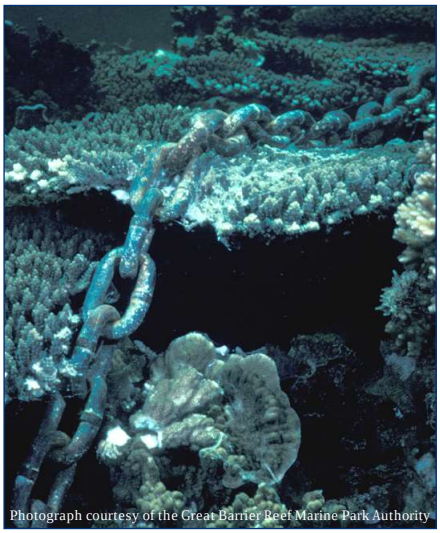
GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AUTHORITY
Queensland Government
Environmental Protection Agency
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

Public moorings and anchoring protecting coral in the Whitsundays

The Great Barrier Reef and its spectacular island national parks are home to an abundant and diverse marine life, attracting thousands of visitors each year. The magnificent corals are among the most popular attractions, yet they are the most vulnerable.



Anchor chains damage coral

Coral reefs can be damaged by:

- a vessel's anchor and chain dropping or dragging on coral;
- a vessel grounding when the wind changes or the tide ebbs; and
- a chain or rope wrapping around coral and breaking pieces off.

Coral can be killed or damaged by anchoring. It may take many years for the coral to recover. Some coral never returns to its original condition.

Public moorings and reef protection markers have been installed in a number of locations throughout the Great Barrier Reef to reduce anchor damage.

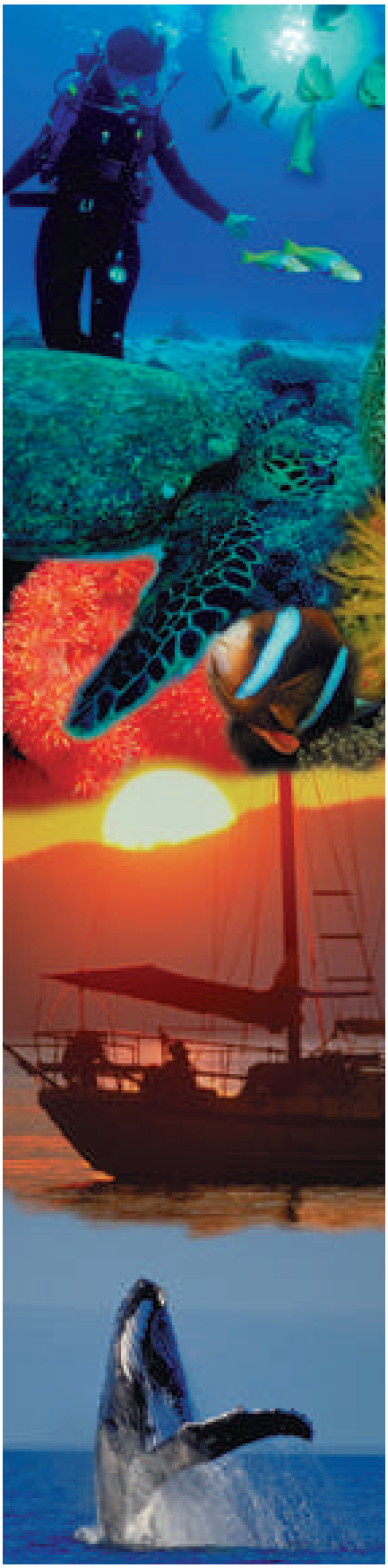
Under the Whitsundays Plan of Management it is an offence to damage coral.

Public moorings

Public moorings are blue, double-cone shaped buoys with a colour-coded band. Five classes of moorings have been standardised throughout the marine park to cater for different vessel types and lengths.

The mooring specifications and conditions of use are displayed on the colour-coded band and on the mooring tag attached to the pick-up line (see table overleaf). A large number of privately owned moorings also exist within the marine park. You should obtain the permission of the owner before using a privately owned mooring.

