Fish Habitat in SEQ

Any recreational fisher knows that fishing is all about the experience – relaxing with friends, connecting with nature, escaping the hustle and bustle and enjoying some down time in beautiful places. Recreation fishing however would not be possible without healthy fish habitats.

Healthy, balanced aquatic ecosystems such as seagrass, mangroves, coral reefs and saltmarsh are essential for fish. They provide habitat, food, shelter and nursing grounds. Connectivity between marine and freshwater systems is also critical for many of our fish species.

Seagrass meadows in Moreton Bay stabilise the sea floor and provide food for dugongs, turtles and critical fish habitat.

Mangroves filter sediment carried by rivers improving water quality and provide marine habitats. Mangroves protect coastal areas from erosion, support marine food chains in areas both adjacent to and remote from the mangrove areas themselves, maintain coastal water quality, and provide significant structurally complex habitats for invertebrates and juvenile fish (often species of commercial and recreational importance)

In SEQ **saltmarsh** is uniquely adapted to our subtropical environment. Plants include marine couch, samphire or succulent herbs and other salt tolerant plants and animals that are found mostly along the upper intertidal zone of coastal waterways and estuaries.

Moreton Bay is the southernmost **coral** stronghold on mainland Australia's east coast with reef-building corals occurring principally on natural reefs at Peel Island, Green Island, Myora, St Helena Island, Mud Island, Wellington Point/Cleveland and Flinders Reef.

Unfortunately, we know that fish habitat is increasingly under threat in SEQ. This is mainly due to a decline in water quality, loss of the extent and quality of fish habitat and a loss of connectivity across our catchments for fish species to travel to breed and reproduce.

Fish Habitat Threats

Sediment pollution is one of the major threats to fish habitat in South East Queensland waterways.

Over 50,000 dump trucks worth of sediment enters the region's waterways each year. During the January 2013 floods, Brisbane came within six hours of running out of drinking water after muddy river water threatened to shut down the Mt Crosby Treatment Plant.

The main causes of seagrass loss in Moreton Bay are related to suspended sediment and increased nutrients, although direct removal for coastal development has caused localised losses that may be minor in isolation but cumulatively significant.

Fish Habitat is in decline around the world but we can all take actions to conserve our fish populations, as well as the natural assets that support our lifestyles and economies.

Here in South East Queensland we are uniquely placed to make a real difference to the health of our native species and habitats. Native vegetation along our waterways is critical to the protection of creeks and rivers, while providing critical habitat for fish, increased biodiversity and shading.

Managing livestock access and revegetating these waterways is also a key strategy for maintaining biodiversity.

At Healthy Land and Water we facilitate riparian revegetation activities among others, which involves the establishment of trees and shrubs on banks to offer protection from erosion and slumping, and vegetation on top of the bank to act as a sediment and nutrient filter.

These projects have a beneficial impact on terrestrial biodiversity around these waterways, while helping to reduce sediment pollution and therefore protecting aquatic and marine biodiversity as well.

We need your help to protect the fishing future of SEQ. You can help by becoming an OzFish member today or contacting Healthy Land and Water to find out more!