of rivers and creeks) has also suffered as land has been cleared of this critical vegetation.

But it is not all bad news!

Revegetating riverbanks in the upper catchments can reduce flood water by up to 50%, reducing sediment and nutrient loads downstream. Work like this in our catchments has seen a decrease in sediment loads and an increase in seagrass growing in the central bay area.

Community action is also focussing on protecting the saltmarsh that remains and new actions are underway in Maroochy and Noosa Rivers and the Pumicestone Passage to restore shellfish reefs.

We need your help to protect the fishing future of SEQ. You can help by becoming an OzFish member today or contacting Healthy Land and Water to find out more!

