

Queensland waterways for waterway barrier works mapping

User guide

Version 3 (October 2023)

This publication has been compiled by Fisheries Queensland, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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Waterways are dynamic systems and in a constant state of change, which may not be reflected in the *Queensland waterways for waterway barrier works* mapping. The information portrayed is therefore subject to revision.

Where the fitness of the mapping in representing the site on the ground is in question, the responsibility for ensuring that the appropriate procedures are employed at the site rests solely with the user. Therefore, the mapping should not be the only source for identifying the relation of a development site to a waterway. Insufficient site-waterway identification for barrier works may risk prosecution or other action under provisions of the *Planning Act 2016* and the *Fisheries Act 1994*.

Version control

| Version | Purpose of revision | Original draftee/s | Reviewer/s | Review date | Approver | Approval date |
|---------|---|---|--|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1.0 | Original document | Claire Peterken Tim Marsden | - | - | Andrew Thwaites | March 2013 |
| 2.0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update to reflect terminology changes and assessment requirements under the <i>Planning Act 2016</i>. - Update to reflect departmental names and acronyms after machinery-of-government changes in 2017. - Addition of 'Awards and recognition' section. - Replacement of colour-coding section, with additional sections that clarify the classification and symbolisation of waterways. - Replacement of term 'fish passage value' with 'fish passage attribute' and context about, and intended use of, the number and colour it denotes. - Amendment of Table 1 to interpret development application fees. - Amendment of Table 2 to clarify link between the waterway mapping and the applicable accepted development requirements work type for waterway barrier works. - Expansion of accuracy and data quality section to guide users in interpreting waterway mapping (new images added). - Addition of mapping anomalies section (includes new images). - Advice for providing feedback about the waterways layer, and when waterway determinations that differ from the mapping may be considered. - Addition of details of how to access the spatial data layer under the 'Availability' section. - Addition of 'Definitions'. | Ian Draper James Giugni Hans Wurzel | Richard Stewart Bart Mackenzie Nikki Moore | April 2021 | Eddie Jebreen | April 2021 |
| 2.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amendment of name of guideline. - Clarification of use of guide as a self-assessable activity for accepted development. - Correction of minor errors. | Bart MacKenzie | Nikki Moore | January 2023 | Samuel Williams | April 2023 |
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Introduction

To protect and manage fish passage and fish habitat in Queensland waterways, waterway barrier works (when barriers to fish movement, including partial barriers, are installed across waterways) are regulated under the *Fisheries Act 1994* and the *Planning Act 2016*. Constructing and raising waterway barrier works includes new construction and filling in, or diversion of, waterways as well as raising existing waterway barriers and replacement and maintenance works on existing barrier structures in waterways. Some common examples include culvert crossings, bed-level and low-level crossings, fill placement and weirs and dams located within waterways. Relevant provisions of the Fisheries Act and Planning Act apply regardless of whether impacts are permanent or temporary. Some common examples of temporary works may include any of those mentioned earlier as well as bunding, fill, pipelines or silt curtains located within waterways.

Prior to 2005, all operational work within a waterway to construct or raise waterway barriers was assessable development. In February 2005, the first series of 'self-assessable codes' for waterway barrier works were released. One code was limited to permanent works on minor low-stream ordered inland waterways more than 100 km from the coast. The other code permitted temporary waterway barrier works (in place for no more than 28 days) within freshwater waterways, with dimensions no greater than 20 m long, 5 m wide and 3 m high.

In 2010 and 2011, further amendments to these self-assessable development codes were introduced. They were expanded to cover some minor dams and weirs, culvert crossings, bed-level crossings and certain maintenance works in both fresh and tidal waters. The code specifications related to the definition of a waterway in the Fisheries Act and, at that time, there was no mapping to aid interpretation. Consequently, there was some difficulty for users to apply the codes to specific site conditions for construction and compliance purposes.

The definition of a waterway under the Fisheries Act is broad to cover relevant fish habitats. In 2013, Queensland-wide mapping was developed to assist with the identification of waterways providing for fish passage. The mapping was based on the best physical and hydrological spatial data available at the time. The release of the *Queensland waterways for waterway barrier works* mapping was accompanied by the release of updates to 4 of the 6 self-assessable development codes. These changes made the use of the self-assessable codes considerably more efficient and effective, with approximately 80% of this type of development then being undertaken through self-assessment in Queensland. The *Queensland waterways for waterway barrier works* mapping has been updated twice since 2013, most recently in 2023.

In July 2017, the self-assessable codes were transitioned into *Accepted development requirements for fisheries development*, to coincide with the commencement of the Planning Act. The multiple self-assessable codes for constructing or raising waterway barrier works before this time were replaced by a single accepted development requirement document for all waterway barrier work types that were made accepted development. A high level of development of this type (approximately 80%) has continued through this system.

The Planning Act provides a streamlined process for development categorised as accepted development. Under the Planning Act, works that comply **in all respects** with Fisheries Queensland's *Accepted development requirements for operational work that is constructing or raising waterway barrier works* are able to proceed without having to apply for the works as assessable development. Visit fisheries.qld.gov.au for information that describes a number of works and types of structures that have been excluded from consideration as waterway barrier works. All other waterway barrier works are assessable development subject to the development application process. This requires the developer to submit application forms, fees and supporting information to the State Assessment and Referral Agency (SARA). Fisheries Queensland provides technical advice as part of the SARA process.

