

Maroochy River - Dredging and Beach Nourishment

Application Number: **03344**

Commencement Date:
23/02/2026

Status: **Locked**

1. About the project

1.1 Project details

1.1.1 Project title *

Maroochy River - Dredging and Beach Nourishment

1.1.2 Project industry type *

Water Management and Use

1.1.3 Project industry sub-type

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1.1.4 Estimated start date *

01/07/2026

1.1.4 Estimated end date *

30/06/2036

1.2 Proposed Action details

1.2.1 Provide an overview of the proposed action, including all proposed activities. *

Sunshine Coast Council undertakes regular dredging and nourishment activities along the coast of its local government area. Dredging of the Maroochy River mouth has occurred for a number of years under existing permits, including EPBC referral decisions 2012-6396 and 2015-7594, which determined the work not to constitute a controlled action if undertaken in a particular manner.

This ongoing action remains the same, and consists of accessing clean sand, suitable for beach nourishment, from the Maroochy River mouth to nourish the ocean beach between the Maroochy and Alexandra Headland Surf Clubs targeting intertidal and subtidal sandbanks and sandbars within an already approved dredge footprint. The proponent is the Sunshine Coast Council. This dredged sand is intended to be accessed annually, for a short period in February/March, then between May and October for the purpose of providing a resilient and safe beach.

The February/March dredging activity window (approved under 2015-7594) allows for additional sand to be placed prior to the Surf Lifesaving Championships, a Statewide event that is held every 3 years on this section of beach. Sand accessed for the event is not in addition to that already allocated to dredging in the Maroochy River (i.e. the existing allocation under the Environmental Authority includes the event).

NOTE: The February/March dredging activity will only occur if deemed necessary by Councils Coastal Engineers. If sufficient sand remains on the foreshore during this time, it may be unnecessary to access the proposed full volume of sand from the Maroochy River for the purposes of nourishment. However, for the purposes of this referral, the description of the project and activities has been prepared on the basis that the event will occur.

The works involve accessing sand in accordance with existing local, state and federal approvals. Dredging in the Maroochy River was previously approved in 2012 (for May to October biennially) and deemed not a controlled action if undertaken in a particular manner. It was referred again in 2015 to include February/March and again deemed not a controlled action if undertaken in a particular manner.

The dredged sand from this activity is used to nourish Maroochy and Alex beaches to the south of the dredge site. These beaches are in a recessive state, and require regular nourishment to provide adequate erosion protection to the adjacent vegetation, dune, and foreshore infrastructure, with the intent of this activity is to delay the need for hard infrastructure, such as a seawall, for as long as possible in this space, keeping the environment as natural as possible.

The existing EPBC referral decisions for this activity limit the majority of the work to biennially (i.e. every other year), as well as within the following operational windows and volumes:

- 1 Feb to 15 March (allowed annually) up to 20,000m³
- 1 May to 30 September (allowed biennially) up to 100,000m³

Since commencement of these activities a number of factors have been observed:

- Operational inefficiencies - the equipment available to Council through its contractors, as well as suitable weather and competing dredging activities, means that Council often struggles to obtain the required dredge volumes in the approved timeframes
- Continuing erosion - biennial dredging is proving unable to keep up with the erosion on this section of beach which is in a recessive state
- Additional erosion post-storm events - there is a need to have annual capacity to react to the impacts of ever more frequent storm events and their erosive capabilities (for example Tropical Cyclone Alfred in 2025)

With the above factors in mind, the intent of this EPBC referral is to undertake the same activity, over the same footprint, with the following changes:

1. Allow for annual dredging activities in this area,
2. Extend the operational window to October 31 each year, and

3. Change the metrics from 'cubic meters' to 'tonnes' for consistency with the Environmental Authority approved under the *Environmental Protection Act (QLD) 1994*.

The new parameters for the dredging activity therefore being:

- 1 February to 15 March - annually - up to 40,000t (20,000m³)
- 1 May to 31 October - annually - up to 200,000t (100,000m³)

1.2.2 Is the project action part of a staged development or related to other actions or proposals in the region?

No

1.2.6 What Commonwealth or state legislation, planning frameworks or policy documents are relevant to the proposed action, and how are they relevant? *

The primary legislation relevant to dredging and beach nourishment activities in Queensland includes the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and the Queensland *Environmental Protection Act 1994* (EP Act). Under the EPBC Act, dredging may require referral and approval if the activity is likely to have a significant impact on Matters of National Environmental Significance, such as listed threatened species, migratory species, marine environments, or World Heritage properties. At the state level, the EP Act regulates dredging and material placement as an Environmentally Relevant Activity (ERA), requiring an environmental authority that assesses potential water quality, sediment, and ecological impacts. Additional frameworks—such as the *State Coastal Management Plan*, *Queensland Coastal Plan*, and relevant regional coastal hazard adaptation or planning scheme policies—guide how these activities should be planned and managed to protect coastal processes, environmental values, and sensitive marine habitats.

