



Mackay Coasts and Communities

Bucasia Beach

Beach Plan

2010



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1. Beach unit description

Bucasia Beach stretches for approximately four kilometres from the Shoal Point rocks south to Eimeo Creek (Figure 1). The beach is backed by a wide foreshore along its length, and vegetated parabolic dunes in the north.

Bucasia is a growing population centre, with large areas of Freehold, Urban Residential development and additional areas zoned for Urban Expansion and High Density Residential (Figures 2, 3). With the exception of a privately owned caravan park at the southern extent of the beach, the foreshore is tenured as Esplanade under the management of the Mackay Regional Council and zoned Open Space. The second zoned tourism activity in the centre of the beach unit is the Kohuna Sands Resort. A small amount of State Land borders the mangrove communities at the mouth of Eimeo Creek.

Figure 1: Extent of Bucasia Beach unit

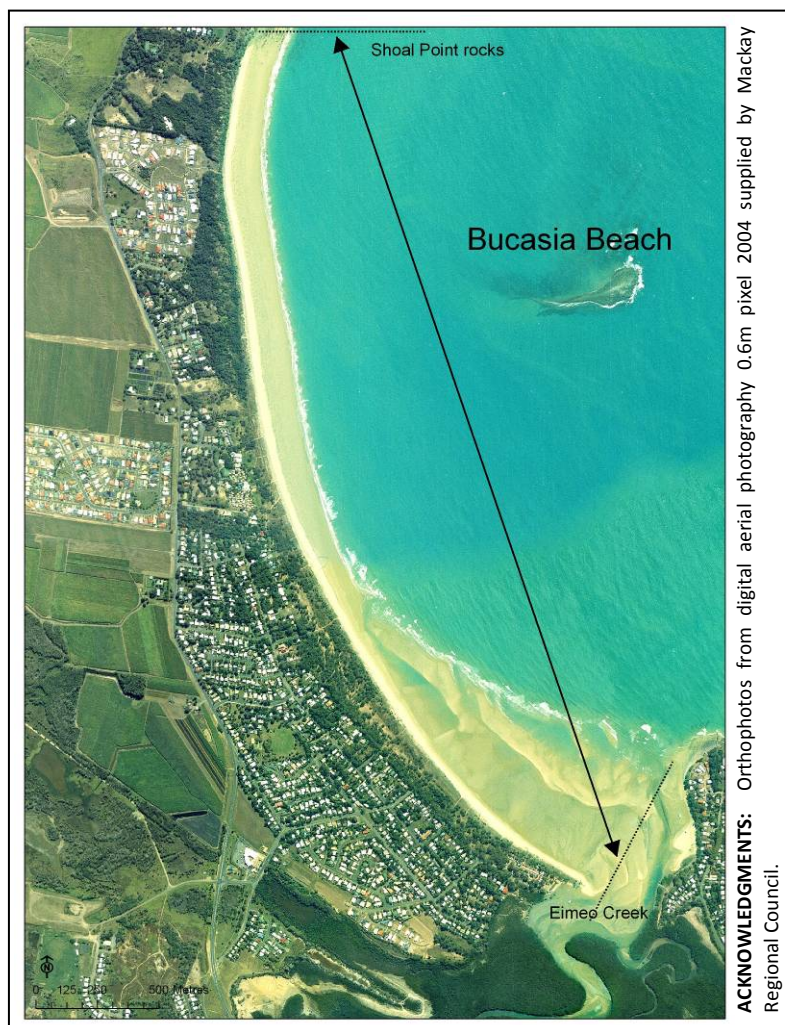
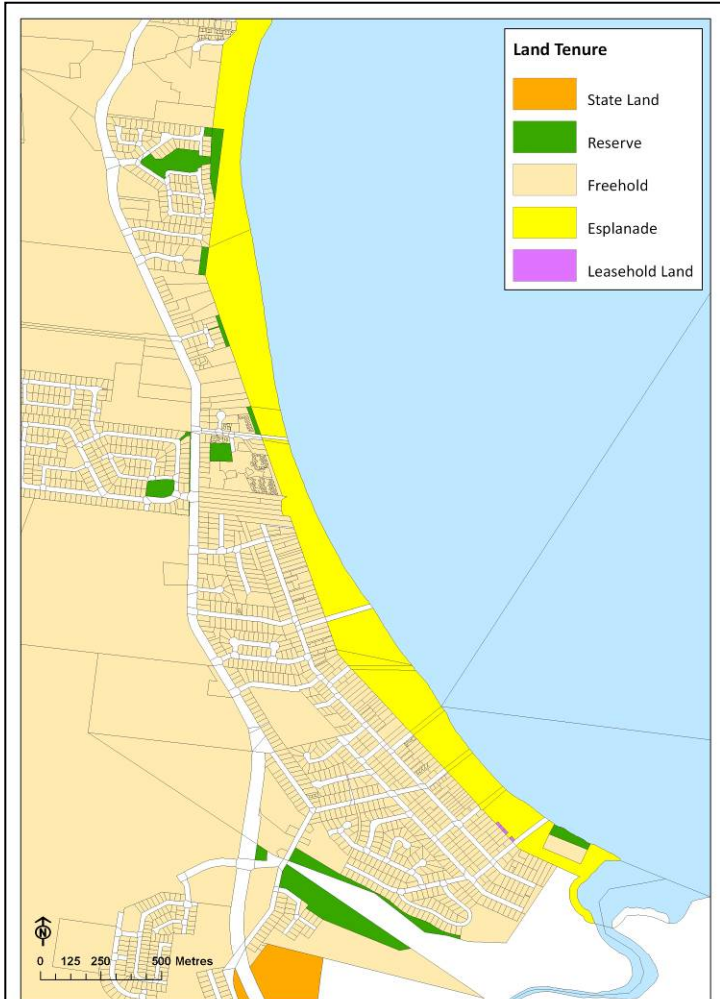


Figure 2: Land tenure Bucasia Beach



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: Digital Cadastral Data 2008 supplied by Mackay Regional Council.