Purpose

The *Queensland waterways for waterway barrier works* mapping was developed as a tool that is complementary to the use of the *Accepted development requirements for operational work that is constructing or raising waterway barrier works*. It is also used to help determine whether the site of proposed waterway barrier works requires approval under the Planning Act.

The *Queensland waterways for waterway barrier works* mapping helps identify waterways defined by the Fisheries Act and the fisheries interest in waterways providing fish passage (a matter of state environmental significance under the *Environmental Offsets Act 2014*). Legislation overrides guidance such as this document and the mapping. The definition of a waterway under the Fisheries Act applies if the mapping is inconsistent with the on-ground features. Such anomalies may become apparent when ground truthing occurs at the property level during development planning and preparation of a development application.

To aid the user, waterways are depicted in the mapping as a multi-coloured waterway network, from their upstream limit to their tidal or wetland conclusion. The colour of a waterway guides users to applicable accepted development work types. The assigned waterway colours (green, amber, red, purple and grey) allow the user to quickly gauge the category of development (assessable or accepted) that may be required for particular operational works at a proposed site. If development is assessable, the colour assigned to the waterway is only used to guide determination of a development application fee, and is not relevant to the subsequent site-specific, performance-based technical assessment.

Awards and recognition

The *Queensland waterways for waterway barrier works* mapping was afforded recognition by the River Basin Management Society in 2015 as winner of the 'Progression of Public Policy for Waterway Management'.

Definitions

Accepted development: Development for which a development approval is not required (*Planning Act 2016*). Compliance with accepted development requirements is required.

Accepted development requirements: A regulation may, for the *Planning Act 2016*, state the requirements (the **accepted development requirements**) that fisheries development must comply with to be categorised as accepted development under the *Fisheries Act 1994*.

Assessable development: Development for which a development approval is required (*Planning Act 2016*).

Drainage feature: Refer to the definition in the *Water Act 2000*.

Fisheries development: Development that relates to aquaculture, fisheries resources, fish habitat or waterway barrier works (*Fisheries Act 1994*).

Watercourse: Refer to definition in *Water Act 2000*.

Waterway: Includes a river, creek, stream, watercourse, drainage feature or inlet of the sea (*Fisheries Act 1994*).

Waterway barrier works: A dam, weir or other barrier across a waterway if the barrier limits fish stock access and movement along a waterway (*Fisheries Act 1994*).

Background

Development of the mapping

The Queensland waterways mapping is a derived product. GIS software is used to analyse publicly available key input datasets to derive the multi-coloured waterway network represented in the mapping.

Data products used to create the current mapping include:

- 1-second Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM) Derived Hydrological Digital Elevation Model (DEM-H) Version 1.0.
 - The 1-second SRTM derived DEM-H Version 1.0 is a 1 arc second (~30 m) gridded digital elevation model. The DEM-H captures flow paths based on SRTM elevations and mapped stream lines, and supports delineation of catchments and related hydrological attributes.
- Watercourse lines – Queensland dataset
 - This dataset contains watercourse lines (a way or course through which water flows from time-to-time) covering the state of Queensland.
- Canal lines – Queensland dataset
- Queensland Wetland Data Version 5.0 – Wetland Areas 2017 dataset
 - This dataset provides mapping of wetland water bodies and wetland regional ecosystems as at 2017, extent at 1:100,000 scale across Queensland. Brisbane city and areas covered by a Property Map of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV) may be mapped at 1:25,000 scale.

In Queensland, the number of fish species that require free passage along any particular waterway is determined by a number of biological and physical factors. Many fish species require, or benefit from, free passage in a waterway for spawning migrations, dispersal, feeding or seeking refuge during wet or dry periods. These movements can occur seasonally and during low or flood flows.

The presence and abundance of fish within a given location is also determined by the amount of available habitat, flow regime and the geographical location of the waterway (e.g. climate, elevation, distance along a waterway, slope).

Generally, waterways higher in the catchment with a reduced habitat area and steeper slopes will have smaller populations of fish. Fish present in these areas often have strong swimming or even climbing abilities. Waterways lower in the catchment typically have large areas of available habitats and low slopes. These waterways have larger populations of fish, including species with weak swimming abilities. In addition, headwater waterways that flow all year round or maintain dry season pools will usually have greater fish populations than those that dry up. All of these waterways are important to contributing to fisheries productivity.

The following physical characteristics, important for identifying waterways and waterways providing fish passage, were analysed:

- stream order
- stream slope
- tidal (estuarine) waterway habitat
- connection of western braided waterways to wetlands.

The output from the GIS analysis produced 2 datasets:

- Queensland waterways for waterway barrier works
 - a 'line' type dataset representing mapped Queensland waterways
- Queensland waterways for waterway barrier works (tidal)
 - a 'polygon' type dataset of Queensland's tidal waterways that contains areas indicative of estuary/tidal waterway habitat shown in Queensland Wetland Data Version 5.0 – Wetland Areas 2017.