1.2.7 Describe any public consultation that has been, is being or will be undertaken regarding the project area, including with Indigenous stakeholders. Attach any completed consultation documentations, if relevant. *

As part of the original development application, the Maroochy River dredging was made available to the public for consultation and submissions. Prior to each dredging event, Council undertakes public notification of the proposed works.

1.3.1 Identity: Referring party

Privacy Notice:

Personal information means information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable.

By completing and submitting this form, you consent to the collection of all personal information contained in this form. If you are providing the personal information of other individuals in this form, please ensure you have their consent before doing so.

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Confirm that you have read and understand this Privacy Notice *

1.3.1.1 Is Referring party an organisation or business? *

Yes

Referring party organisation details

ABN/ACN 37876973913
Organisation name Sunshine Coast Regional Council
Organisation address 4558 QLD

Referring party details

Name Sam Cook
Job title Mr
Phone 0456259840
Email sam.cook@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au
Address 54 Industrial Avenue, Caloundra QLD 4551

1.3.2 Identity: Person proposing to take the action

1.3.2.1 Are the Person proposing to take the action details the same as the Referring party details? *

Yes

Person proposing to take the action organisation details

ABN/ACN 37876973913
Organisation name Sunshine Coast Regional Council
Organisation address 4558 QLD

Person proposing to take the action details

Name Sam Cook
Job title Mr
Phone 0456259840
Email sam.cook@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au
Address 54 Industrial Avenue, Caloundra QLD 4551

1.3.2.14 Are you proposing the action as part of a Joint Venture? *

No

1.3.2.15 Are you proposing the action as part of a Trust? *

No

1.3.2.17 Describe the Person proposing the action's history of responsible environmental management including details of any proceedings under a Commonwealth, State or Territory law for the protection of the environment or the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources against the Person proposing to take the action. *

Sunshine Coast Council does not have any proceedings against it regarding Commonwealth, State or Territory law for the protection of the environment or the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

1.3.2.18 If the person proposing to take the action is a corporation, provide details of the corporation's environmental policy and planning framework

Sunshine Coast Council's overarching environmental framework, principally the *Environment and Liveability Strategy (ELS)*, sets out a long-term vision to protect natural assets, strengthen climate resilience and ensure sustainable growth across the region. This strategy includes guiding principles, policy positions and implementation pathways covering biodiversity, waterways, coastal management, sustainable design, energy efficiency and climate adaptation. Council also commits to proactive climate action and supports sustainable living practices across the community. Council's planning framework includes commitments such as progressing towards zero-net emissions by 2041, which influences expectations around procurement, supply chains, lifecycle impacts and waste minimisation.

1.3.3 Identity: Proposed designated proponent

1.3.3.1 Are the Proposed designated proponent details the same as the Person proposing to take the action? *

Yes

Proposed designated proponent organisation details

ABN/ACN 37876973913
Organisation name Sunshine Coast Regional Council
Organisation address 4558 QLD

Proposed designated proponent details

Name Sam Cook
Job title Mr
Phone 0456259840
Email sam.cook@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au
Address 54 Industrial Avenue, Caloundra QLD 4551

1.3.4 Identity: Summary of allocation

✔ Confirmed Referring party's identity

The Referring party is the person preparing the information in this referral.

ABN/ACN	37876973913
Organisation name	Sunshine Coast Regional Council
Organisation address	4558 QLD
Representative's name	Sam Cook
Representative's job title	Mr
Phone	0456259840
Email	sam.cook@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au
Address	54 Industrial Avenue, Caloundra QLD 4551

✔ Confirmed Person proposing to take the action's identity

The Person proposing to take the action is the individual, business, government agency or trustee that will be responsible for the proposed action.

Same as Referring party information.

✔ Confirmed Proposed designated proponent's identity

The Person proposing to take the action is the individual or organisation proposed to be responsible for meeting the requirements of the EPBC Act during the assessment process, if the Minister decides that this project is a controlled action.

Same as Person proposing to take the action information.