Figure 3: Planning scheme zonation Bucasia Beach



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: Planning Scheme Zone Data 2008 supplied by Mackay Regional Council.

2. Conservation and Management Issues

2.1 Vegetation

2.1.1 Remnant vegetation

The northern end of Bucasia Beach Esplanade (north of Homestead Bay Avenue access) retains the majority of its remnant vegetation and will be a key area to maintain. This community is a mix of eucalypt and acacia open forest with beach scrub understorey, and open casuarina forest with spinifex and other grasses on the foredunes (Table 1, Figure 4). Both of these Regional Ecosystems are listed as 'Of Concern' by state legislation (*Vegetation Management Act, 2005*). Weed invasion, extension of residential lawns and gardens across Esplanade tenure, and illegal removal of native vegetation in some areas is reducing the condition of this remnant vegetation.

South of the Homestead Bay Avenue access, only a very narrow band of remnant vegetation remains on the Esplanade. Approximately two hectares of this is recorded as microphyll vine forest on coastal dunes (RE 8.2.2, 'beach scrub'), which is listed as 'Critically Endangered' by federal legislation (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999*). Revegetating a buffer zone around this community would potentially allow this ecosystem to be maintained and expanded. Documented threats to beach scrub communities include inappropriate fire regimes, weed invasion, impacts of coastal development and recreational use (Ecosystem Conservation Branch, 2007).

At the southern extent of the beach unit, approximately 30 hectares of mangrove and samphire forbland communities border Eimeo Creek. The quantity and quality of storm water entering the system from the catchment as residential development increases will be important for mangrove health into the future.

A bushfire is an uncontrolled fire burning in forest, scrub or grassland vegetation and may occur in most vegetation types in Queensland where there is a fuel path of sufficient dryness to be flammable (Queensland Government, 2003). State Planning Policy 1/03 under the *Sustainable Planning Act 2009* deals with the mitigation of adverse impacts of bushfire, and includes a natural hazard assessment for bushfires and the subsequent provision of safety buffers. According to this policy, a low hazard score and no prescribed safety buffer width is allocated to "narrow strips of coastal vegetation with a linear shape, less than 50 hectares in area and more than one kilometre from the nearest extensive vegetation, on 0-5% slope, with an eastern aspect" (Queensland Government, 2003). All rehabilitation activities undertaken as part of this plan will be done so with consideration of this State Planning Policy.

Table 1: Remnant vegetation (Regional Ecosystem) communities at Bucasia Beach

Regional Ecosystem (RE)	Short description (Environmental Protection Agency, 2005)	Approximate area (ha) on Reserve, Esplanade, State Land tenure	Vegetation Management Act status 2005	Biodiversity status	EPBC Status
8.1.1	Mangrove vegetation of marine clay plains and estuaries. Estuarine wetland.	29 ha	Not of concern	No concern at present	n/a
8.1.2	Samphire open forbland to isolated clumps of forbs on saltpans and plains adjacent to mangroves.	1.5 ha	Not of concern	Of concern	n/a
8.2.1	Casuarina equisetifolia open forest to woodland with Ipomoea pes-caprae and Spinifex sericeus dominated ground layer on foredunes	2 ha	Of concern	Of concern	n/a
8.2.2	Microphyll vine forest on coastal dunes.	2 ha	Of concern	Endangered	Critically Endangered
8.2.6a	<i>Corymbia tessellaris</i> ± <i>Acacia leptocarpa</i> ± <i>Banksia integrifolia</i> ± <i>Melaleuca dealbata</i> ± beach scrub species open forest on coastal parallel dunes.	20 ha	Of concern	Of concern	n/a
8.12.3a	Notophyll rainforest/microphyll rainforest ± <i>Araucaria cunninghamii</i> . Occurs on coastal hills ranges on Mesozoic to Proterozoic igneous rocks. Contains minor areas of Tertiary acid volcanic.	Freehold tenure. Not included in beach unit recommendations.	Not of concern	No concern at present	n/a
8.1.3	<i>Sporobolus virginicus</i> grassland on marine sediments. Estuarine wetland	Freehold tenure. Not included in beach unit recommendations.	Of concern	Of concern	n/a
8.1.4	<i>Paspalum spp.</i> and <i>Fimbristylis ferruginea</i> sedgeland/grassland (estuarine wetland). Includes areas of deep open water with clumps of <i>Schoenoplectus littoralis</i> ± <i>Eleocharis dulcis</i>	Freehold tenure. Not included in beach unit recommendations.	Of concern	Endangered	n/a
8.1.5	<i>Melaleuca spp.</i> and/or <i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> and/or <i>Corymbia tessellaris</i> woodland to open forest (estuarine wetland) with a ground stratum of salt tolerant grasses and sedges, usually in a narrow zone adjoining tidal ecosystems.	Freehold tenure. Not included in beach unit recommendations.	Of concern	Endangered	n/a
8.2.11	<i>Melaleuca spp.</i> woodland in parallel dune swales (wetlands).	Freehold tenure. Not included in beach unit recommendations.	Of concern	Of concern	n/a
8.3.13a	Palustrine wetland (e.g. vegetated swamp). Mixed <i>Melaleuca spp.</i> woodlands. Occurs on marine plains or alluvial plains, usually adjacent to estuarine areas.	Freehold tenure. Not included in beach unit recommendations.	Of concern	Endangered	n/a

Figure 4: Remnant vegetation Bucasia Beach



2.1.2 Vegetation zonation

The northern end of Bucasia Beach maintains the full complex of dune zonation with colonising spinifex and casuarina woodland on foredunes, and open forest communities beyond the frontal dune (Figure 5). The condition of parts of this remnant vegetation is reduced in some areas owing to; inappropriate access, disturbance, erosion, and dense stands of non-native vegetation.