Scale

Data used to build the Queensland waterways mapping varied in scale from 1:25,000 to 1:100,000. The most appropriate scale to use the mapping is at 1:100,000. Any line work shown in the mapping is only to be considered a graphical representation of the physical on-ground feature. The mapping should not be relied upon at property-level development scale without ground truthing the on-ground waterway features.

Waterway fish passage attribute

A fish passage (FP) attribute has been assigned to all waterways displayed on the Queensland waterways mapping. The FP attribute is used to classify waterways to help manage instream development by avoiding or minimising the effect that waterway barrier works may have on fish movement and fish habitat.

The FP attribute for waterways is a number that ranges from 1 to 5. **All waterways are fish habitat that is protected and managed to maintain fish passage and other fish habitat values.** It is important to remember that it's not only the habitat at the specific site of the works that is relevant to fish passage, but also the upstream and downstream fish habitats connected by that site.

Waterways classified as having an FP attribute of 1 or 2 are usually located in the upper reaches of a drainage catchment and have steeper slopes. The biomass of fish populations in these waterways would generally be smaller than in downstream reaches. The fish that are present may have stronger swimming abilities, allowing them to navigate past waterway barriers with relatively greater ease.

Waterways that have been classified as having an FP attribute of 3, 4 or 5 typically contain a larger biomass of fish populations, more species of fish with larger size classes and include species that may have weaker swimming abilities. Different solutions to provide adequate fish passage at a waterway barrier works development are likely to be required.

Regardless of the FP attribute number assigned, the development must incorporate solutions that provide adequate fish passage for the conditions and swimming ability of the weakest swimmers present in the fish community. Although the FP attribute is a number, it does not represent the importance of the fish habitat.

Colour code

A system of colours has been assigned to waterways to provide easy identification of the FP attribute. The colours green, amber, red, purple and grey are used to depict FP attributes 1 to 5. The mapped colour provides a visual link from the mapping to enable the use of accepted development requirements that guide management solutions of relevant waterway barrier work types.

As with the FP attribute number, the colour that has been assigned does not represent the importance of the fish habitat – it only enables the use of accepted development requirements. The colour or FP attribute is only used in cases of assessable development to help determine the development application fee. Outdated terminology from a previous version of this guide is currently still used in the Planning Regulation 2017 (Schedule 10, Part 6, Division 4, Subdivision 2, Table 1) and may be interpreted using Table 1 below to calculate application fees for assessable development until it is possible to address this issue.

Table 1: Link between Planning Regulation 2017 terminology for fee determination and FP attributes/colours in the Queensland waterways mapping

| Planning Regulation 2017 (Schedule 10, Division 4) | FP attribute | Queensland waterways mapping colour |
|--|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Low risk | 1 | Green |
| Moderate risk | 2 | Amber |
| High risk | 3 | Red |
| Major risk | 4 | Purple |
| Major risk (tidal) | 5 | Grey |

If a colour attributed to a waterway has accepted development solutions, compliant development may be undertaken in accordance with all the requirements for that colour waterway under the accepted development requirements. The requirements for accepted operational work that is constructing or raising a waterway barrier works are available at fisheries.qld.gov.au. If the accepted development requirements cannot be, or are not, complied with, the development is assessable and a development application must be lodged with the State Assessment and Referral Agency.

Table 2: Assessment process based on waterway classification (e.g. accepted development work types)

| Waterway classification | | Development work type | | | |
|-------------------------|--------|---|--|--------------------|-----------------|
| Fish passage attribute | Colour | Some dams/weirs | Culvert crossing | Bed-level crossing | Temporary works |
| 1 | Green | Development complies with accepted development requirements | | | |
| 2 | Amber | Development application | Development complies with accepted development requirements OR lodge a development application | | |
| 3 | Red | | Development complies with accepted development requirements OR lodge a development application | | |
| 4 | Purple | Development application | Development complies with accepted development requirements OR lodge a development application | | |
| 5 | Grey | | Development complies with accepted development requirements OR lodge a development application | | |

Mapping

Spatial extent

The aim of the Queensland waterways mapping was to depict waterways within Queensland. This was only achievable to the extent that the quality of the input data aligned with the on-ground features. Input datasets were not created for the specific purpose of mapping waterways for fish passage. Input datasets were subject to gaps and other anomalies. If there is a discrepancy between the data and on-ground features, the definition of a waterway under the Fisheries Act is applied.

Although a waterway may be depicted as a line or a polygon, the line or polygon does not indicate the width or areal extent of the actual waterway. The full areal extent of the actual waterway is fish habitat and any lateral and longitudinal fish passage that it provides is important.

Under the *Commonwealth Fisheries Management Act 1991*, state jurisdiction extends into coastal waters and offshore islands. Tidal waters, including beyond the landward edge of the waterway (such as oceans and estuaries), should be treated as tidal waterways for waterway barrier works that may impact fish passage. They are shown as grey polygons or lines on the Queensland waterways mapping. It is important to ensure that both line and polygon datasets are viewed concurrently. It is also important to ensure that waterways with tidal characteristics are treated as tidal.

Accuracy and data quality: mapping interpretation

All care has been taken to ensure that the data analysis and interpretation is of the highest quality. However, as the mapping has been derived from specified versions of pre-existing products, there may be inconsistencies with on-ground features as a result of these base layers. Guidance on how to interpret some common scenarios is provided below.

