



Sunshine Coast Council
Marine Turtle Conservation Plan
Making tracks together



Marine turtles enrich our community life on the Sunshine Coast.

By protecting marine turtles, we protect our foreshores and oceans.

Marine turtles are of enormous practical, cultural, and spiritual significance to the Kabi Kabi First Nation Peoples.

All marine turtles on the Coast are depleted to the point that every nest and every egg is critical to the ongoing survival and recovery of the population.

Three generations of sustained population growth is needed to remove marine turtles from the threatened species list.

The Sunshine Coast environment is likely to be increasingly important refuge in the future as climate change progresses.

We need to set ambitious goals, collaborate at scale, and work together with local communities to save our marine turtles.

We can co-exist in harmony with marine turtles, reduce light pollution and continue making tracks together for generations to come.

A large group of people, many wearing blue shirts and hats, are gathered on a sandy beach. They appear to be engaged in a conservation activity, possibly related to marine turtles, as they are looking at items on the sand. The background shows the ocean with waves breaking on the shore under a clear blue sky. The foreground is partially obscured by a white curved graphic element.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Kabi Kabi peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land and sea country covered by this plan and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging. We gratefully recognize the immense contribution of First Nations people to the knowledge and conservation of marine turtles in Australia.

Together we are planning for our biosphere where people and turtles can co-exist in harmony.

'The Sunshine Coast TurtleCare Program is one of the best community responses to care of turtles and their habitats that I have seen in more than 50 years of researching and managing marine turtles. Now more than ever we need more highly trained and dedicated community volunteers to help battle increasing threats such as climate change and marine pollution to bring our populations of marine turtles back from the brink of extinction. But we must work together and act now.'

DR COLIN LIMPUS

Chief Scientist, Aquatic Threatened Species, Queensland Government





MAKING TRACKS TOGETHER

The Sunshine Coast is blessed with the wonders and richness of a biodiverse natural environment. Within a fast-growing urban community and world-renowned tourism destination, our world-famous beaches and coastal waters provide critical habitat for six species of marine turtles.

Marine turtles are long-lived animals—at least one hundred years—foraging in waters along the Queensland coast and internationally.

Every summer the Sunshine Coast community welcomes the arrival of our two species of nesting marine turtles—the critically endangered loggerhead turtle and the green turtle—followed by the emergence of hundreds of turtle hatchlings in the new year, making their way to the ocean for their long journey ahead.

As the global environment changes, our coastal habitats together with our local climate is forecast to be an important refuge for future populations of marine turtles.

Ensuring that turtles and people co-exist in our region into the future provides both challenges and opportunities

for our community. This Plan has been developed to explore and address these, and to map a path of action to ensure the best outcomes for all.

The Marine Turtle Conservation Plan has been prepared in collaboration with Sunshine Coast Council officers and elected representatives, Kabi Kabi First Nation Peoples, Queensland Government, scientific experts and community leaders of TurtleCare, Bribie Island Turtle Trackers and Coolum and North Shore Coast Care volunteers.

Our Plan supports our vision to be Australia's most sustainable region: healthy, smart, creative and is a clear demonstration of our commitment to marine turtle conservation.



VISION

Marine turtles surviving and thriving on the Sunshine Coast, co-existing in harmony with people.