In some areas of Bucasia Beach, residential lawns and gardens have been extended onto the Esplanade and native vegetation has been removed (Figures 7, 8). This process removes natural dune zonation and threatens the resilience of the dunes into the future.

The maintenance of Seaview Park at the southern end of Bucasia beach prevents natural dune zonation in this area (Figure 6). However, the Park is fenced along its eastern margin and set back some 20 metres from the beach, allowing the extent of a colonising spinifex and grass zone. The extent of the mown parkland is currently undefined to the north, and the opportunity exists to partially revegetate and/ or encourage natural regeneration to the north of Downie Avenue.



Figure 5: Northern end of Blacks Beach with dunal zonation in place from colonising spinifex to open woodlands and beach scrub communities on dunes.



Figure 6: Presence of Seaview Park at the southern end of Bucasia Beach precludes natural dune zonation.



Figure 7 and 8: In some areas of Bucasia Beach dune vegetation has been removed and the Esplanade has become an extension of neighbouring properties, removing and preventing natural dune zonation.

2.1.3 Non-native vegetation

Throughout much of the Bucasia Beach Esplanade Guinea grass (*Megathyrsus maximus*) and lantana (*Lantana camara*) pose an environmental threat, outcompeting native vegetation and providing a fire risk to adjacent fire sensitive remnant vegetation communities (Figure 9). Additional declared weeds (*Land Protection Pest and Stock Route Management Act, 2002*) are also present along the length of the beach including prickly pear (*Opuntia sp.*) and singapore daisy (*Sphagneticola trilobata*). Garden escapees are concentrated along access ways and the western margin of the Esplanade, bordering residential communities. The accumulation of vegetative waste from dense stands of coconut palms (*Cocos nucifera*) on the Esplanade smother native vegetation and prevent regeneration (Figure 10).



Figure 9: Dense stands of lantana (*Lantana camara*) in remnant vegetation at the northern end of Bucasia Beach threaten to out-compete native vegetation and increase the threat of fire.



Figure 10: Coconut palms (*Cocos nucifera*) pose problems with the risk of falling coconuts and fronds, and fronds which don't readily decay preventing regeneration by native species.

2.1.4 Waste dumping

Vegetative waste is present on dunes at Bucasia Beach, particularly where there are adjacent residential areas (Figures 11, 12). This leads to the smothering of native vegetation and spreading of non-native species.



Figure 11 and 12: Dumping and accumulation of vegetative waste on dunes at Bucasia Beach.

2.2 Public access and facilities

There are currently 19 designated beach access points provided with fencing and associated infrastructure along Bucasia Beach (Figure 13, 15). These lead from Seaview Park and/ or connect with key residential areas along the length of the beach. Many unofficial access tracks have also been created from private housing along the length of the beach (Figure 14). The formalisation and fencing of access points associated with new residential developments in the north, and the boat ramp in the south, are required to protect dune systems.

Fencing has been partially installed along the Esplanade to protect foredune vegetation and provide an eastern boundary for park maintenance. The width of foredune vegetation protected to the east of this fence line ranges between 10 and 80 metres and stops at the northern extent of Waverley Street. With the expansion of residential dwellings now extending as a continuum to Shoal Point, the extension of this fence line along the western margin of the Esplanade is recommended.

Recreational facilities are provided at Seaview Park at the southern end of Bucasia Esplanade, with toilet, BBQ, tables, playground and parking facilities. The northern extent of this mown area is currently undefined, and it is recommended that Downie Avenue mark the northern boundary. A cement pathway runs from Seaview Park to north of Symons Avenue, and Mackay Regional Council has conceptual plans to extend the pathway north to Shoal Point as funds become available. A second mown parkland, Nautilus Park, is associated with the Starboard circuit access way.

There is a swimming enclosure net associated with Waverley Street access (Figure 15, 16), and a Council managed boat ramp is provided at the southern end of the beach unit on Eimeo Creek (Figure 17).



Figure 13: William Street beach access at Bucasia Beach.



Figure 14: Several unofficial access tracks have been created and lead to private housing.