Tidal extent of waterways

Limitations of the input datasets used to display tidal waterways (grey polygons and lines) on the Queensland waterways mapping, means that tidal waterways often extend further upstream than indicated. That is, coastal features located upstream/landward of displayed tidal waterways can be tidal. If a waterway displays on-ground tidal features such as marine plants (mangroves, seagrasses, marine algae or salt marsh), marine fauna, salt or brackish water, or tidal ebb and flow (regardless of salinity), the waterway should be treated as tidal (grey) for the purposes of the accepted development requirements.



Figure 1: A hypothetical coastal site upstream/landward of a grey tidal waterway – if tidal ebb and flow, marine plants or other features show this location to be tidal, it must be treated as a grey waterway rather than an amber waterway to reflect on-ground conditions

A waterway feature is present on ground but is not mapped

The Queensland waterways mapping helps identify waterways defined by the Fisheries Act. The definition of a waterway under the Fisheries Act still applies if the mapping is inconsistent with on-ground features.

Some landscape features that are considered waterways under the Fisheries Act are not displayed on the Queensland waterways mapping due to deficiencies in the input data. Some of these waterways may be located between isolated mapped stream segments or connect to/within wetlands. These waterways are fish habitats, provide fish passage and require waterway barrier works assessment.

If you have specific details of a development proposal located in an area where waterways may be present, it is recommended that you request pre-lodgement advice through your regional State Assessment and Referral Agency office before undertaking any works at the site. This will identify any state development triggers that may apply to your proposal.



Figure 2: Aerial imagery showing on-ground features upstream of a mapped green waterway – these waterways have not been mapped on the input watercourse line dataset and should be investigated to determine if they are waterways as per the Fisheries Act

A mapped waterway is misaligned with the on-ground waterway

The scale at which the input data layers were captured (1:100,000) means that when the Queensland waterways mapping is compared to high-resolution imagery and other drainage datasets or ecosystem mapping captured at larger scales, it appears that the mapping of the actual waterways are misaligned. Generally, if the on-ground features of the mapped waterway are obvious, such as nearby defined bed and banks, then the colour of that mapped waterway applies to any proposed waterway barrier works.

Figure 3 shows an example of a hypothetical proposed waterway barrier works (black dot) within a waterway. In this instance, the classification as an amber waterway applies to the proposed waterway barrier works if it is an accepted development work type.



Figure 3: Example of a misalignment of a mapped waterway with the on-ground waterway

A mapped waterway no longer exists on ground or has been diverted

Due to development, some waterways on the mapping layer are no longer present on ground (Figure 4) or may have been diverted away from their mapped location. This is a by-product of the point-in-time capture of the input data layers.

It should be noted that placing fill in a waterway constitutes waterway barrier works. This type of development has profound impacts on fish passage and fish habitat, and is assessable development. Filling results in direct loss of not only fish habitat, but potentially connectivity between upstream and downstream habitats that may become isolated (indirect loss). Even if this is termed 'realignment' or a diversion is proposed (bypass fishway), this is assessable development and a development application must be lodged, preferably at an early planning stage of development layouts.

If a waterway realignment has been undertaken, with all necessary approvals, the diversion channel takes the place of the mapped waterway and the same colour should be applied for potential use of accepted development requirements. The result of deliberate filling to remove on-ground features of a waterway without relevant approvals is not considered a mapping anomaly. A review of historic aerial imagery can be undertaken to identify when filling of a waterway occurred.



Figure 4: Examples of the waterway mapping no longer reflecting the on-ground features – (left) a red waterway that has been diverted around a sporting complex and (right) the upper end of a green waterway that has been filled and no longer exists on ground

Isolated green waterway segments

Isolated waterway segments can be displayed on the Queensland waterways mapping. Green waterway segments greater than 500 m in length in the headwaters of a waterway will appear on the mapping and this is not an anomaly. This occurs where stream order 1 watercourse segments greater than 500 m had a grade of less than 6% and were located upstream of a segment not displayed due to having a slope greater than 6%.

Green waterway segments greater than 500 m in length that appear isolated in the mapping are more likely to be of a size sufficient to provide value to fisheries productivity through self-sustaining fish populations and/or downstream connection through steep watercourses.