Public mooring buoy - this illustrates a B class mooring



Use of moorings

- All public moorings are available for overnight use.
- All public moorings have a time access limit on day use. This means that a vessel cannot occupy a mooring for longer than the time limit specified on the mooring tag between the hours of 7am and 5pm. Most moorings have a limit of either 2 or 4 hours. This has been introduced to ensure fair and equitable use of the moorings. If a vessel picks up a mooring at or after 3pm it may remain on the mooring overnight and is not required to vacate the mooring until 9am the next day.
- Public moorings must not be used by more than one craft at a time (ancillary craft exempted), unless otherwise stated.
- Take care to comply with all information displayed on the mooring tag.
- It is an offence to remove, misuse, or engage in conduct that results in damage to a public mooring.

How to pick up a mooring

- Take note of the prevailing wind and tides, then approach the mooring buoy by motoring into the wind or tide (whichever is stronger).
- Observe the colour-coded band on the buoy to ensure your vessel is within the size and wind strength limitations for the mooring.
- Take care to avoid running over the pick-up line when approaching the mooring.
- Using a boat hook, retrieve the pick-up line.
- Observe the mooring tag attached to the pick-up line for information on the limits of use.
- Attach the pick-up eye to a cleat or strong point on the bow of the vessel. Do not attach another line to the pick-up line. This will increase the swing circle of the vessel and may lead to vessel or reef damage.

Mooring buoy, pick-up tag and pick-up line.

How to drop a mooring

- Motor slowly towards the mooring to slacken the line slightly.
- Cast the pick-up line well clear of the vessel.
- Reverse away from the mooring buoy and lines.

Please note:
Public moorings are generally located near drying reefs or shorelines and extreme care should be exercised in approaching and departing public moorings. Public moorings should not be accessed at night or in conditions of low light or poor visibility.

Colour-coded band & mooring tag:

