

2.6 The community regularly monitors the health and protection of wildlife and adopts strategies based on latest evidence.

The Great Barrier Reef [Marine Monitoring Program](#) (MMP) surveys and reports on the health of inshore coral, seagrass, and water quality every year, and has done so for over 15 years. The program is coordinated by the Reef Authority and has partnerships with the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), James Cook University, Cape York Water Monitoring Partnerships. In addition, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, community volunteers, and others assist with or undertake monitoring.

MMP data informs the [Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program](#), and is used to evaluate progress towards the [Reef Plan 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan](#) targets, objectives, and [outcomes](#). It also informs progress against the objectives under the [Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan](#).

The results are shared with a broad range of stakeholders through seminars, Reef Health updates, fact sheets, briefings, and reports. The five-yearly [Outlook Report](#) considers the information in its assessment of the Great Barrier Reef's health, pressures, and likely failures. Detailed methods are published in the annual [QA/QC manuals](#).

The main monitoring of cetaceans in our region happens through the citizen science program [Eye on the Reef](#). The information recorded in Sightings and the broader Eye on the Reef program helps scientists and government authorities understand what animals live in particular locations, how often they are seen, and when they are likely to be seen. The program stores the latest and most comprehensive collection of observations of protected and iconic species on the Great Barrier Reef. This data was key in identifying the Whitsundays as critical breeding areas for Humpback Whales and the adoption of the Whale Protection Area in the Whitsundays.

[HappyWhale](#) is also starting to gain traction in the Whitsundays. It is a citizen science tool used to identify individual whales based on images of their tail flukes and then track them across their migratory route 'for fun and for science'. HappyWhale gives people the opportunity to name and adopt the whales they've spotted and support a non-profit marine organisation in the process. Recently, [Red Cat Adventures](#), a local tourism operator, had a 'Name the Whale Competition' and named ECHO through HappyWhale. They used the opportunity to donate to our very own [Eco Barge Clean Seas Inc.](#)

The Whales of the Whitsundays Steering Committee has also started to collate information with the University of Queensland's (UQ) Cetacean Ecology Group by adding hydrophone recordings of Humpback whale song to UQ's long-term monitoring portal. Part of this process was having a hydrophone training day on a local tourism boat, *Viper*, with a PhD candidate from UQ, Genevieve Williams. The group has been studying the population of Humpback whales that migrate along the eastern coast of Australia for more than 25 years. They focus on a variety of aspects of Humpback whale ecology, including monitoring patterns in song. Our contribution will help them expand their study to more areas of the east coast and help to monitor changes in the song which occurs every year.