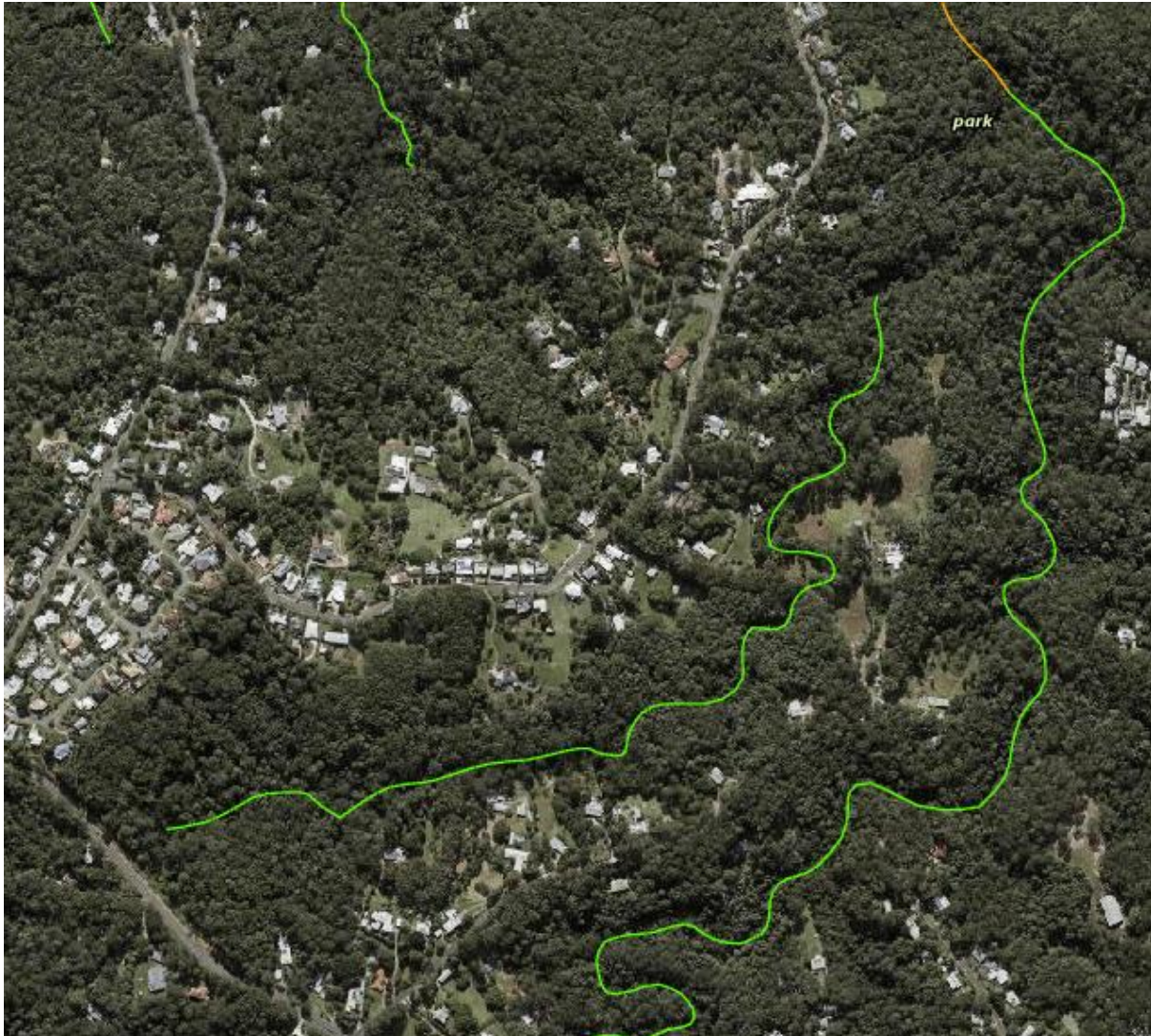


Figure 5: Isolated green waterway segment greater than 500 m in length upstream of a stream order 1 watercourse segment not displayed due to having a slope greater than 6%

Notifying Fisheries Queensland of mapping anomalies

Anomalies may occur if mapping is done over a large area, such as the whole of Queensland. Inconsistencies can occur in the mapping, such as a waterway not showing on the data layer or the alignment of the waterway appearing inconsistent with on-ground features due to the scale at which it is being used. If you have information about a mapping anomaly, please email Fisheries Queensland at planningassessment@daf.qld.gov.au. Feedback is appreciated and can help to improve the Queensland waterways mapping for all users. However, the proposed development will still need to proceed based upon the classification (colour) of the current mapping.

State Assessment and Referral Agency pre-lodgement process

If you have specific details of a development proposal located in an area where waterways may be present, it is recommended that you request pre-lodgement advice through your regional State Assessment and Referral Agency office before undertaking any works at the site. This will identify any state development triggers that may apply to your proposal.

Note: The level and detail of advice will depend on the quality and detail of information provided as part of the pre-lodgement request. Please refer to section 4 of the [SDAP guideline 18 - Waterway barrier works](#) for standard information to include in your request.

Currency of the mapping

The current version of the Queensland waterways mapping is used in conjunction with this guide when making a decision about the level of development assessment (accepted or assessable) and the available accepted development work types (if any) for constructing or raising waterway barrier works.

View the mapping

The Queensland waterways mapping can be viewed and downloaded from the following platforms.

Development Assessment Mapping System

Open the [Development Assessment Mapping System \(DAMS\)](#) and navigate to the Queensland waterways mapping under the 'SARA DA Mapping, FISH HABITAT AREAS' drop-down list (Figure 6). The layer names are:

- Queensland waterways for waterway barrier works
- Tidal waterways.