BROWN

YELLOW

GREEN

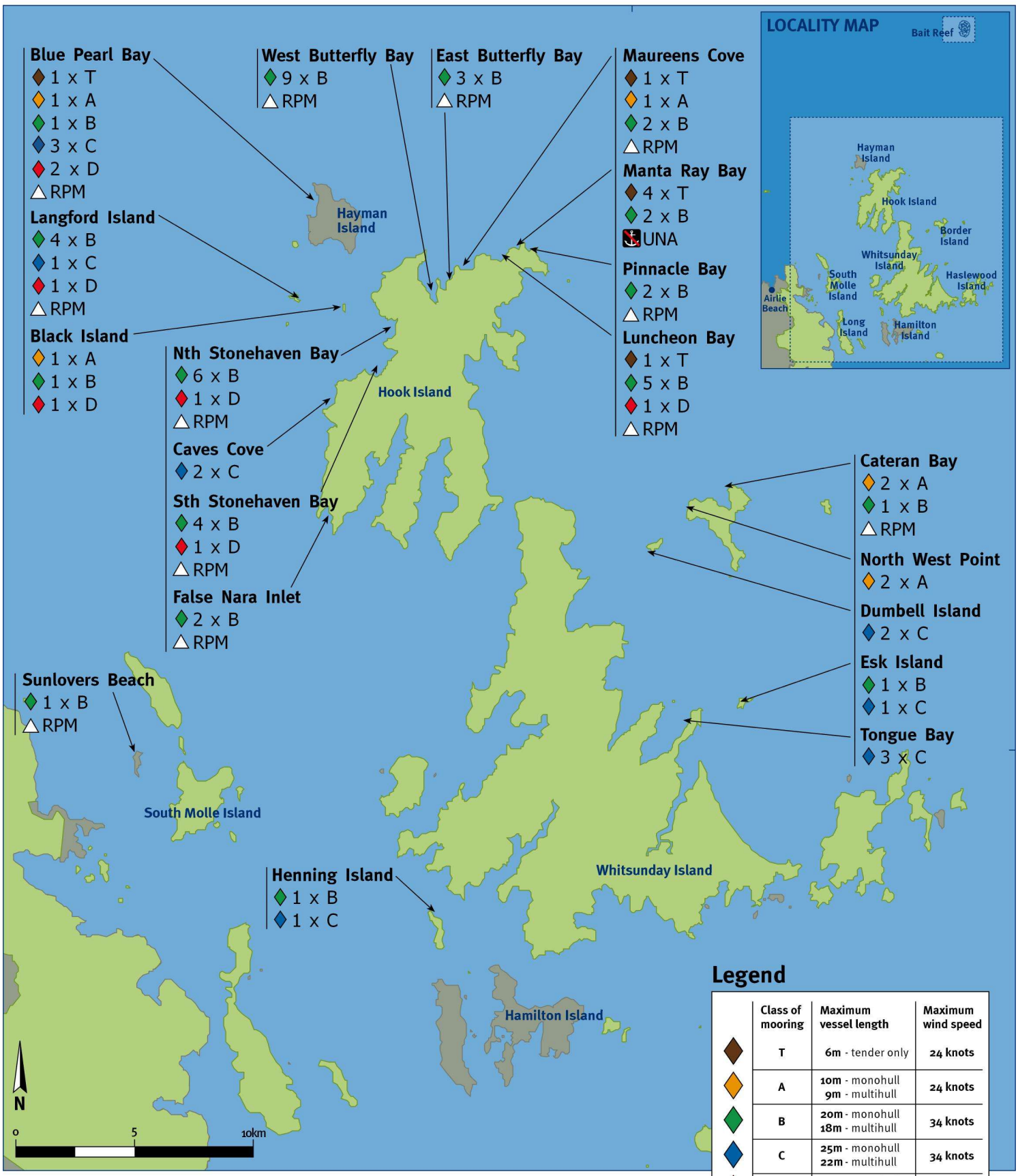
BLUE

RED

Pick-up tag

Class of mooring	Maximum vessel length	Maximum wind speed
T	6m - tender only	24 knots
A	10m - monohull 9m - multihull	24 knots
B	20m - monohull 18m - multihull	34 knots
C	25m - monohull 22m - multihull	34 knots
D	35m - monohull 30m - multihull	34 knots

Location of public moorings and reef protection markers



Legend

	Class of mooring	Maximum vessel length	Maximum wind speed
◆	T	6m - tender only	24 knots
◆	A	10m - monohull 9m - multihull	24 knots
◆	B	20m - monohull 18m - multihull	34 knots
◆	C	25m - monohull 22m - multihull	34 knots
◆	D	35m - monohull 30m - multihull	34 knots
△	Reef protection marker		
	Unmarked no-anchoring area		
	National Park		

This map is not to be used for navigational purposes. Marine park zoning and other regulations apply within the marine park. Please ensure you have up to date information.

Anchoring restrictions and reef protection markers

Reef protection markers

Some fragile reef areas are marked by white pyramid shaped buoys (joined by an imaginary line) with blue marine park labels – these are reef protection markers. Anchoring is not allowed inshore of the line of buoys. Reef protection markers must not be used to moor vessels but may be used as a descent line for diving. For location see the map centre page.

Diagram showing typical placement of reef protection markers

Unmarked no-anchoring sites

Manta Ray Bay (Hook Island) and parts of Bait Reef are also closed to anchoring, but no reef protection markers are present. See map centre page and refer to the Whitsundays Amended Plan of Management (June 2002).

Anchor with care outside reef protection markers

Please ensure you follow best environmental practices:

- Carry enough chain, or chain and line, for the depth.
- Anchor in sand or mud away from corals.
- If anchoring on coral is unavoidable, a reef pick must be used to minimise damage.
- Motor towards the anchor while retrieving it. If the anchor is stuck, motor the vessel above and slightly ahead of the anchor before retrieval.
- Anchor far enough outside the line of reef protection markers to ensure that all parts of the ground tackle (anchor chain and rope) will remain outside the line of markers if the vessel swings.

Reef protection marker

For further information

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