Figure 15: Bucasia Beach access points and recreational areas

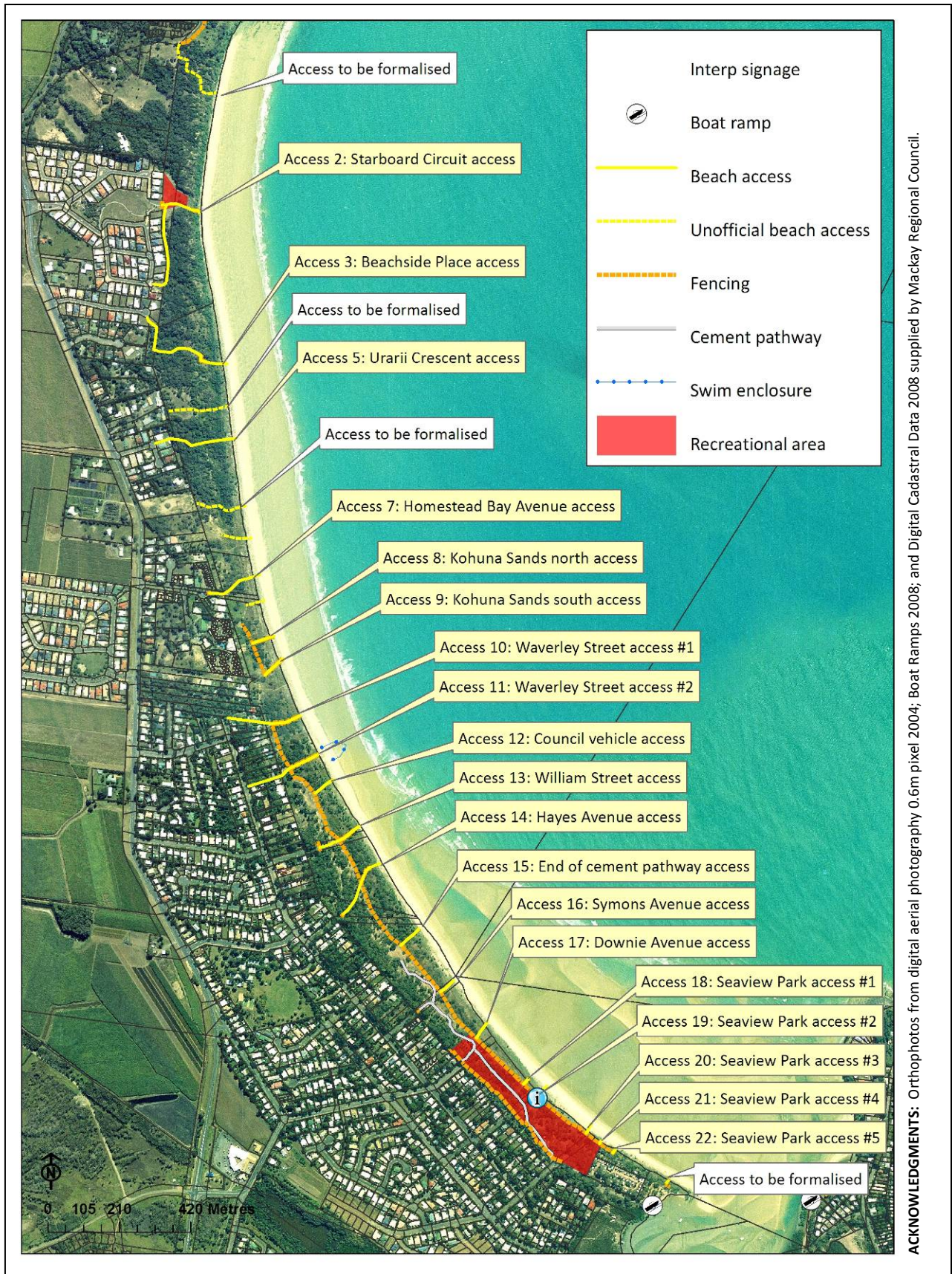




Figure 16: Bucasia swimming net enclosure.



Figure 17: Bucasia boat ramp on Eimeo Creek.

