

REVISED DRAFT

Queensland Crocodile Management Plan

Summary of key changes

May 2024



Queensland
Government

OVERVIEW

The Queensland Government is undertaking consultation on a revised draft of the Queensland Crocodile Management Plan (draft plan), which provides the framework for managing estuarine (saltwater) crocodiles in Queensland.

The draft plan aims to balance the highest possible levels of public safety with the conservation of crocodile populations in areas of crocodile habitat (Croc Country).

The draft plan also aims to:

- provide a consistent approach to crocodile management for Queensland
- ensure an evidence-based approach to conserving estuarine crocodiles while increasing public safety
- define the crocodile management zones and explain how the Queensland Government manages crocodiles in each zone
- outline the risks posed by crocodiles in Queensland.

The draft plan uses a ‘response-based’ management approach, which involves taking appropriate action based on the crocodile management zone where the animal is located.





The need for a review of the plan

In 2021, an independent expert committee, found the Queensland Crocodile Management Program was world-class, fit for purpose and highly effective in reducing the risks to public safety while conserving crocodile populations in the wild.

The committee made a number of recommendations designed to further strengthen and improve the plan.

This revised draft plan has been developed in response to those recommendations and to help increase community understanding about crocodile management.

Review of the draft plan has been informed by evidence-based science including the findings of key monitoring and research work undertaken by the Queensland Government and external experts.

QUEENSLAND ESTUARINE CROCODILE FACTS



Estuarine (saltwater) crocodiles are a threatened species, listed as Vulnerable under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.



They were hunted to the brink of extinction in Queensland until they were protected in 1974.



It is estimated there are currently between 20,000 and 30,000 non-hatchling crocodiles (those bigger than 60cm) in Queensland.



The number and density of crocodiles is highest in the northern Cape York Peninsula.



20% of crocodiles occur along the east coast, south of Cooktown.



The number and density of crocodiles is lowest in the southern-most parts of their range including the Fitzroy River, at Rockhampton.



90% of the population exists in areas less than 20m above sea level.



The Estuarine Crocodile Population Monitoring in Queensland (1979–2019) Technical Report indicated that the average size of the animals has decreased along the northern populated east coast (NPEC) between Cooktown and Ayr. This is likely due to the regular removal of ‘problem crocodiles’ as part of the Queensland Crocodile Management Program over the previous 10 years.



The overall distribution of crocodiles in Queensland has not significantly changed over time and there is no evidence the population has expanded southwards.



CONSULTATION

A revised draft of the plan is now open for consultation.

What's proposed to change

The most significant changes in the revised draft plan include:

- updates to the crocodile management zones
 - » consolidation of the number of zones from six to four (note: there are no major changes to the current locations/boundaries of the existing zones)
 - » changes to the names of the zones
 - » changes to some existing zone areas (either by zone type and/or boundary).
- the introduction of an annual feedback process for the plan, including the opportunity for members of the public to request changes to the crocodile management zones.
- information about trials to proactively change crocodile behaviour using conditioning techniques (such as hazing) to increase wariness and drive them away from high-use recreation areas.

The revised draft plan also includes changes to provide clearer information about:

- the risks and management responses for each zone to help improve the community's understanding about crocodile management in their area
- how 'problem crocodiles' are identified, targeted for removal and what happens to those that have been removed.