1.4 Payment details: Payment exemption and fee waiver

1.4.1 Do you qualify for an exemption from fees under EPBC Regulation 5.23 (1) (a)? *

No

1.4.3 Have you applied for or been granted a waiver for full or partial fees under Regulation 5.21A? *

No

1.4.5 Are you going to apply for a waiver of full or partial fees under EPBC Regulation 5.21A?

No

1.4.7 Has the department issued you with a credit note? *

No

1.4.9 Would you like to add a purchase order number to your invoice? *

No

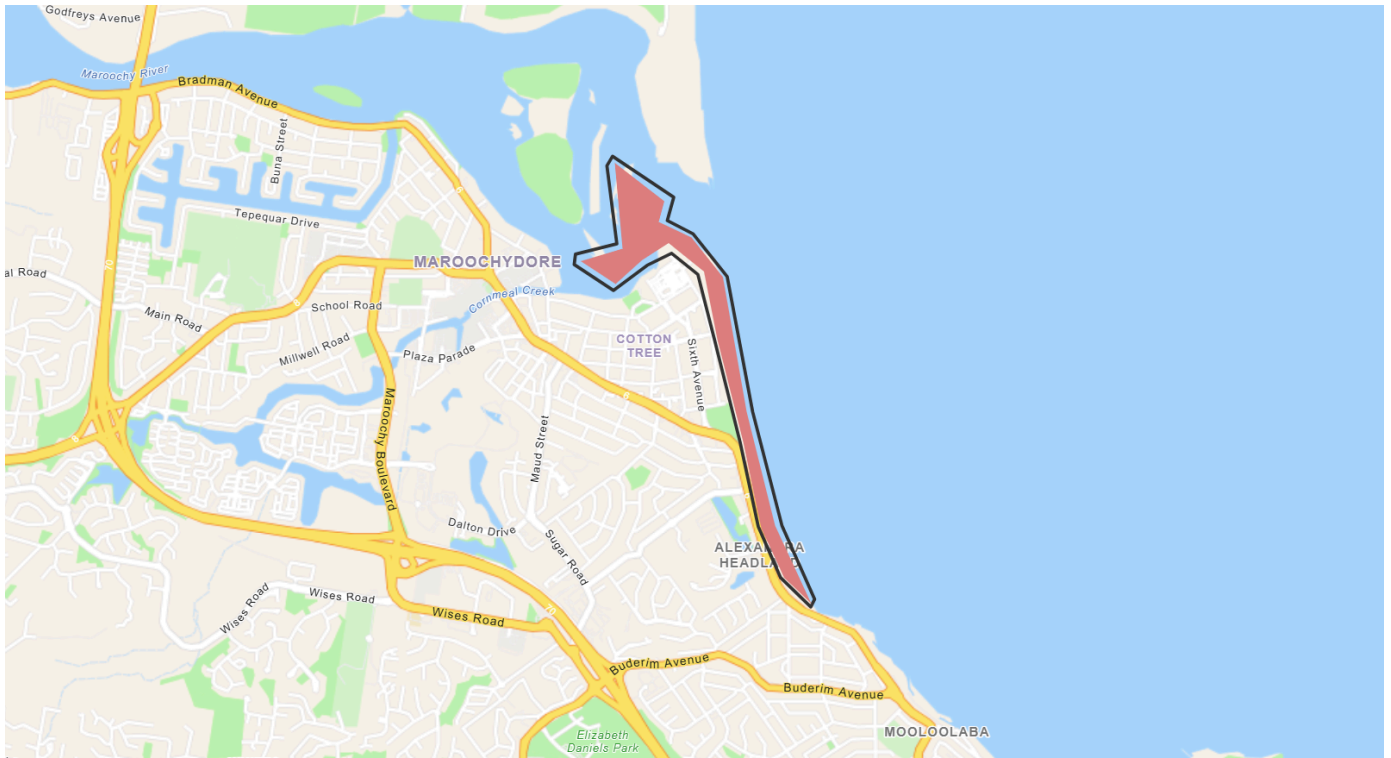
1.4 Payment details: Payment allocation

1.4.11 Who would you like to allocate as the entity responsible for payment? *

Person proposing to take the action

2. Location

2.1 Project footprint



Project Area: 59.57 Ha Disturbance Footprint: 36.80 Ha

2.2 Footprint details

2.2.1 What is the address of the proposed action? *

Maroochy River, Sunshine Coast, Queensland (adjacent to Lot 39 USL32605)

2.2.2 Where is the primary jurisdiction of the proposed action? *

Queensland

2.2.3 Is there a secondary jurisdiction for this proposed action? *

No

2.2.5 What is the tenure of the action area relevant to the project area? *

Unallocated State Land

3. Existing environment

3.1 Physical description

3.1.1 Describe the current condition of the project area's environment.

The environment within the dredging footprint is robust and resilient. There is little evidence of contamination or other impacts in this area.

The foreshore between Maroochy and Alexandra Headland Surf Clubs is a subject to strong erosive forces and thus varies in condition depending upon prevailing climate and weather conditions. At the time of dredging, the foreshore is expected to be moderately to heavily eroded as a result of summer storms, with erosion threatening stability of some foredune vegetation and beach access areas. During heavy erosion, indurated sands ('coffee rock') is exposed along the beach front.

