

Bowling Green Bay Fish Habitat Area Proposed Partial Revocation

About AIMS

AIMS' is Australia's tropical marine research agency. It is established under the Australian Institute of Marine Science Act 1972 (AIMS Act), which outlines the performance of AIMS' functions and the exercise of its powers.

AIMS' mission is to provide the research and knowledge of Australia's tropical marine estate required to support growth in its sustainable use, effective environmental management and protection of its unique ecosystems.

To accomplish our mission, AIMS delivers independent science that underpins decision-making and environmental management of Queensland's tropical waters, including by the Queensland Government and departments such as the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science, and Innovation (DETSI) and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

AIMS Infrastructure

Since 1976 AIMS has owned and operated marine infrastructure at its Cape Ferguson headquarters, 50km south of Townsville. The 50-year-old infrastructure is critical to AIMS scientific operations and requires urgent refurbishment and/or upgrade.

AIMS harbour comprises a single lane boat ramp, wharf, pontoon and a rock armoured breakwater in Chunda Bay.

AIMS operates 2 seawater intakes for seawater use in the scientific research aquaria onsite at Cape Ferguson. An additional intake is required to meet expanded demand for seawater for critical science research on the sustainability of the Great Barrier Reef.

Based on advice from the DPI, the proposed partial revocation of the Bowling Green Bay declared Fish Habitat Area (FHA) is required to enable AIMS to progress maintenance and potential upgrades to the existing infrastructure through QLD state environmental approval processes.

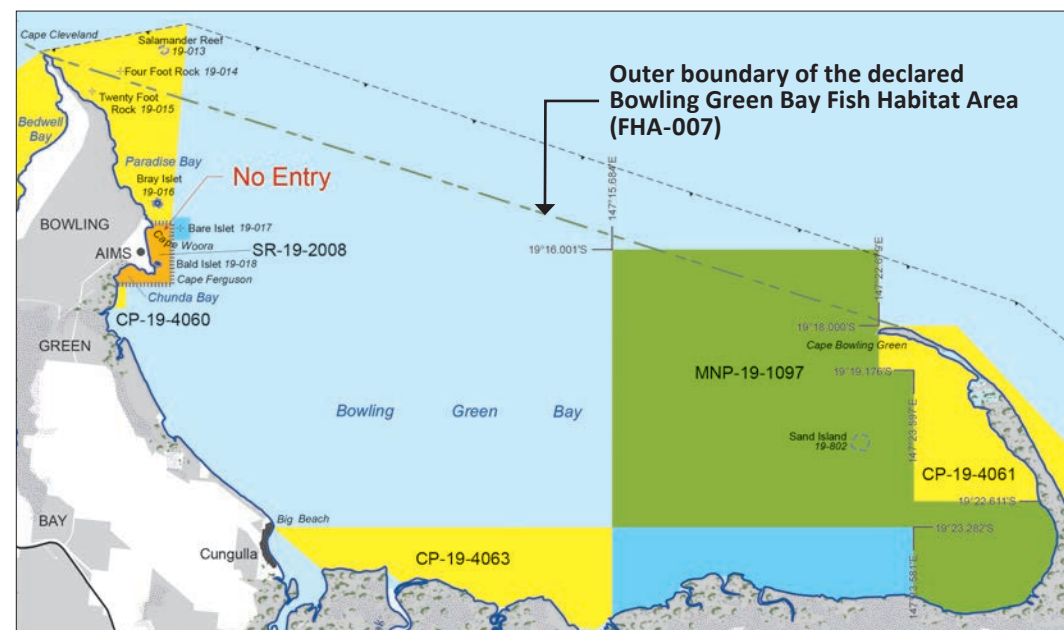


Figure 1: Protected Area boundaries extracted from Map 7 - Townsville Marine Park Zoning Map showing the AIMS Scientific Zone (SR-19-2008) within the FHA (FHA-007). There is no public access to the Scientific Zone.



Figure 2: AIMS Scientific zone boundary (orange outline) showing the proposed partial revocation areas (green outline).