What isn't proposed to change

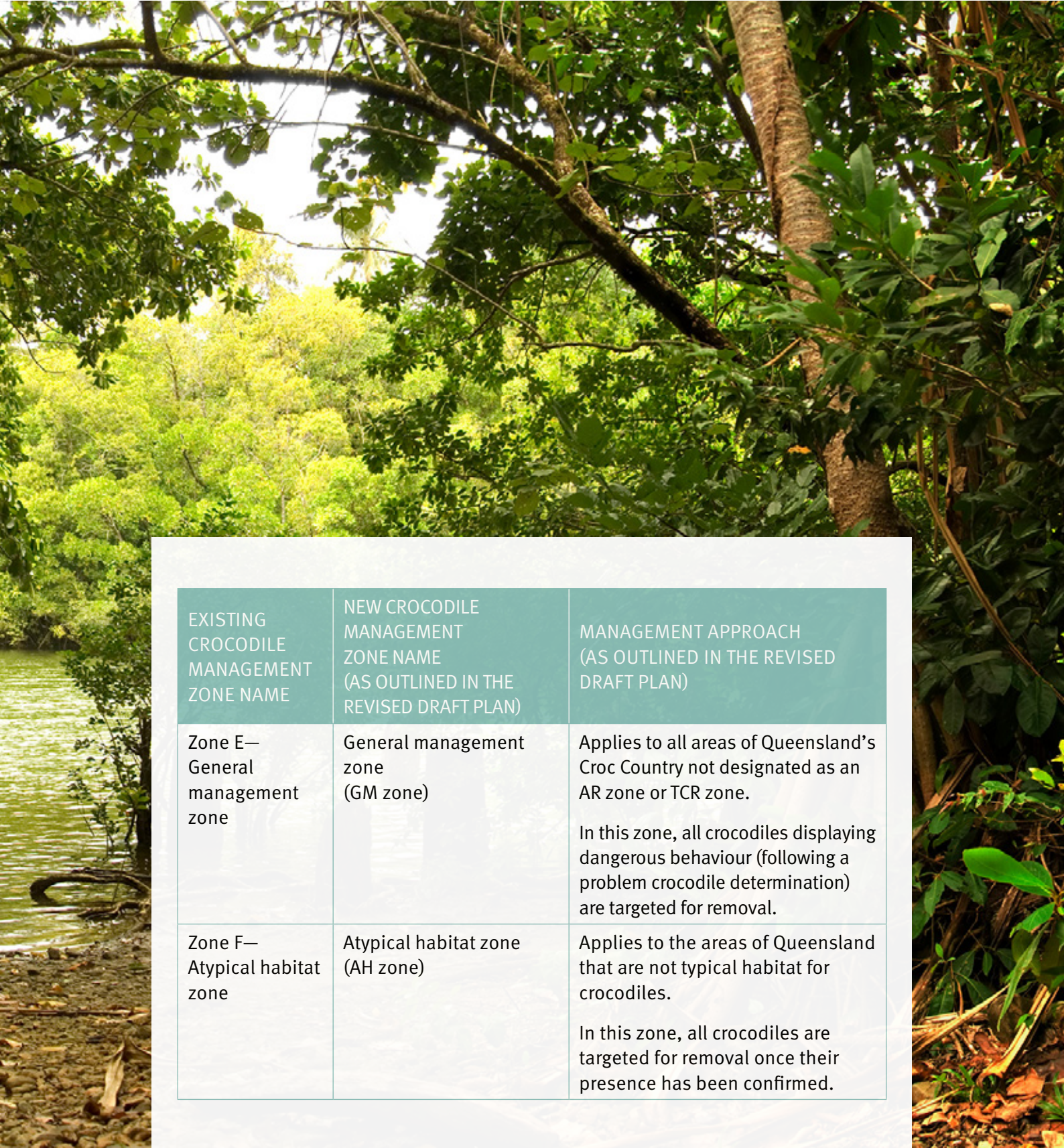
- Crocodiles that pose a threat to human safety will continue to be targeted for removal in line with the requirements of the different management zones.
- Based on scientific research and modelling, no change is proposed to the current response-based management approach. This means there would be no targeted increase in the number of larger crocodiles (2.4 metres or more in length) removed from along the populated east coast of Queensland each year.
- This decision has been informed by the *Modelling population dynamics of estuarine crocodiles on Queensland's northern populated east coast (NPEC)* study, which found that:
 - » continuing the current rate of removal beyond 2022 is 'likely a safe strategy from a species conservation standpoint and as an effective public safety management strategy'
 - » the NPEC crocodile population is not at risk of extinction in the foreseeable future unless there is a significant change in crocodile management practices.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES

1. Queensland crocodile management zones

The following table outlines proposed changes to the existing crocodile management zones. This includes the number of zones as well as the zone name and management approach.