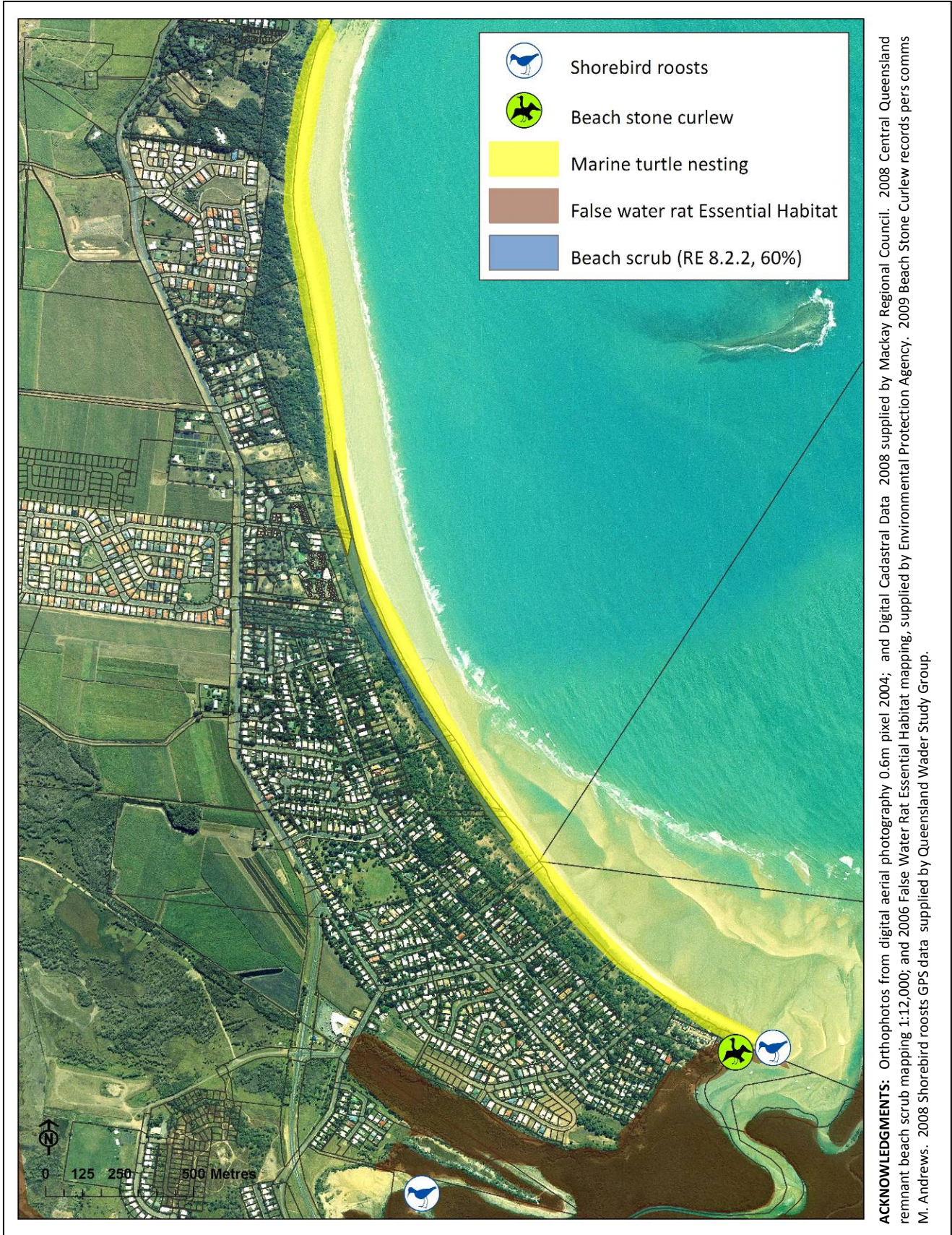
2.3 Wildlife

Bucasia is an important turtle nesting beach. An average of 16 flatback turtle (*Natator depressus*) nests per year were recorded at Bucasia Beach between 1993 and 2003 with a maximum of 30 occurring in one year (Mackay District Turtle Watch Association, 2003). An interpretive sign highlighting the value of Bucasia Beach as turtle nesting habitat is installed in Seaview Park. The wide buffer zone which has been retained between Freehold properties and the beach front at Bucasia means that there are fewer lighting issues than at other residential beaches. However, there are some opportunities to rehabilitate dune vegetation along Bucasia Esplanade to improve habitat for nesting marine turtles.

The southern end of Bucasia Beach, including the complex of sandbanks and adjacent foreshore, is identified as an intertidal roost for shorebirds in the Mackay region and disturbance via boating and pedestrian traffic impact on shorebird roostings at this site (Milton, 2009). Waders are also recorded to use the Bucasia saltplan on the upper reaches of Eimeo Creek at high spring and king tides. No major threats have been recorded in this site and disturbance is negligible (Milton, 2009). Sightings of the vulnerable beach stone curlew (*Esacus magnirostris*) were recorded at Bucasia Eimeo Creek mouth in 2000 and 2004 (Andrews, M. 2009, pers. comm., 2 July).

Essential Habitat mapping for the false water rat (*Xeromys myoides*) covers the mangroves adjacent to Eimeo Creek at the southern end of Bucasia Beach. The quantity and quality of storm water entering the system at this point will be of relevance to the health of the false water rat population. Although no other Essential Habitat mapping is currently available, beach scrub ecosystems are considered to provide habitat for the listed northern quoll (*Dasyurus hallucatus*), rusty monitor (*Varanus semiremex*), and coastal sheathtail bat (*Taphozous australis*). Bucasia Esplanade has approximately 2 ha of beach scrub vegetation (Figure 18). The condition of these communities is threatened by inappropriate fire regimes, weed invasion, and the impacts of coastal development and recreational use.

Figure 18: Wildlife values Bucasia Beach



2.4 Cultural heritage

The Bucasia Beach area was previously occupied by Traditional Owners and the retention and rehabilitation of natural areas remains of significance to the Yuibera people (Mooney, G. 2009, pers. comm., 9 March). Middens, fish traps or other items of cultural significance may be present in the area. Bucasia Beach was named after Father Bucas who ran an orphanage for indigenous children in the area from 1870's to 1885 (Mackay Historical Society and Museum Incorporated, 2008).

2.5 Erosion

Development has been excluded from the erosion prone area along the Bucasia Beach unit with the exception of the caravan park at the southern end, now to become 'Bucasia Beach Resort and Spa' (Figure 23). The retention and maintenance of this wide buffer zone will ensure that there are minimal coastal management concerns into the future (Figure 19). In its assessment of future erosion issues at Bucasia beach, the Mackay Coast Study (Environmental Protection Agency, 2004) noted that "The caravan park is at risk of inundation from storm tide due to its proximity to the creek entrance. It is recommended that no increase in the density of development be permitted in this area".

There are localised examples of erosion along Bucasia Beach owing to inappropriate access through the dunes. This opens up bare patches of sand, leaving them vulnerable to erosion processes and encourages the growth of non-native vegetation (Figures 20, 21, 22).



Figure 19: The existence of wide buffer zones at Bucasia Beach enables resilience against natural events such as king tides.



Figure 20: The removal of native vegetation has opened up bare patches of sand which are more susceptible to wind erosion and invasion by non-native species.



Figure 21 and 22: Localised erosion occurs from unofficial access, particularly in the steeper dunes at the northern end of Bucasia Beach.