3.1.2 Describe any existing or proposed uses for the project area.

Within the dredging footprint there is very minimal existing recreational or other use given. Some sailing and other boat-based activities may occur on occasion. No swimming or other primary recreational activities occur.

The foreshore for nourishment is commonly used, especially in the vicinity of the surf clubs and beach access points, for primary recreation such as swimming and surfing. The foreshore is also used by pedestrians.

The ocean beaches between Maroochy and Alexandra Headland Surf Clubs is utilised for a number of local and State wide events including the Surf Lifesaving Championships.

3.1.3 Describe any outstanding natural features and/or any other important or unique values that applies to the project area.

There are no outstanding natural features and/or any other important or unique values that applies to the project area.

3.1.4 Describe the gradient (or depth range if action is to be taken in a marine area) relevant to the project area.

Dredging occurs in intertidal and sub-tidal areas, to a depth necessary to access the required volume of sand.

3.2 Flora and fauna

3.2.1 Describe the flora and fauna within the affected area and attach any investigations of surveys if applicable.

The sand placement area consists of foredune vegetation communities, supporting local dune grasses, casuarinas and other dune vegetation. This provides habitat to local flora and fauna species. Previous surveys, however, have not identified any threatened or migratory species occupying this area. Placement activities are unlikely to have any significant impact on the habitat in these areas as sand is placed seaward of the toe of the foredune.

The Maroochy River estuary is important habitat for fish species. North and west of the dredging footprint is the Maroochy River Fish Habitat Area (FHA) and fish movement is known throughout the estuary. No seagrass or other marine plants are known in this section of the estuary due to its dynamic nature at the river mouth.

3.2.2 Describe the vegetation (including the status of native vegetation and soil) within the project area.

There is remnant vegetation on Goat Island and the northern half of the sand placement area. This consists of RE 12.1.3 (mangrove shrubland to low closed forest on marine clay plains and estuaries) and RE 12.2.14 (foredune complex). Both communities are least concern under the Queensland *Vegetation Management Act 1999* and will not be impacted by the works.

Sediment in the dredge footprint consists of clean sand, as indicated by previous testing, and recent dredging activities. This material matches that found in the sand placement area.

3.3 Heritage

3.3.1 Describe any Commonwealth Heritage Places Overseas or other places recognised as having heritage values that apply to the project area.

There are no Commonwealth heritage places overseas, or other places recognised as having heritage values that apply to the project area.

3.3.2 Describe any Indigenous heritage values that apply to the project area.

There are no known Indigenous heritage values that apply to the project area. The general duty of care under the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act will be followed at all times throughout the project.

3.4 Hydrology

3.4.1 Describe the hydrology characteristics that apply to the project area and attach any hydrological investigations or surveys if applicable. *

The dredge footprint is within the Maroochy River estuary which is tidal. The vicinity of the footprint is subject to high flows given its proximity to the river mouth. This area has been chosen as a sediment source due to its ability to replenish sediment rapidly post-dredging activities.

4. Impacts and mitigation

4.1 Impact details

Potential Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) relevant to your proposed action area.

EPBC Act section	Controlling provision	Impacted	Reviewed
S12	World Heritage	No	Yes
S15B	National Heritage	No	Yes
S16	Ramsar Wetland	No	Yes
S18	Threatened Species and Ecological Communities	Yes	Yes
S20	Migratory Species	Yes	Yes
S21	Nuclear	No	Yes
S23	Commonwealth Marine Area	No	Yes
S24B	Great Barrier Reef	No	Yes
S24D	Water resource in relation to large coal mining development or coal seam gas	No	Yes
S26	Commonwealth Land	No	Yes
S27B	Commonwealth Heritage Places Overseas	No	Yes
S28	Commonwealth or Commonwealth Agency	No	Yes

4.1.1 World Heritage

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

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4.1.1.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

No

4.1.1.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.

*

No World Heritage properties are located within 10 km of the project area.

4.1.2 National Heritage

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

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4.1.2.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

No

4.1.2.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.

*

No National Heritage places are located within 10 km of the project area.

4.1.3 Ramsar Wetland

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

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4.1.3.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

No

4.1.3.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.

*

There are no RAMSAR wetlands within 10km of the proposed work.

4.1.4 Threatened Species and Ecological Communities

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

Threatened species

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Species	Common name
No	Yes	Caretta caretta	Loggerhead Turtle
No	Yes	Chelonia mydas	Green Turtle
No	Yes	Rostratula australis	Australian Painted Snipe

Ecological communities

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4.1.4.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

Yes

4.1.4.2 Briefly describe why your action has a direct and/or indirect impact on these protected matters. *

The protected matters search tool (PMST) identified three listed threatened ecological communities (TECs). Site surveys indicate that no listed TECs occur within or adjacent to the dredging or placement areas.