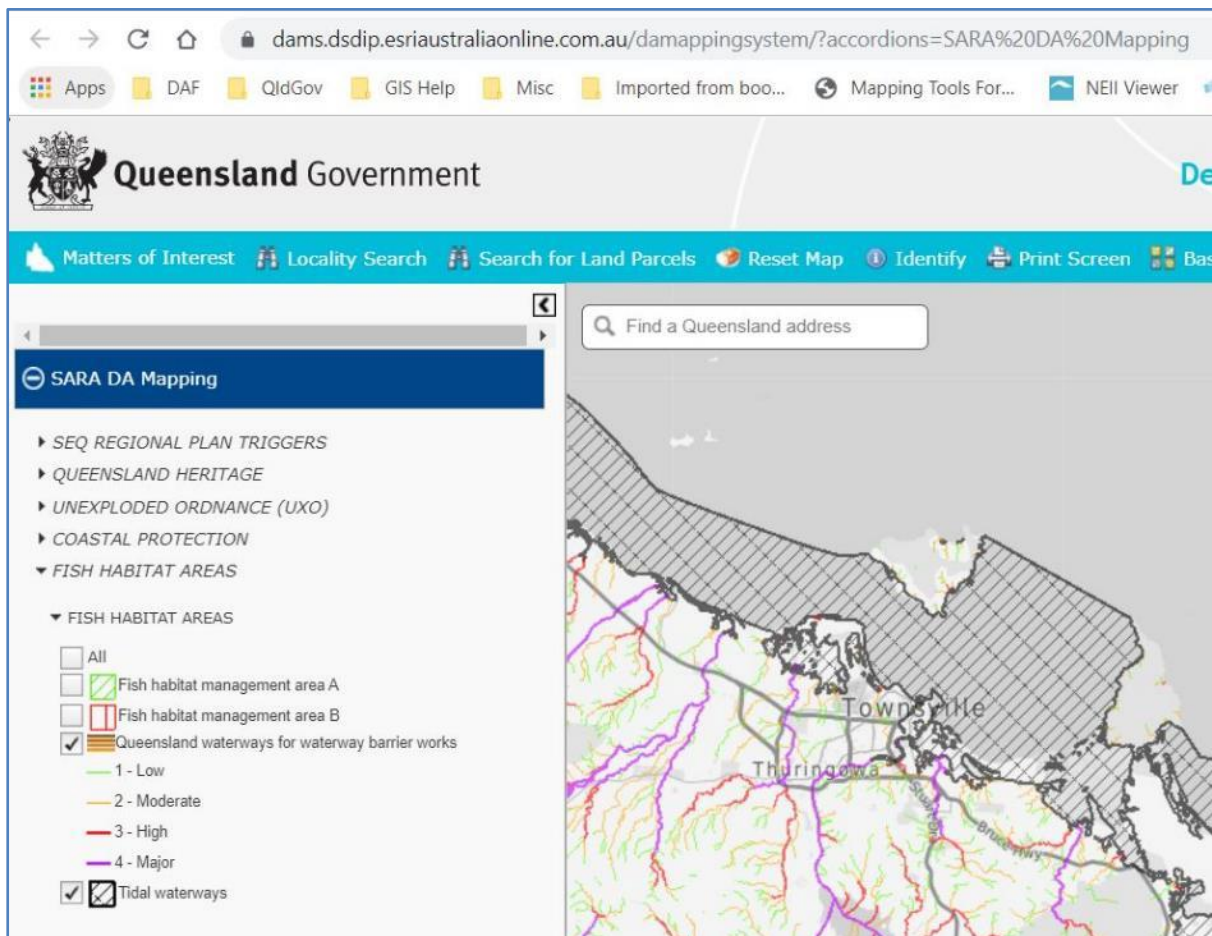


Figure 6: Queensland waterways mapping on DAMS

Queensland Globe

Queensland Globe provides an online interactive experience to view Queensland location-based information. Open [Queensland Globe](#) and accept the terms and conditions (Figure 7 overleaf). Once the default globe layers load, click on the 'layers' tab and then 'add layers'. Navigate to the Queensland waterways mapping under the 'Environment, Waterways' drop-down list in the layers tab (Figure 8 overleaf). The layer names are:

- QLD waterways for waterway barrier works
- QLD waterways for waterway barrier works (Tidal).