Figure 23: Erosion Prone Area Bucasia Beach

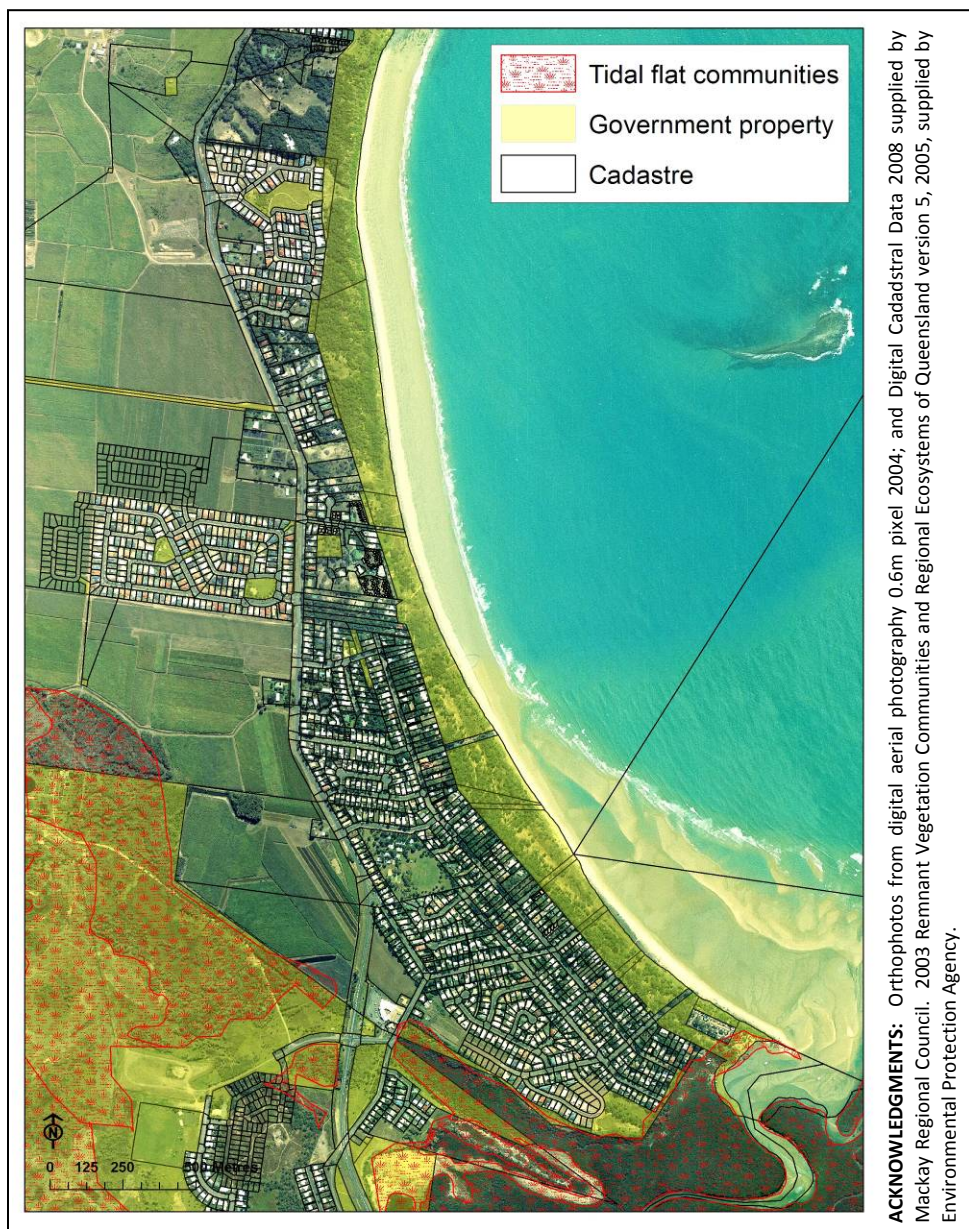


2.6 Climate change

The presence of a wide buffer zone and natural dune zonation along much of Bucasia Beach means it is well situated to protect against the effects of climate change, however, there are opportunities to improve dune structure and condition through weed control and rehabilitation activities along the length of the beach. In particular, dunal areas on Bucasia Esplanade which have been cleared of native vegetation and are being maintained as extensions of residential lawns will have limited resilience to the effects of climate change into the future.

Tidal flat communities extend in behind the Bucasia Spit to the margins of the southern Bucasia residential area, precluding the possibility of any expansion of these salt marsh communities as sea level changes occur (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Current extent of tidal flat communities Bucasia Beach (Landzone 1)