History of Protected Areas at Cape Ferguson

AIMS headquarters were established at Cape Ferguson on the Cape Cleveland Road in 1974. AIMS have been operating research vessels out of the harbour established in Chunda Bay and extracting seawater for experiments at Cape Ferguson since 1976. Existing infrastructure includes a seawall, jetty, boat ramp, floating pontoon and two offshore seawater intake pipelines. This infrastructure is approaching end of life and requires urgent maintenance and refurbishment.

The Bowling Green Bay declared Fish Habitat Area was first declared in 1989 and was redeclared in 1998. The FHA is managed as a Management 'A' level FHA under the Queensland Fisheries Act 1994 and the Fisheries (General) Regulation 2019. The declaration and management of FHAs is to provide protection of fisheries resources from physical disturbance while allowing legal fishing and community use. The existing AIMS infrastructure is located inside the FHA outer boundary of Plan No. FHA-007. <https://shorturl.at/EANdG>

In 2004 a Scientific Zone was declared as part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan within the FHA. The zone included the existing AIMS infrastructure. The AIMS scientific zone is access by permit only (i.e. not publicly accessible).

Current Status (2025): Under the Operational policy Management of declared Fish Habitat Areas (QPWS/2015/1240) and the Fisheries (General) Regulation 2019, works in the Management A area that are to maintain or improve the existing AIMS infrastructure which is now 50 years old cannot be undertaken.

On advice of DPI, AIMS is preparing a Revocation Assessment Study to request DPI's assessment of an application for partial revocation (0.07% of the total area) of the Bowling Green Bay declared FHA so that maintenance and improvements can be planned to allow for the next 50 - 100 years of operation of these facilities.

The partial revocation area identified in Figure 2 remains within the declared Great Barrier Reef Marine Park scientific zone, which excludes public access, and any planned, proposed and future activities will go through the required environmental approval process inclusive of any associated environmental assessments and further public consultation.

The proposed partial revocation area nominated has been minimised to cover essential AIMS infrastructure requirements while allowing for some limited future development.

The outcomes of the public consultation process will be submitted to DPI as a component of the Revocation Assessment Study to inform ministerial consideration of the proposed revocation application.

AIMS PARTIAL FHA REVOCATION AREAS

Under the Operational policy Management of declared Fish Habitat Areas (QPWS/2015/1240) and Fisheries (General) Regulation 2019, works in the Management A area that are to maintain or improve the existing AIMS infrastructure which is now 50 years old cannot be undertaken. https://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/2018172/fha-management-policy.pdf

AIMS is requesting a partial revocation of the FHA so that works can be planned that will allow for future operations out of these facilities. The proposed area to be investigated during the Revocation Assessment Study is 45.4 ha. This area makes up 0.07% of the existing Bowling Green Bay FHA (FHA – 007) – See figures 1 and 2. The existing FHA is 68,573 Ha.

To ensure the lowest impact partial revocation area AIMS is proposing three small revocation area(s) in line with DPI requirements to minimise the area of revocation while contemplating current and future AIMS requirements (Figure 3);

1. An area around the existing AIMS harbour which encompasses existing operations and allows for future harbour upgrades.
2. An area around a proposed additional seawater inlet pipeline running between the mainland and to the north of Bald Islet.
3. An area around 2 existing pipelines which lies between the mainland and North and South of Bald Islet.

AIMS has no plans for any development or works that would impact the intertidal zones and mangroves inside the revocation areas.

The partial revocation area identified remains within the declared scientific zone, which excludes public access, and any planned proposed and future activities will go through normal environmental approval requirements for tidal works which include environmental assessments and public consultation.

Existing AIMS Harbour (Revocation Area 1- 38.8 Ha)

AIMS harbour infrastructure (Boat Ramp, Seawall and Jetty) are at end of life and in urgent need of refurbishment. AIMS are seeking partial revocation of this area so that refurbishment works, and possible upgrades can be approved. AIMS will work with regulators and marine engineers to identify the best solutions to minimise any environmental disturbance while returning the harbour to full operational capability. Future activities in this area will go through normal environmental approval requirements for tidal works which include environmental assessments and further public consultation.