The protected matters search tool (PMST) identified 95 listed threatened species as potentially occurring within the project area. Based on a survey of habitat requirements and historical surveys, only three species have been identified as potentially affected by the dredging event. These species have been summarised in table 1 (attached).

4.1.4.4 Do you consider this likely direct and/or indirect impact to be a Significant Impact? *

*

No

4.1.4.6 Describe why you do not consider this to be a Significant Impact. *

In addition to the detail noted in table 1, taking into consideration the scale of the activity, the work undertaken by Sunshine Coast Council in terms of protecting and monitoring shorebirds and turtles, the fact that this activity has occurred for a decade without any noticeable significant impacts, ongoing survey work, and the abundance of higher value alternative habitat adjacent to the site, it is considered that the dredging activities will not have any significant impacts to any listed threatened species or ecological communities.

4.1.4.7 Do you think your proposed action is a controlled action? *

No

4.1.4.9 Please elaborate why you do not think your proposed action is a controlled action.

*

The key MNES value that could be impacted by the additional dredging activity timeframe is migratory shorebirds. Given that the dredging will occur in an area chosen to cause least disturbance to these species and the availability of alternative foraging, roosting and respite areas within the Maroochy River estuary, any effects on these species is expected to be minimal. The proposed additional mitigation measures will also help to manage any impacts.

4.1.4.10 Please describe any avoidance or mitigation measures proposed for this action and attach any supporting documentation for these avoidance and mitigation measures. *

Recognising that the primary mitigation measure of undertaking dredging and nourishment activities outside of the months where migratory shorebirds are present is not available for the proposed timeframes extension, the following additional mitigation measures are proposed.

In line with EPBC referral decision 2015-7594, identical mitigation measures are proposed should dredging and nourishment be required before May and after September.

These additional measures have been tried and tested and have worked successfully in terms of avoiding impacts to migratory shorebirds during dredging activities.

Buffer

To maximise the buffer between the dredging works and the shallow intertidal sand banks where shorebirds have been observed and are most likely to be present, the footprint for the works will target the seaward extent of the permitted dredge area. This location has relatively low value for shorebird roosting and feeding due to the dynamic morphology of the spit.

Survey and Monitoring

Sunshine Coast Council (SCC) will commit to undertaking further shorebird surveys prior to the works, during the works (including observations of any negative interactions between the dredge operation and feeding or resting shorebirds) and immediately following works. These surveys will be undertaken by suitably qualified members of the Coastal Conservation and Planning Team. A detailed survey and inspection of the beach nourishment site will also be undertaken to search for any bird or turtle nests prior to nourishment works being undertaken, including consultation on known next locations with Turtle Care. If any nests or juvenile animals are identified on the upper beach or dune areas they will be immediately marked, and the proposed nourishment works shifted to avoid the nesting areas or provide an adequate buffer zone. Where this is not possible, remedial works should be undertaken to transplant nests and animals to a safer location.

Restriction of Access to Provide Additional Respite

If shorebirds are present and disturbed or displaced by the proposed secondary dredging and nourishment works, they will likely seek respite at adjacent areas. These are likely to include the adjacent areas of the sand spit, at Goat Island, or at the Maroochy North Shore. As an additional mitigation measure, Council will commit to restriction of access to the northern Spit area and to the Northshore shorebird habitat site from pedestrian traffic such that any birds that seek respite in these areas have additional protection from human disturbance during the works. This mitigation measure is complemented by a recent action of SCC, through the Dog Exercise Area (DEA) plan, to seasonally limit access to an area of the Maroochy North Shore.

4.1.4.11 Please describe any proposed offsets and attach any supporting documentation relevant to these measures. *

No offsets are proposed for this activity.

4.1.5 Migratory Species

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Species	Common name
No	Yes	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Ruddy Turnstone
No	Yes	<i>Calidris acuminata</i>	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
No	Yes	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	Red Knot, Knot
No	Yes	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	Red-necked Stint
No	Yes	<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	Great Knot
No	Yes	<i>Caretta caretta</i>	Loggerhead Turtle
No	Yes	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	Green Turtle
No	Yes	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	White-winged Tern, White-winged Black Tern
No	Yes	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Caspian Tern
No	Yes	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Bar-tailed Godwit
No	Yes	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Black-tailed Godwit
No	Yes	<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	Eastern Curlew, Far Eastern Curlew
No	Yes	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Whimbrel
No	Yes	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	Pacific Golden Plover
No	Yes	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	Little Tern
No	Yes	<i>Tringa brevipes</i>	Grey-tailed Tattler

4.1.5.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

Yes

4.1.5.2 Briefly describe why your action has a direct and/or indirect impact on these protected matters. *

The PMST identified 74 listed migratory species as potentially occurring within the project area.