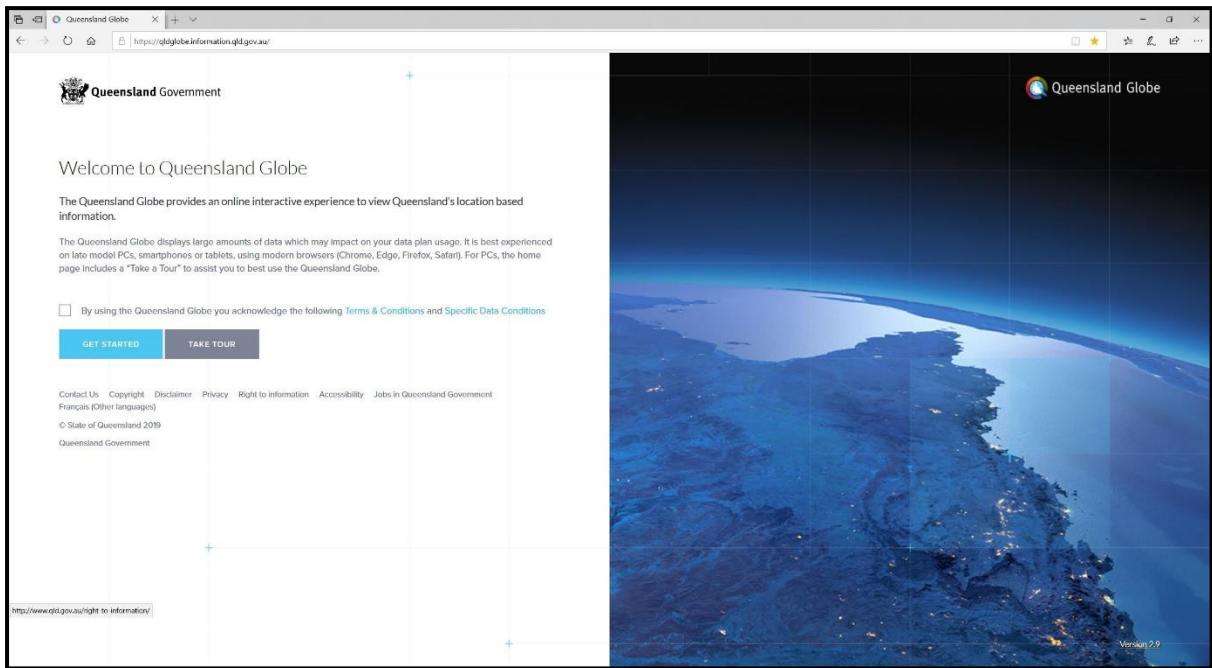


Figure 7: Queensland Globe

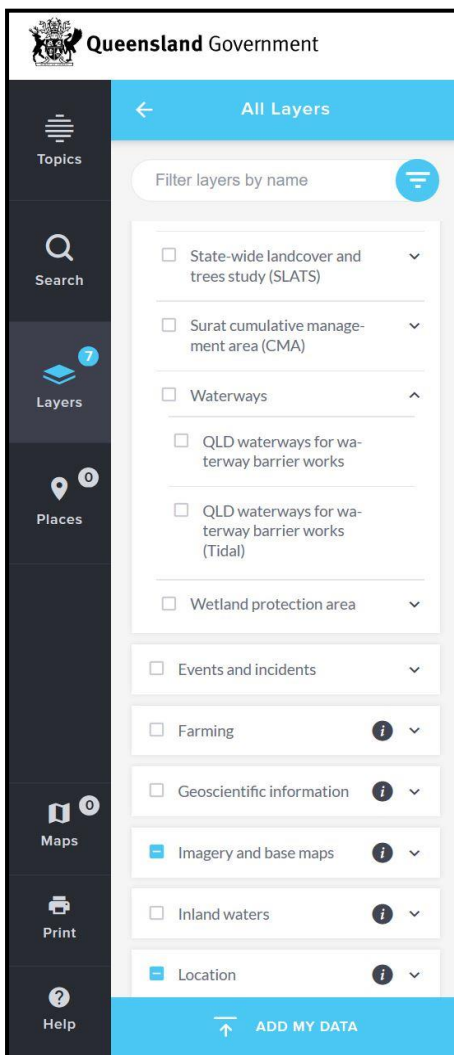


Figure 8: Adding the Queensland waterways mapping in Queensland Globe

Queensland Spatial Catalogue

Open the [Queensland Spatial Catalogue \(QSpatial\)](https://qldspatial.information.qld.gov.au/catalogue/custom/search.page) website to download the Queensland waterways mapping and/or view the metadata. Enter 'Queensland waterways for waterway barrier works' into the search box. From the list of associated items returned by the search, select 'View Metadata' to open the metadata pop-up box. Alternatively, select 'Download dataset' to open the download dialogue pop-up box. (Figure 9). Enter an email address to which the spatial data will be sent (Figure 10). The spatial datasets can be supplied in various Geographic Information System (GIS) file formats, including ESRI file geodatabase (.gdb), ESRI shapefile (.shp), Google Earth KML (.kmz) or MapInfo TAB (.tab). The layer names are:

- Queensland waterways for waterway barrier works
- Queensland waterways for waterway barrier works – Tidal.