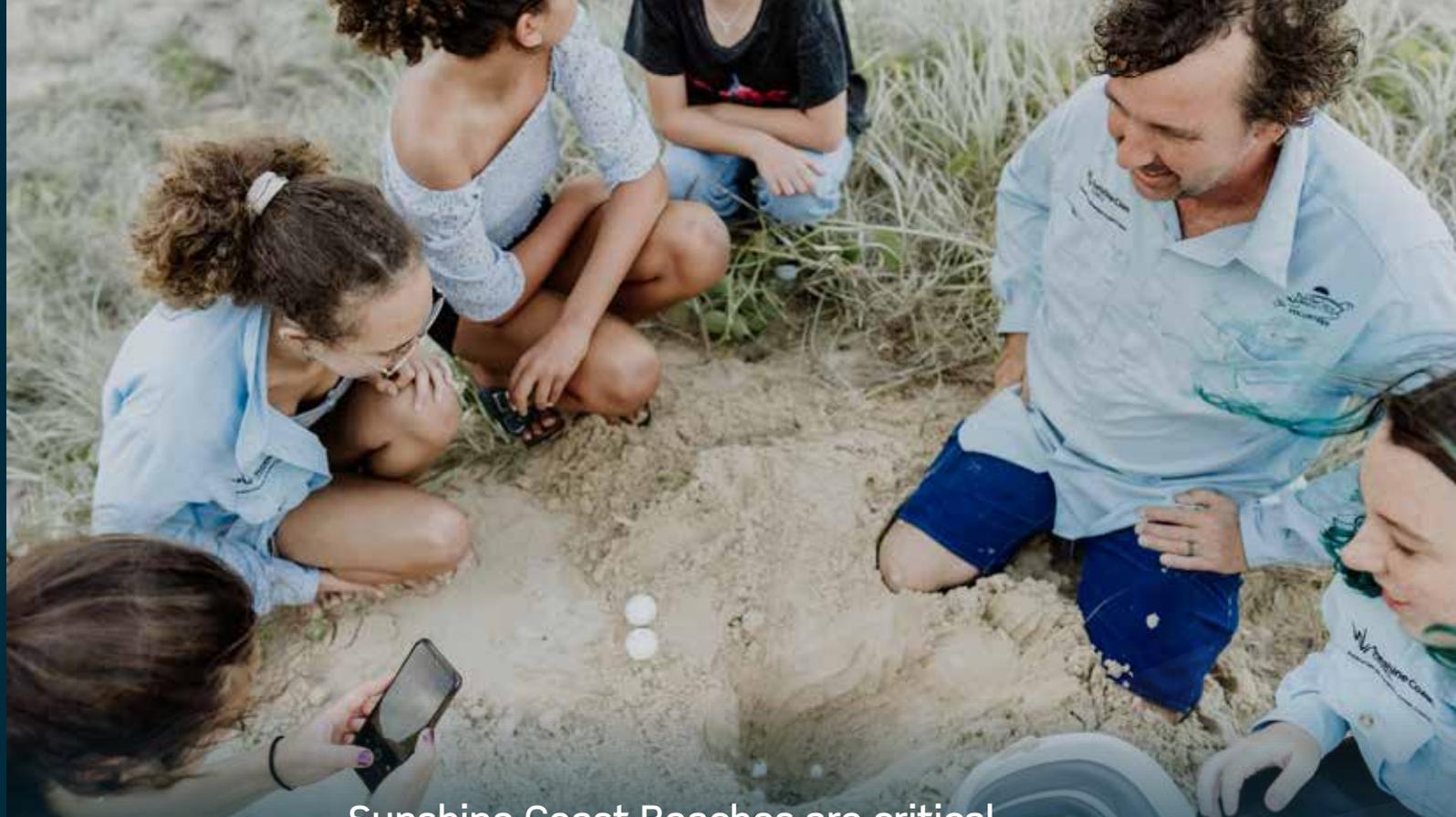


GOAL

Supporting the recovery of self-sustaining populations of marine turtles on the Sunshine Coast by reducing threats, improving habitat quality, and strengthening community-based management.

SUNSHINE COAST TURTLE
NESTING ABUNDANCE





Sunshine Coast Beaches are critical to the survival of endangered Loggerhead turtles in Queensland.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This Marine Turtle Conservation Plan supports efforts by the Queensland and Australian Governments to stop the decline of depleted stocks, support recovery and maintain functional populations of marine turtles on the sunshine coast through managing threats to population viability. The Plan will guide council decision making to achieve future conservation and management goals for nesting marine turtles and hatchlings within the Sunshine Coast Local Government Area (LGA).

HIGH VALUE TURTLE HABITAT – ‘CRITICAL TO SURVIVAL’

Marine turtles are an essential part of the Sunshine Coast environment, and the Sunshine Coast environment is essential to the future of marine turtles. The region, with relatively cooler temperatures than more northern turtle habitat, provides critical nesting sites that produce a higher proportion of the male hatchlings that are essential for long-term recovery of turtle populations. The Sunshine Coast environment is likely to become increasingly important in the future as predicted climate change progresses.

THREAT MANAGEMENT

All marine turtles found on the coast are depleted or severely depleted and subject to ongoing threats to the point that now every nest and every egg matter to population recovery, and direct management intervention will be increasingly required. The most significant threats to the region’s marine turtles include altered temperatures from climate change, urban light pollution, terrestrial predation, entanglement by and ingestion of marine debris, habitat modification, recreational activities, accidental death as fisheries by-catch, chemical and terrestrial discharge, and vessel disturbance.

A close-up photograph of a person's hand, wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt, gently touching two white, oval-shaped turtle eggs on a sandy beach. The background is a soft-focus view of the ocean. The image is overlaid with a teal circular graphic in the upper left and a white circular graphic in the lower right.

Marine turtles are our ancient mariners. They have been around for the best part of 240 million years and each one can live between 50 and 100 years.

These ancient mariners have been living, breeding and nesting on our local beaches long before there were towns and suburbs. Its up to us now to ensure we all continue to survive and thrive together.

THE PLAN TO ACHIEVE OUR VISION

To achieve our long-term vision and primary goal, this Plan sets out desired outcomes and strategic directions under three overlapping and mutually supportive themes:



Strategic planning and policy guidance for turtle-sensitive lighting and coastal development



Regional marine turtle recovery actions



Sunshine Coast community based TurtleCare program delivery

The Plan identifies strategic directions and actions under each of these themes to further strengthen the existing highly successful community-based volunteer Turtle programs and associated citizen science activities. These actions include strong education, awareness, and ongoingzgnity, ensuring people and marine turtles co-exist in harmony on the Sunshine Coast.

The Plan also proposes improved governance arrangements to coordinate ongoing implementation, evaluation, and improvement of the Plan, in partnership with a range of stakeholders across the broader Sunshine Coast region.