Surveys undertaken by the Queensland Wader Study Group and Sunshine Coast Council between 2009 and 2026 have confirmed the presence of a number of migratory shorebirds in the Maroochy River estuary. In addition, as noted above, green and loggerhead turtles are known to occur in Moreton Bay to the south and may occur on rare occasions within the Maroochy River estuary. The table below summarises the occurrence of these species.

Please refer to the attached Table 2.

All other migratory species listed on the PMST results are not expected to be affected by the dredging activities.

Nature and extent of likely impact

Table 2 summarises the potential impacts to listed migratory species. The key impacts to consider are related to migratory shorebirds and waders. These species are known to utilise areas in the vicinity of the dredging area for foraging activities. However, annual surveys undertaken by Sunshine Coast Council and their contractors (available through Councils website) have identified infrequent use of the dredging footprint by shorebirds for either foraging or roosting activities (as supported by the attached 'Shorebird Habitat Map 24-25' map). Shorebirds have been observed to prefer the less disturbed sites occurring to the north and west.

This is supported by a recent scientific publication, '*Changes in shorebird use of the Maroochy River estuary, Sunshine Coast, Queensland over 25 years*' (P Lloyd, PV Driscoll and S Bosshard) which, amongst other conclusions, notes:

'Thus, there is no unequivocal evidence to suggest an impact of dredging on shorebird abundance at low tide. The restriction of the dredging to a localised area at the estuary entrance, where the sandy sediments are highly dynamic, has ensured minimal overlap with the tidal flat areas used by shorebirds for feeding at low tide.'

This paper can be found here: [V48_Pg39-48_QldWaders_Lloyd_V1.pdf](#)

In accordance with EPBC Act policy statement 3.21, *Industry guidelines for avoiding, assessing and mitigating impacts on EPBC Act listed migratory shorebird species*, the Maroochy River estuary would be identified as nationally important habitat where it supported 15 or more of the 37 migratory shorebird species listed in the statement.

While 15 migratory shorebird/wader species have been identified for the estuary based on studies by Sunshine Coast Council and the Queensland Wader Study Group only 10 of these have been identified within the list of 37 provided in the policy statement. However, it is possible that other shorebirds may occur within the estuary from time to time based on counts within the Noosa River and Pumicestone Passage habitat areas (north and south of the Maroochy River). Taking a risk-based approach, therefore, it is possible that the Maroochy River estuary is 'nationally important habitat' for the purpose of EPBC Act policy statement 3.21 and the Significant Impact Guidelines 1.1.

Where the Maroochy River estuary is important habitat, the dredging activities would cause a significant impact if it led to any of the following:

- Loss of important habitat resulting in a reduction in the capacity of the habitat to support migratory shorebirds
- Degradation of important habitat, increased disturbance, or direct mortality of birds, all leading to a substantial reduction in migratory shorebirds using the site. This takes into account number of migratory shorebirds historically using a site, likely resultant changes in bird numbers and species diversity, alterations to the value, quality, geographic extent of the site, function and role of the site

(e.g. roosting, foraging) and likely changes in ecology and hydrology, the regional and local context of the site, and the nature, extent, duration of impacts and likelihood of consequence.

These significant criteria are considered in the context of species-specific significant impact in table 2.

4.1.5.4 Do you consider this likely direct and/or indirect impact to be a Significant Impact?

*

No

4.1.5.6 Describe why you do not consider this to be a Significant Impact. *

In addition to the detail noted in Table 2, taking into consideration the scale of the activity, the work undertaken by Sunshine Coast Council in terms of protecting and monitoring shorebirds and turtles, the fact that this activity has occurred for a decade without any noticeable significant impacts, ongoing survey work, and the abundance of higher value alternative habitat adjacent to the site, it is considered that the dredging activities will not have any significant impacts to any listed threatened species or ecological communities.

4.1.5.7 Do you think your proposed action is a controlled action? *

No

4.1.5.9 Please elaborate why you do not think your proposed action is a controlled action.

*

As noted, the key MNES value that could be impacted by the dredging activities is migratory shorebirds. Given that the dredging will occur in an area chosen to cause least disturbance to these species and the availability of alternative foraging and roosting areas within the Maroochy River estuary, any effects on these species is expected to be minimal, especially if undertaken in conjunction with the proposed mitigation measures below.

This is supported by a recent scientific publication, '*Changes in shorebird use of the Maroochy River estuary, Sunshine Coast, Queensland over 25 years*' (P Lloyd, PV Driscoll and S Bosshard) which, amongst other conclusions, notes:

'Thus, there is no unequivocal evidence to suggest an impact of dredging on shorebird abundance at low tide. The restriction of the dredging to a localised area at the estuary entrance, where the sandy sediments are highly dynamic, has ensured minimal overlap with the tidal flat areas used by shorebirds for feeding at low tide.'