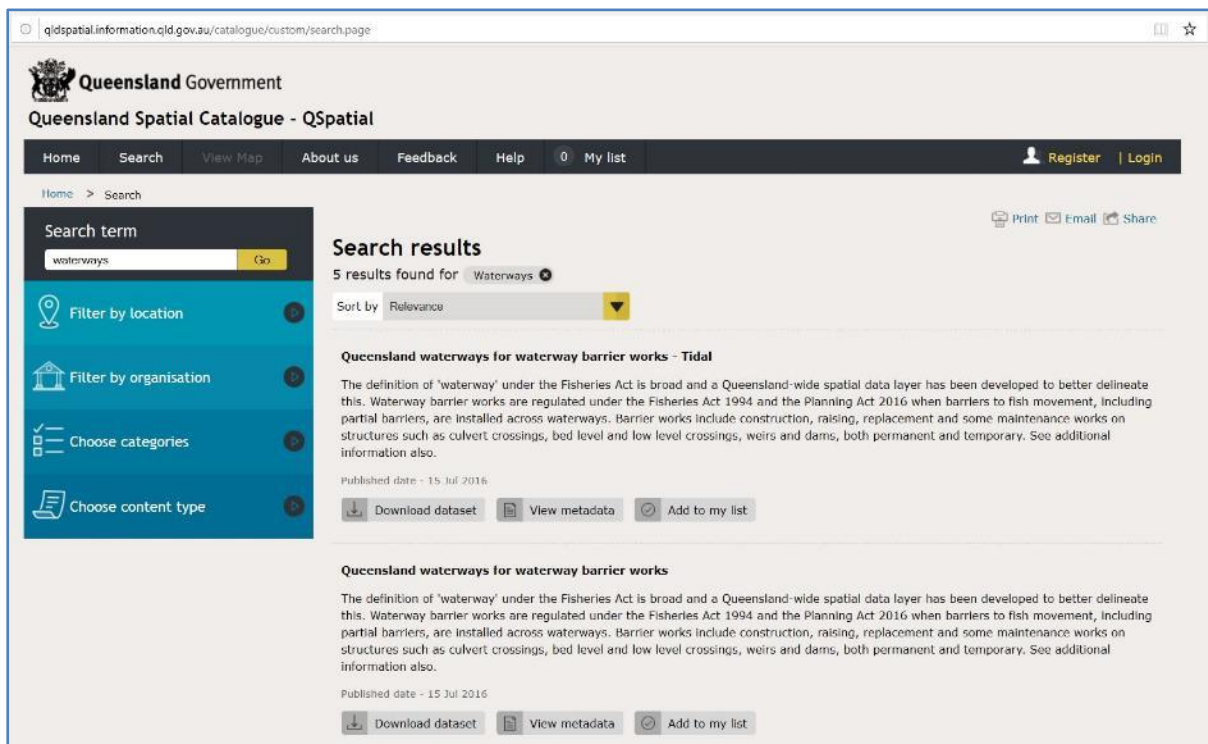


Figure 9: Search results from the QSpatial website

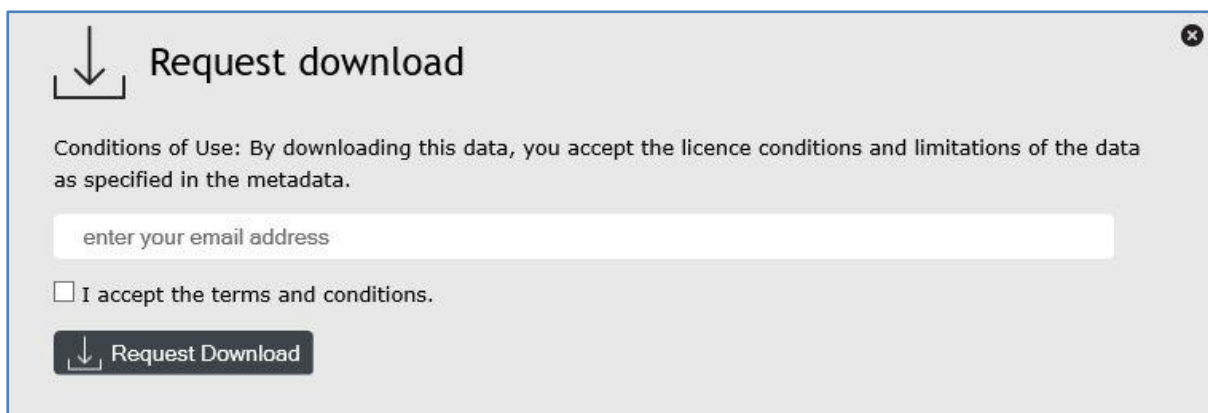


Figure 10: Download pop-up dialogue box in search results on the QSpatial website

How to use the mapping

1. Locate the site of the proposed works that may involve construction or raising waterway barrier works.
2. If the works are located on a feature that displays the physical and hydrological features of a waterway, even if it is **not** mapped, it may be considered a waterway under the Fisheries Act. If there is a waterway at the site (mapped or unmapped) that meets the definition of a waterway under the Fisheries Act, then the development may constitute waterway barrier works. Visit fisheries.qld.gov.au for information about waterways.
3. Confirm the proposed works constitute waterway barrier works. Visit fisheries.qld.gov.au for information about waterway barrier works.
4. For works located on a mapped waterway, use the classified waterway colour to determine if compliance with the accepted development requirements is possible. The waterway colour and development type in Table 2 provides a quick guide as to whether there may be accepted development work types available. If applicable, refer to the specific work type to ensure the works will meet the stated requirements and standards of that work type, as well as any general requirements and standards that apply. Refer to *Accepted development requirements for operational work that is constructing or raising waterway barrier works* at fisheries.qld.gov.au.
5. If the proposed works comply with all the requirements set out for the relevant work type, an accepted development requirements notification must be lodged.
6. If the works **do not** comply with all requirements of an accepted development work type, the works are assessable and a development application must be lodged. Table 1 in this guide shows the links between waterway colour references and terminology in the Planning Regulation 2017 to determine the assessment fee.
7. If a development approval is required for the works, an application for assessable development must be lodged with the State Assessment and Referral Agency. Contact the agency's relevant regional office for further details on the development assessment process.

More information

Call: 13 25 23

Email: planningassessment@daf.qld.gov.au

Visit: fisheries.qld.gov.au