

Marine plants - a community resource

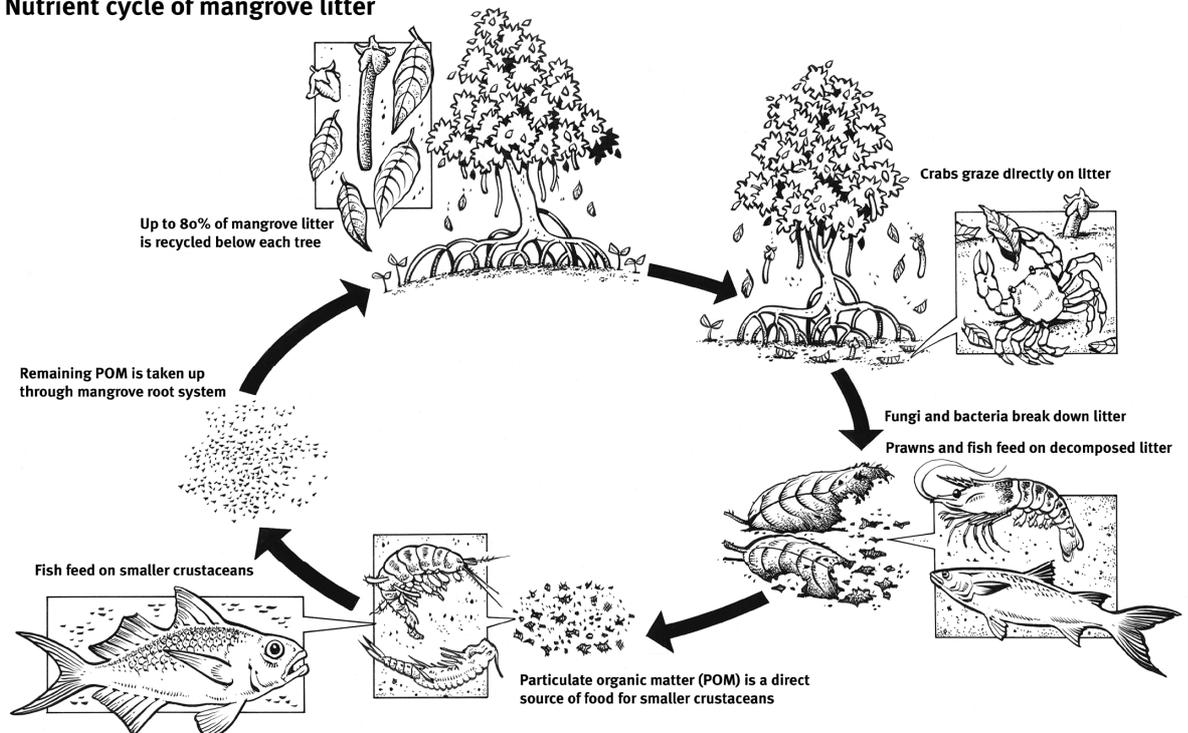
Which marine plants are protected in Queensland?

The *Fisheries Act 1994* specifically **protects all marine plants** in Queensland including seagrass, mangroves, salt couch and in specific circumstances, *Melaleuca* species. **The protection applies over all tenures, including privately owned land, leasehold and State lands.**

Why are all marine plants in Queensland protected?

Intertidal flats and marine plants provide habitats for both recreational and commercially important fish species and other aquatic species. These animals live in the sand and mud (e.g. worms, pipis and yabbies) or visit at high tide and are vital to the estuarine food chain. Disturbances, even of a minor nature, can disrupt this entire food chain and lead to a long term decline in fish production and general aquatic health.

Nutrient cycle of mangrove litter



What activities maybe considered to cause unacceptable disturbances?

Unacceptable disturbances to marine plants and other tidal habitats include:

- Destroying marine plants or fish habitats
- Pruning/trimming mangroves
- Reclaiming tidal lands with or without marine plants
- Dumping rubbish, chemicals, etc on tidal lands
- Poisoning marine plants (e.g. by herbicide spraying)
- Collecting mangrove timber, dead or live
- Collecting sea grass, dead or live
- Burning or mowing salt couch
- Works in a declared Fish Habitat area (jetties, boat ramps)
- Modifying fish habitats (e.g. by creating sandy beaches)
- Dredging tidal lands (e.g. to gain access to private facilities such as boat ramps or jetties)
- **Any of the above activities on PRIVATELY OWNED land**

Unless authorised, these activities are not supported.

What penalties apply for unauthorised disturbance?

1. Significant fines (**up to \$300,000**) may be imposed under the *Fisheries Act 1994* for unauthorised removal, destruction or damage of a marine plant or for unauthorised works within a declared Fish Habitat Areas.
2. A **Restoration Notice** may be issued under the provisions of the *Fisheries Act 1994* when fish habitat or marine plants have been damaged through causes such as polluting matter placed on land. The Notice will direct the list of actions to be followed to restore the fish habitats.
3. An **Enforcement Notice** may also be issued under the provisions of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* when a fish habitat or marine plants have been unlawfully disturbed.

What is authorised marine plant disturbance?

Protected marine plants may only be removed, damaged or destroyed if an approval, (i.e. a development approval or compliance with a self assessable code), has been issued by the Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries under provisions of both the *Fisheries Act 1994* and the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*.

Did you know?

- **Mangroves** have one of the most unique reproductive strategies in the plant world. Like most mammals, mangroves are **viviparous** (bringing forth live young), rather than producing dormant resting seeds like most flowering plants.
- Juvenile **tiger prawns** settle in **seagrass** and remain until they become adults – juvenile tiger prawns are found nowhere else
- **Dugong, green turtles, sea urchins and some fish** are the only animals able to feed directly of **seagrass** leaves
- **Fiddler crabs** live in **salt marsh** and graze amongst the plants for delicious morsels of dead plant material

The long-term benefits of protecting marine plants and of declaring Fish Habitat Areas for local fishing depend on ongoing community support. Please play your role in support of these important fisheries management measures.

If you observe any disturbance of marine plants at anytime, please contact the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol by phone on the **FISHWATCH HOTLINE No 1800 017 116** (free call) or 3860 3502.

Further information on marine plants and fish habitats, including DPI&F requirements for works involving habitat disturbance, can be located on the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries website: www.dpi.qld.gov.au/fishweb/ or telephone the **Call Centre on 13 25 23**.

If you are in any doubt about what falls within the term 'marine plants' please phone the **DPI&F Call Centre on 13 25 23** to be connected to your local Fisheries Centre for further clarification.