4.1.5.10 Please describe any avoidance or mitigation measures proposed for this action and attach any supporting documentation for these avoidance and mitigation measures. *

Recognising that the primary mitigation measure of undertaking dredging and nourishment activities outside of the months where migratory shorebirds are present is not available for the proposed timeframes extension, the following additional mitigation measures are proposed.

In line with EPBC referral decision 2015-7594, identical mitigation measures are proposed should dredging and nourishment be required before May and after September.

These additional measures have been tried and tested and have worked successfully in terms of avoiding impacts to migratory shorebirds during dredging activities.

Buffer

To maximise the buffer between the dredging works and the shallow intertidal sand banks where shorebirds have been observed and are most likely to be present, the footprint for the works will target the seaward extent of the permitted dredge area. This location has relatively low value for shorebird roosting and feeding due to the dynamic morphology of the spit.

Survey and Monitoring

Sunshine Coast Council (SCC) will commit to undertaking further shorebird surveys prior to the works, during the works (including observations of any negative interactions between the dredge operation and feeding or resting shorebirds) and immediately following works. These surveys will be undertaken by suitably qualified members of the Coastal Conservation and Planning Team. A detailed survey and inspection of the beach nourishment site will also be undertaken to search for any bird or turtle nests prior to nourishment works being undertaken, including consultation on known next locations with Turtle Care. If any nests or juvenile animals are identified on the upper beach or dune areas they will be immediately marked, and the proposed nourishment works shifted to avoid the nesting areas or provide an adequate buffer zone. Where this is not possible, remedial works should be undertaken to transplant nests and animals to a safer location.

Restriction of Access to Provide Additional Respite

If shorebirds are present and disturbed or displaced by the proposed secondary dredging and nourishment works, they will likely seek respite at adjacent areas. These are likely to include the adjacent areas of the sand spit, at Goat Island, or at the Maroochy North Shore. As an additional mitigation measure, Council will commit to restriction of access to the northern Spit area and to the Northshore shorebird habitat site from pedestrian traffic such that any birds that seek respite in these areas have additional protection from human disturbance during the works. This mitigation measure is complemented by a recent action of SCC, through the Dog Exercise Area (DEA) plan, to seasonally limit access to an area of the Maroochy North Shore.

4.1.5.11 Please describe any proposed offsets and attach any supporting documentation relevant to these measures. *

Due to the fact that the activity will not present a significant impact on migratory species, as supported by the information above, no offsets are proposed for this activity.

4.1.6 Nuclear

4.1.6.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on this protected matter? *

No

4.1.6.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.

*

The project is not a nuclear action.

4.1.7 Commonwealth Marine Area

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

—

4.1.7.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

No

4.1.7.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.

*

There are no Commonwealth Marine Areas in proximity to the project area.

4.1.8 Great Barrier Reef

4.1.8.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on this protected matter? *

No

4.1.8.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.

*

The project is not in proximity to the Great Barrier Reef.

4.1.9 Water resource in relation to large coal mining development or coal seam gas

4.1.9.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on this protected matter? *

No

4.1.9.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.

*

The project is not associated with a water resource in relation to coal seam gas or large coal mining development.

4.1.10 Commonwealth Land

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

—

4.1.10.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

No

4.1.10.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.

*

The project is not located on or near Commonwealth Land.

4.1.11 Commonwealth Heritage Places Overseas

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

—

4.1.11.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

No

4.1.11.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.

*

There are no Commonwealth Heritage places overseas associated with the project area.

4.1.12 Commonwealth or Commonwealth Agency

4.1.12.1 Is the proposed action to be taken by the Commonwealth or a Commonwealth Agency? *

No

4.2 Impact summary

Conclusion on the likelihood of significant impacts

You have indicated that the proposed action will likely have a significant impact on the following Matters of National Environmental Significance:

None

Conclusion on the likelihood of unlikely significant impacts

You have indicated that the proposed action will unlikely have a significant impact on the following Matters of National Environmental Significance:

- World Heritage (S12)
- National Heritage (S15B)
- Ramsar Wetland (S16)
- Threatened Species and Ecological Communities (S18)
- Migratory Species (S20)
- Nuclear (S21)
- Commonwealth Marine Area (S23)
- Great Barrier Reef (S24B)
- Water resource in relation to large coal mining development or coal seam gas (S24D)
- Commonwealth Land (S26)
- Commonwealth Heritage Places Overseas (S27B)
- Commonwealth or Commonwealth Agency (S28)

4.3 Alternatives

4.3.1 Do you have any possible alternatives for your proposed action to be considered as part of your referral? *

No

4.3.8 Describe why alternatives for your proposed action were not possible. *

Dredging within the Maroochy River is already approved by the Queensland Government and Sunshine Coast Council subsequent to approvals obtained in 2012. These approvals limit dredging to the months of Feb/March, and May to September (inclusive). In conjunction with this referral, an amendment to these approvals is being sought to allow for an extension into October.

