

Soils

Soils provide a medium for plant growth. Soils store, purify and release water. Soils modify the atmosphere and are home to organisms that break down organic matter, recycle nutrients and create habitat. As well as supporting healthy ecosystems, healthy soils are essential for the region's agricultural industries.

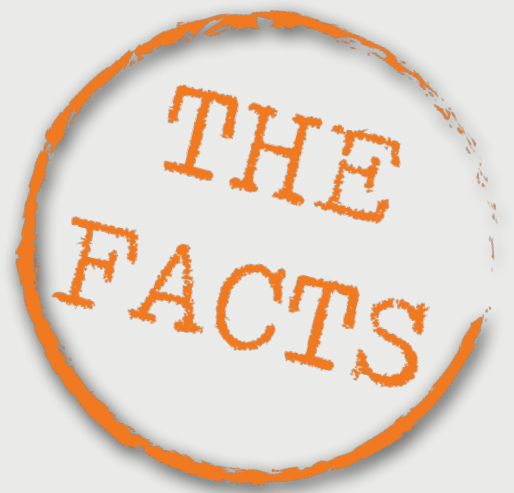
Pressures

Soil erosion is a natural process where wind and rain dislodge soil particles that can move across the landscape and into waterways. Poor land management practices, across all sectors, can result in greatly accelerated erosion processes. The Fitzroy River carries an estimated 4 million tonnes of sediment annually from the catchment to Keppel Bay and the Great Barrier Reef lagoon annually.

Groundcover is organic material such as crops, grass or leaf litter on the soil surface. Managing groundcover is a key way to manage soil health and erosion risk.

Salinity, from land use change through clearing or inappropriate irrigation practices, is an issue. Approximately 70 salinity expressions have been identified in the region. Salinity can reduce productivity, damage infrastructure and degrade water quality.

Acid sulfate soils are marine soils that leach acid when exposed to air. Acid sulfate soils are an issue when low-lying coastal soils are disturbed by development, such as through excavation or dredging.



The region's diverse landscape includes ranges, flood plains, estuaries, coastlines and islands.

Trends

Good rainfall in recent years has promoted high groundcover levels across most of the catchment.

Soil erosion and its impacts on Keppel Bay and the Great Barrier Reef lagoon will continue to be an important issue for central Queensland. Intensification of land use brings with it greater risks to soils. Open-cut mining operations often substantially modify local landforms and soil properties. Intensive animal industries, urban, suburban, industrial, and infrastructure development can all impact and contaminate soils.

Climate change, with increasing temperatures and changes to the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, will impact soil health and land management systems.

Regional objectives

Soils are a finite and valuable resource facing increasing pressure from a growing population, intensification of land use and climate change.

We need to protect and maintain the productive soils that support high value agricultural industries. Maintaining and increasing agricultural productivity relies on the health of these soils.

We must tackle the already degraded soils and ensure we manage soils that are at risk of degradation.

Maintaining groundcover is the most effective way of managing soil erosion risk in the grazing lands that cover most of the catchment.



Soil erosion is directly linked to declining water quality and impacts on the Great Barrier Reef.



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