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TITLE: Marine zoning revisited: How decades of zoning the Great Barrier Reef has evolved as an effective spatial planning approach for marine ecosystem?based management

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ABSTRACT:

Abstract For more than 40 years, marine zoning has played a key role while evolving as part of the adaptive management of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) Marine Park. The statutory zoning plan provides the primary integrating component that prohibits many threatening activities and manages the impacts of allowed human activities and competing uses by means of various zones, special management areas and other spatial management tools. How zoning is applied, however, has changed considerably since the first zoning plan was finalized in 1981. Today, zoning is applied in combination with other layers of marine spatial planning; the effective combination of these management tools provides the integrated approach, considered one of the best for managing a large marine protected area. The zoning plan provides the foundation for management of the GBR and is the fundamental component of the integrated marine spatial planning approach ensuring high levels of protection for significant areas of the GBR, while also allowing ecologically sustainable use. The paper outlines the legal and managerial contexts of zoning, providing 38 lessons that may be useful for marine zoning and ecosystem?based management elsewhere. It outlines aspects of zoning that have worked well in the GBR Marine Park and what has changed in the light of experience and changing contexts, and seeks to clarify various misconceptions about zoning and marine spatial planning. The integrated management approach in the GBR utilizes a variety of spatial planning tools, which complement the underlying zoning; some of these comprise statutory management layers (e.g. designated shipping areas, special management areas, plans of management, fishery management arrangements, Traditional Owner agreements, defence training areas); other layers are non?statutory (e.g. site plans). This paper is written for planners, managers and decision?makers considering the use of zoning to achieve effective marine conservation, protection and ecologically sustainable use.

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