Figure 3: Proposed Revocation Areas (Google Maps).

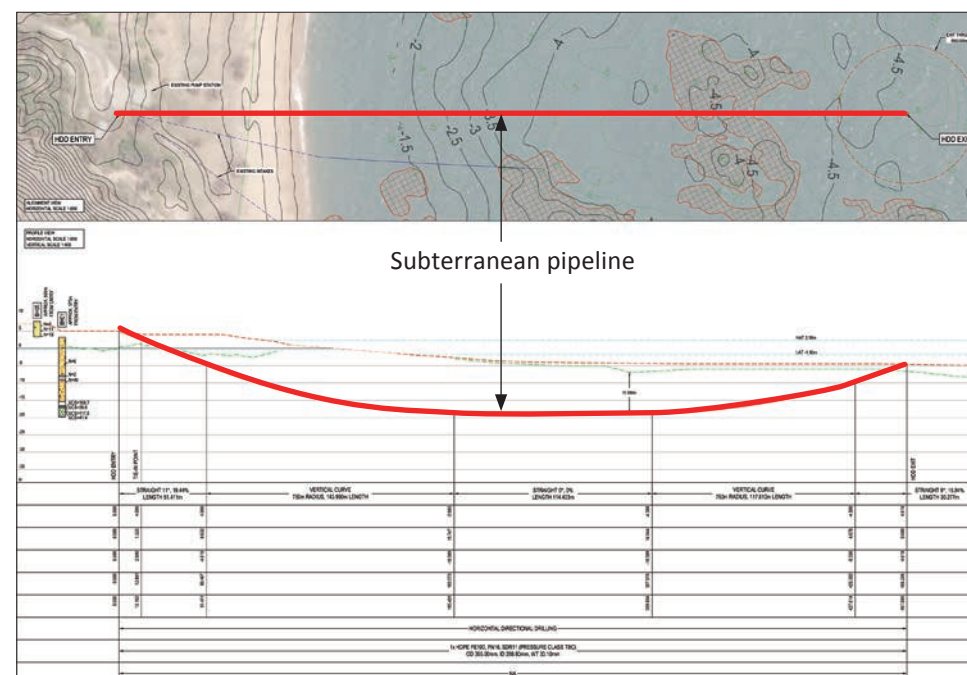


Figure 4: AIMS Seawater Supply Upgrade - Profile and Alignment Drawing (Pipeline Drillers).

New Seawater Inlet (Revocation Area 2 – 1.8 Ha)

AIMS requires an upgrade to the existing seawater supply to supply expanded experimental facilities used for critical research into tropical marine environments to support their sustainable use.

AIMS is proposing to construct a new seawater inlet to the North of Bald Islet and the existing Northern seawater inlet. Advancements in drilling equipment and equipment mean that the inlet pipeline can be directionally drilled a greater distance offshore below the seabed minimising the length of pipe laying on the seabed. Design is for approximately 40m of pipe laying on the seabed surface for access and maintenance purposes. The proposed revocation area represents a 75m buffer zone around the pipeline inlet which will be approximately 2m above the seabed in 4.5m of water depth. (See figure 4).

AIMS will require access to the pipeline approximately 3 times a year to clear biofouling from the interior of the pipeline and ensure optimal operations using divers and pipe cleaning equipment.

Existing Seawater Inlets (Revocation Area 3 – 4.8 Ha)

AIMS has been extracting seawater offshore from Turtle beach since the 1970's. The existing seawater intake pipelines (running across the seabed to inlets North and South of Bald Islet) have been in continuous operation since the late 1970s with upgrades undertaken in 2008. Maintenance inspections and removal of internal biofouling occurs approximately 3 times per year. The inlets and pipelines are accessed by divers using pipe cleaning equipment.

The proposed partial revocation of the Fish Habitat Area around this infrastructure would allow AIMS to continue to maintain and safely operate the seawater intakes while allowing for future replacement or refurbishment.

For further information:

<https://www.aims.gov.au/public-consultation>

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End date for consultation:

Sunday 20th July 2025