Greater levels of human intervention are likely to be required to achieve the nesting and hatchling success rates necessary for recovery of stocks found on the Sunshine Coast. Therefore, an adaptive management approach has been identified as essential to allow appropriate response, ensure learning, and improve approaches from ongoing experience.



THEME ONE

TURTLE SENSITIVE LIGHTING AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT

We now have the technology, monitoring and mapping data to support this plan and our region's success — reducing light pollution and improving lifestyles.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

By 2033 to have:



strategic planning and policy guidance tools in place including:

(i) a regulatory framework for coastal development in the Sunshine Coast LGA that appropriately integrates State interests and the MTCP

(ii) educational guidance tools to support the development sector, property owners and residents to seek to achieve world best practice turtle sensitive development outcomes



development and implementation of lighting policies and standards that deliver a commitment to Dark Sky objectives and a naturally dark coastline at night, with minimisation of direct light sources and ambient light visible from sensitive nesting beaches and adjacent marine areas.



nesting beaches identified as future climate refugia and protected as part of integrated coastal hazard management Turtle sensitive lighting in public places.

TURTLE SENSITIVE LIGHTING IN PUBLIC PLACES

Sunshine Coast Council has already retrofitted many lights in public areas to be motion activated after 8pm and appropriately shielded from adjacent nesting habitat.

For example, the Point Cartwright Toilet Block has 14 lights—12 motion activated after 8pm and two shielded lights stay on all night. As a person approaches the building, the lights come on; as they enter a toilet stall, more lights come on, and after they leave the lights automatically turn off. Turtle sensitive lighting is a smarter approach to meeting human lighting needs in a way that helps recover marine turtle populations, as well as achieving greater energy efficiency.

NB: public safety is recognised as an important consideration in this approach.

THEME TWO



REGIONAL MARINE TURTLE RECOVERY ACTIONS

Given the increasing pressures and threats facing marine turtle populations globally, and the severely depleted status of local stocks, it is necessary to aim higher than simply maintaining the current population and to take well informed immediate and ongoing action.



DESIRED OUTCOMES

By 2033 to have:



the identified threats (that are under the influence of the Sunshine Coast Council) reduced to lowest residual risk level to minimise negative impacts on nesting marine turtle populations



sufficient resilient essential habitat to support effective marine turtle nesting, foraging and courtship behaviour



current male to female ratios maintained on the Sunshine Coast to ensure continued recruitment of male turtles to the breeding population

THREAT SIGNIFICANCE — SUNSHINE COAST

Priority threats to marine turtles nesting and foraging on the Sunshine Coast beaches and offshore areas.

- Climate change and vulnerability
- Light pollution
- Terrestrial predation
- Marine debris
- Habitat modification
- Recreation activities
- Fisheries by-catch and shark control nets
- Chemical and terrestrial discharge
- Vessel disturbance



THEME THREE

COMMUNITY BASED TURTLE CARE PROGRAM DELIVERY

Our strategic directions will ensure Council can continue to support over 200 dedicated volunteers to provide educational services to the community, and continue to monitor and protect nesting turtles and hatchlings on Sunshine Coast beaches.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

By 2033 to have:



the Sunshine Coast is recognised as a national and international leader in community-based marine turtle care program fully integrated into Queensland and Australian strategies



secure, adequate funding for TurtleCare (and allied programs) allows optimal contribution to monitoring, managing, and recovering marine turtles in line with world best-practices.



Kabi Kabi First Nation Peoples are fully integrated into marine turtle management — the knowledge, culture and traditions, traditional rights, interests, management capacity and customary obligations are respected, strengthened, valued, and promoted



a community of residents and visitors value marine turtles and are engaged in turtle conservation —community custodians/stewards

TURTLECARE PROGRAM EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

- The program is well organised and provides a positive, meaningful experience for volunteers, including opportunities to volunteer in other community activities.
- The leadership provided by the Sunshine Coast Council and recognised expertise in sea turtle conservation is highly regarded.
- Community awareness of the TurtleCare program is very high (90%).
- The program is supporting the Guideline aim to sustain an ongoing marine turtle monitoring program.
- Almost three quarters (74%) of surveyed residents are aware of actions needed to protect marine turtles.
- More than half (56%) of surveyed residents reported learning about turtle conservation by observing TurtleCare volunteers in action.

Credit: Dr Vikki Schaffer, University of Sunshine Coast



MAKING TRACKS TOGETHER –
MARINE TURTLES SURVIVING AND
THRIVING ON THE SUNSHINE COAST,
CO-EXISTING IN HARMONY WITH PEOPLE

Marine turtles enrich all life on the Sunshine Coast, and we are hopeful and determined to ensure their continued survival.

Great aspirations won't protect our marine life, foreshore habitats and valued lifestyle—only bold actions will.

Over the next ten years we can work together with the community to design, learn and practice living in harmony together.

Join us, and our community partners in putting marine turtles on a path to recovery.









Our region.
Healthy. Smart. Creative.

sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au
mail@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au
07 5475 7272
Locked Bag 72 Sunshine Coast Mail Centre Qld 4560