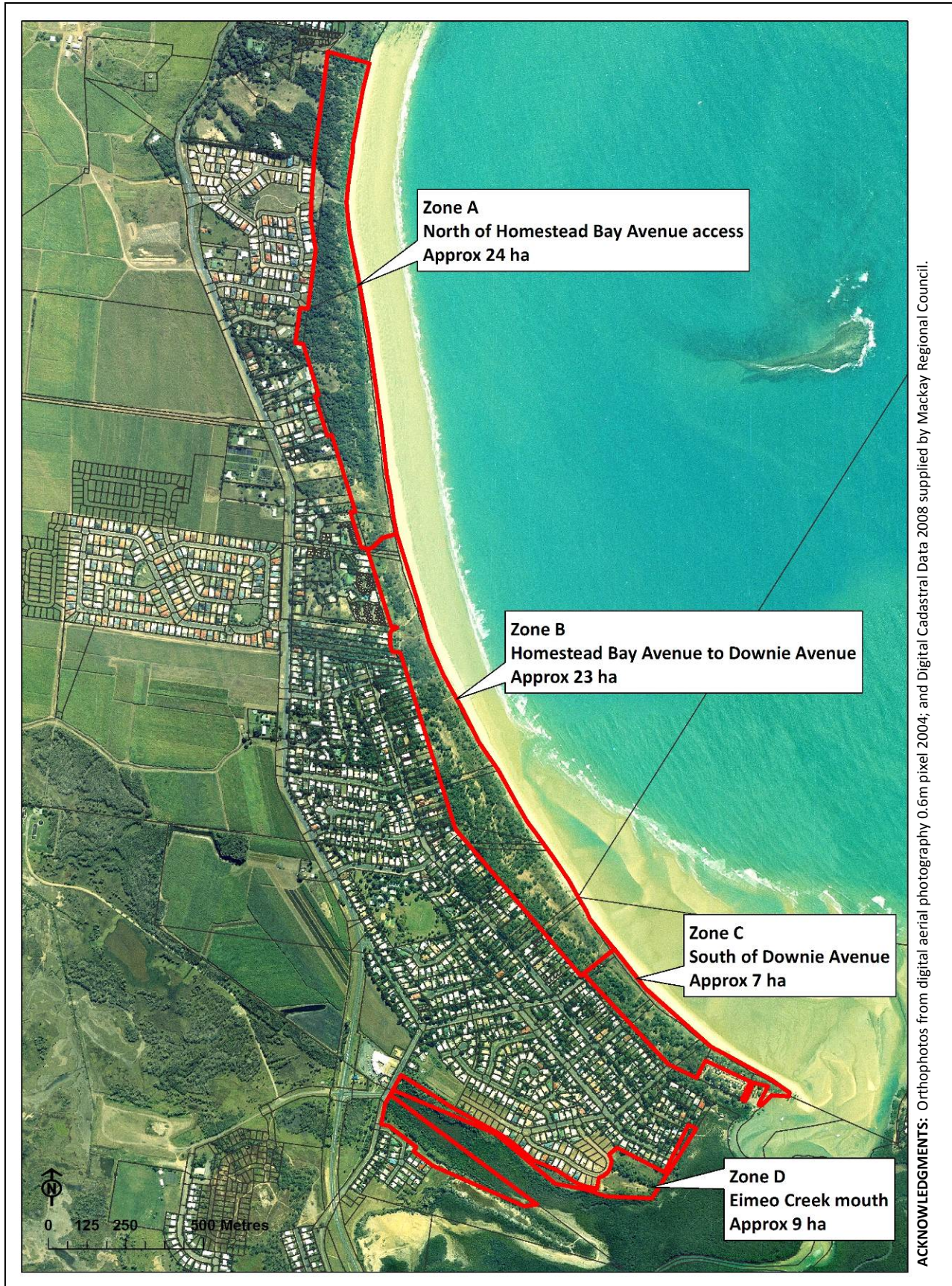


3. Recommended activities

#	On-ground activity details (Figure 25)
Zone A North of Homestead Bay Avenue access (24 ha).	
1	Weed control, revegetation, remove waste dumping, remove private gardens and infrastructure. Major target weed species include lantana (<i>Lantana camara</i>), Guinea grass (<i>Megathyrsus maximus</i>), prickly pear (<i>Opuntia sp.</i>). Revegetation to replace removed weed species, and support frontal dune. Revegetation of bare patches currently being mown by residential areas. Remove vegetative waste dumped on dunes. Maintenance and expansion of mapped remnant vegetation. Limited revegetation and amenity plantings around margins of Nautilus Park.
2	Fencing. Fencing of the western margin of Bucasia Esplanade as residential development expands along this zone as required (allowing for fire break and potential pathway installation). Fencing will delineate Esplanade boundary, prevent encroachment from residential areas, restrict vehicle access, and direct pedestrians to official beach access paths. Approx 1.5 kilometres total distance.
3	Formalise three pedestrian beach access paths. Three currently unofficial tracks (one from Belangason Way; one equidistant between Homestead Bay Ave and Urarii Crescent; and one in between current access tracks marked as 2 and 3) to be made official to join with Esplanade fencing proposed (Figure 15). Formalising these tracks includes associated activities such as fencing a defined track to direct pedestrians and exclude vehicles, and rehabilitation of coastal vegetation adjacent to the paths.
Zone B Homestead Bay Avenue to Downie Avenue (23 ha).	
4	Weed control, revegetation, remove waste dumping, remove private gardens and infrastructure. Major target weed species include lantana, Guinea grass, prickly pear, garden escapees. Revegetation to replace removed weed species, and support frontal dune, particularly on foredunes to the east of current fenceline. Revegetation of bare patches currently being mown by residential areas. Remove vegetative waste dumped on dunes. To the west of current fenceline, restrict slashing and mowing activity to allow natural regeneration of shrub layer and support with revegetation if necessary. Slashing to continue to a minimal width along either side of the current cement pathway. Drainage line on western side of reserve to be kept clear.
5	Fencing. Complete fencing of foredunes from Waverley Street access #1 to Homestead Bay Avenue access (approx 250 metres). Fencing will delineate Esplanade boundary, prevent encroachment from residential areas, restrict vehicle access, and direct pedestrians to official beach access paths. Upgrade current fence as required. Remove barbed wire from old fenceline.

Zone C South of Downie Avenue (7 ha)	
6	Weed control, revegetation. Major target weed species include lantana and Guinea grass. Revegetation to replace removed weed species, and support frontal dune to the east of current fenceline. Some additional amenity plantings to occur around margins of Seaview Park. Rehabilitation/ revegetation of frontal dunes on Bucasia Spit adjacent to boat ramp.
7	Fencing and beach access paths. Fencing from southern extent of Reserve tenure to continue to Spit and border car parking area. Fencing will delineate Reserve/ Esplanade boundary, prevent encroachment from Freehold tenure, restrict vehicle access, and direct pedestrians to official beach access paths. Unofficial beach access from car park to beach front to be formalised with fencing to direct pedestrians (Figure 15).
Zone D Eimeo Creek mouth (9 ha).	
8	Weed control, revegetation, remove waste dumping. Major target weed species include lantana and Guinea grass, particularly around the margins of the existing remnant vegetation. Revegetation to replace removed weed species and provide a buffer zone to the existing remnant vegetation. Remove garden waste and maintain storm water retention basin to ensure optimal operation.
Other activities across multiple zones	
9	Update and rationalise current regulatory and information signage; dogs on leads, vehicle and pedestrian access points, waste dumping, camping, and fire signage.
10	Monitor and use available legislation to protect existing native vegetation on Esplanade and Reserve tenure as required (particularly zones A and B).
11	Educate coastal community on local weed species and promote the use of local native species in residential gardens.
12	Educate coastal community on requirement to dispose of garden waste and other debris at designated Council refuse sites.

