

REEF PLAN

A large number of our reefs have come under threat over the last few decades from exploitation and encroachment. So Scientists have come up with a plan to help our reefs.

In the past we have tried to preserve some areas of the Great Barrier Reef in isolation in order that they remain "pristine", but this has been done in vain. The Great Barrier Reef has lost 50% of its coral cover in just 40 years, as it is not resilient to change.

Now scientists believe we should change our strategy by protecting certain types of fish and marine life, which help protect coral. One of the greatest threats to coral is algal bloom. This smothers the coral and kills it. The "Surgeon" fish, for example, eat algae and helps reduce it spreading. Other fish such as the "Humphead" fish eats dead coral thus enabling the regeneration of coral. Both these and other types of fish should be protected, under a management plan. Scientists have discussed the plan at an international gathering in Japan in July 2004.

[Source: ABC (Australia) News program]