EXISTING CROCODILE MANAGEMENT ZONE NAME	NEW CROCODILE MANAGEMENT ZONE NAME (AS OUTLINED IN THE REVISED DRAFT PLAN)	MANAGEMENT APPROACH (AS OUTLINED IN THE REVISED DRAFT PLAN)
Zone A—Barrier and removal zone	Merged with Zone B and included in the Active removal zone (AR zone)	
Zone B—Active removal zone	Active removal zone (AR zone)	Applies to areas where the risk of human–crocodile interaction is high due to the significant number of people living in the area. In this zone, all estuarine crocodiles—regardless of size or behaviour—are targeted for removal.
Zone C—Targeted management zone	Targeted crocodile removal zone (TCR zone)	Applies to areas near urban centres and popular leisure sites where the risk of human–crocodile interaction is high. In this zone, all large crocodiles, and any crocodile displaying dangerous behaviour (following a problem crocodile determination), are targeted for removal.
Zone D—Transitory zone	Merged with Zone C and included in the Targeted crocodile removal zone (TCR zone)	



EXISTING CROCODILE MANAGEMENT ZONE NAME	NEW CROCODILE MANAGEMENT ZONE NAME (AS OUTLINED IN THE REVISED DRAFT PLAN)	MANAGEMENT APPROACH (AS OUTLINED IN THE REVISED DRAFT PLAN)
Zone E— General management zone	General management zone (GM zone)	<p>Applies to all areas of Queensland’s Croc Country not designated as an AR zone or TCR zone.</p> <p>In this zone, all crocodiles displaying dangerous behaviour (following a problem crocodile determination) are targeted for removal.</p>
Zone F— Atypical habitat zone	Atypical habitat zone (AH zone)	<p>Applies to the areas of Queensland that are not typical habitat for crocodiles.</p> <p>In this zone, all crocodiles are targeted for removal once their presence has been confirmed.</p>

2. Changes to existing crocodile management zone areas

The following table outlines proposed changes introduced in the draft plan to some existing crocodile management zone areas (either by zone type and/or boundary).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA	PROPOSED CHANGE
Hinchinbrook Shire Council	Re-zoning part of the Tyto Wetlands from the current Zone E general management zone to become a Targeted crocodile removal (TCR) zone.
Mareeba Shire Council	Re-zoning of Southedge Dam (Lake Mitchell) from the current Zone E general management zone to become an Atypical habitat zone.
Rockhampton Regional Council	Re-zoning of lagoons adjoining the gardens from the current Zone E general management zone to become a Targeted crocodile removal (TCR) zone.

3. Annual feedback process

Each year, there will be a four (4) week period when the community can request evidence-based changes to the crocodile management zones.

The annual review process means that as new risks are identified and verified, changes to the location and/or boundaries of the crocodile management zones could be made as required—and not be restricted to the plan’s formal 5-year review cycle.

Any amendments to a crocodile management zone map will include consideration of matters relevant to the conservation of crocodiles as well as public safety.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Specifically, the consultation is seeking feedback on how clearly the revised draft plan explains:

- overall goals and objectives
- new crocodile management zone names and maps
- how crocodiles are managed in each zone
- process for removing crocodiles and what happens to them
- annual review process for crocodile management zones.

HOW TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK

You can either:

1. Complete the online survey

www.qld.gov.au/QCMPconsultation

2. Lodge a written submission:

Email:

des.crocodiles@des.qld.gov.au

or

3. Post:

Queensland Crocodile Management Plan consultation
Department of Environment and Science
GPO Box 2454
Brisbane Qld 4001

Consultation closes at
Wednesday 5 June 2024 at 11.59pm