Figure 25: Zones for recommended activities Bucasia Beach



4. References

Ecosystem Conservation Branch (2007) *Conservation Management Profile. Regional Ecosystem 11.2.3 – Low notophyll to microphyll vine forest (“beach scrub”) on sandy beach ridges*, Environmental Protection Agency.

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Environmental Protection Agency (2005) *Regional Ecosystem Description Database*. Available at http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/nature_conservation/biodiversity/regional_ecosystems/how_to_download_REDD/

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Mackay Historical Society and Museum Incorporated (2008) *Mackay Placenames*, viewed 14 April 2009, <http://www.mackayhistory.org/research/placenames/placenames.html>

Milton, D. (2009) *Internal data provided on shorebird roost sites within Mackay Regional Council (1993 – 2008)*, Queensland Wader Study Group.

Queensland Government (2003) *State Planning Policy 1/03 Mitigating the Adverse Impacts of Flood, Bushfire and Landslide*. Available at <http://www.emergency.qld.gov.au/publications/spp/>

Appendix 1: Recommended species for dune revegetation

This is a generic list of recommended species for dune revegetation on Mackay beaches compiled from *Sarina Shire Beaches Management Guidelines for Coastal Zones*, Regional Ecosystem 8.2.1, 8.2.2, 8.2.6a revegetation recommendations, and field observations.

A distinction is made below between front and hind dune species for revegetation. However, the species selected for revegetation at any particular location will ultimately depend on current and pre-clearing Regional Ecosystem mapping, and site-specific conditions (such as aspect, topography, existing vegetation, soil condition, etc).

Front Dune (seaward)		
Species name	Common name	Habit
<i>Canavalia rosea</i>	Beach bean	Groundcover
<i>Carpobrotus glaucescens</i>	Angular pigface	Groundcover
<i>Ipomoea pes-caprae</i>	Goats foot convolvulus	Groundcover
<i>Sporobolus virginicus</i>	Marine couch	Groundcover
<i>Vigna marina</i>	Vigna	Groundcover
<i>Cyperus pedunculatus</i>	Pineapple sedge	Sedge
<i>Spinifex sericeus</i>	Beach spinifex	Grass
<i>Thuarea involuta</i>	Birds beak grass	Grass
<i>Vitex trifolia</i>	Coastal vitex	Shrub
<i>Argusia argentea</i>	Octopus bush	Tree
<i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i>	Coastal she oak	Tree

Front Dune (top and landward side)		
Species name	Common name	Habit
<i>Clerodendum inerme</i>	Coastal lollybush	Shrub
<i>Dodonaea viscosa</i> subsp. <i>viscosa</i>	Sticky hop bush	Shrub
<i>Sophora tomentosa</i>	Silver bean	Shrub
<i>Vitex trifolia</i>	Coastal vitex	Shrub
<i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i>	Coastal she oak	Tree
<i>Hibiscus tiliaceus</i>	Cottonwood	Tree
<i>Pandanus tectorius</i>	Pandanus	Tree

Hind dune and further landward		
Species name	Common name	Habit
<i>Crinum pedunculatum</i>	Spider lilly	Lilly
<i>Eragrostis interrupta</i>	Coastal love grass	Grass
<i>Eustrephus latifolius</i>	Wombat berry	Climber
<i>Stephania japonica</i>	Tape vine	Climber
<i>Clerodendrum inerme</i>	Coastal lolly bush	Shrub
<i>Dodonaea viscosa subsp. viscosa</i>	Sticky hop bush	Shrub
<i>Eugenia reinwardtiana</i>	Beach cherry	Shrub
<i>Jasminum didymium</i>	Native jasmine	Shrub
<i>Sophora tomentosa</i>	Silver bean	Shrub
<i>Acacia leptocarpa</i>		Tree
<i>Acacia oraria</i>		Tree
<i>Acronychia laevis</i>	Glossy acronychia	Tree
<i>Alphitonia excelsa</i>	Soapy ash	Tree
<i>Banksia integrifolia</i>	Coastal banksia	Tree
<i>Calophyllum inophyllum</i>	Ball nut	Tree
<i>Chionanthus ramiflora</i>	Native olive	Tree
<i>Clerodendrum floribundum</i>	Lolly bush	Tree
<i>Corymbia tessellaris</i>	Moreton bay ash	Tree
<i>Cupaniopsis anacardioides</i>	Tuckeroo	Tree
<i>Diospyros geminata</i>	Scaly ebony	Tree
<i>Drypetes deplanchei</i>	Yellow tulip	Tree
<i>Euroschinus falcata</i>	Ribbonwood	Tree
<i>Hibiscus heterophyllus</i>	Native hibiscus	Tree
<i>Hibiscus tiliaceus</i>	Cottonwood	Tree
<i>Jagera pseudorhus</i>	Foam bark	Tree
<i>Macaranga tanarius</i>	Macaranga	Tree
<i>Mallotus philipensis</i>	Red kamala	Tree
<i>Mimusops elengi</i>	Red coondoo	Tree
<i>Morinda citrifolia</i>	Smelly cheese tree	Tree
<i>Pandanus tectorius</i>	Pandanus	Tree
<i>Pittosporum ferrugineum</i>	Rusty pittosporum	Tree
<i>Planchonia careya</i>	Cocky apple	Tree
<i>Pleiogynium timorense</i>	Burdekin plum	Tree
<i>Sterculia quadrifida</i>	Peanut tree	Tree
<i>Terminalia cattapa</i>	Beach almond	Tree
<i>Terminalia muelleri</i>		Tree
<i>Thespesia populnoides</i>	Tulip tree	Tree

Appendix 2: Coastal fencing specifications