An amendment to the 2012 approval was approved in mid-2015 and is reflected on the attached site plan. This provided a minor amendment in the dredge footprint, to avoid disturbing unclean/silty sands in the estuary.

Due to the recessive nature of Maroochy Beach, there is a need to nourish this area with suitable sand in order to build the erosion buffer both for beach use, and more importantly for protection of the dune, vegetation, and public assets along the foreshore.

Installation of a seawall for protection of the foreshore would present a significant impact in this space and still require nourishment in front of it. For this reason, a seawall is not considered to be an acceptable alternative.

Sand in the nearby Maroochy River mouth displays the same characteristics as that of the beach and is quickly replenished when removed from this space. No other sand/sediment alternatives would be considered acceptable alternatives.

Should dredging and nourishment not occur and not occur at a frequency so as to address the recessive nature of the beach, the dunes, vegetation, and foreshore assets would quickly become at risk, an unacceptable outcome for Council and the community.

5. Lodgement

5.1 Attachments

1.2.1 Overview of the proposed action

	Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
#1.	Document	2012-6396-referral-decision.pdf 2012 referral decision for this activity.		No	High
#2.	Document	2015-7594 Referral Decision.pdf 2015 referral decision for this activity.		No	High
#3.	Document	Project Footprint - Maroochydoore Beach Dredging and Nourishment Site Plan.pdf This plan shows the approved dredging and placement areas that are currently operated in under this activity. No change is proposed to these already approved footprints.		No	High

4.1.4.2 (Threatened Species and Ecological Communities) Why your action has a direct and/or indirect impact on the identified protected matters

	Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
#1.	Document	Table 1 - Description of occurrence and environmental effect on listed threatened species.xlsx Table noting the description of occurrence and environmental effect on listed threatened species.	23/02/2026	No	High

4.1.5.2 (Migratory Species) Why your action has a direct and/or indirect impact on the identified protected matters

	Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
#1.	Document	Shorebird Habitat Map - 24-25 - Maroochy River.pdf Map of known Shorebird feeding and roosting habitat in the lower Maroochy River.	23/02/2026	No	High
#2.	Document	Table 2 - Description of occurrence and environmental effects on listed migratory species.xlsx Description of occurrence and environmental effects on listed migratory species.	23/02/2026	No	High

5.2 Declarations

Completed Referring party's declaration

The Referring party is the person preparing the information in this referral.

ABN/ACN	37876973913
Organisation name	Sunshine Coast Regional Council
Organisation address	4558 QLD
Representative's name	Sam Cook
Representative's job title	Mr
Phone	0456259840
Email	sam.cook@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au
Address	54 Industrial Avenue, Caloundra QLD 4551

Check this box to indicate you have read the referral form. *

Check this box to confirm these are the correct identification details. *

By checking this box, I, **Sam Cook of Sunshine Coast Regional Council**, declare that to the best of my knowledge the information I have given on, or attached to this EPBC Act Referral is complete, current and correct. I understand that giving false or misleading information is a serious offence. *

You may receive automated notifications that aim to assist you in tracking the progress of your project. You can opt out of these notifications by updating your communication preferences on your profile.

Completed Person proposing to take the action's declaration

The Person proposing to take the action is the individual, business, government agency or trustee that will be responsible for the proposed action.

Same as Referring party information.

Check this box to indicate you have read the referral form. *

Check this box to confirm these are the correct identification details. *

I, **Sam Cook of Sunshine Coast Regional Council**, declare that to the best of my knowledge the information I have given on, or attached to the EPBC Act Referral is complete, current and correct. I understand that giving false or misleading information is a serious offence. I declare that I am not taking the action on behalf or for the benefit of any other person or entity. *

I, **Sam Cook of Sunshine Coast Regional Council**, the Person proposing the action, consent to the designation of **Sam Cook of Sunshine Coast Regional Council** as the Proposed designated proponent for the purposes of the action described in this EPBC Act Referral. *

You may receive automated notifications that aim to assist you in tracking the progress of your project. You can opt out of these notifications by updating your communication preferences on your profile.

Completed Proposed designated proponent's declaration

The Proposed designated proponent is the individual or organisation proposed to be responsible for meeting the requirements of the EPBC Act during the assessment process, if the Minister decides that this project is a controlled action.

Same as Person proposing to take the action information.

Check this box to indicate you have read the referral form. *

Check this box to confirm these are the correct identification details. *

I, **Sam Cook of Sunshine Coast Regional Council**, the Proposed designated proponent, consent to the designation of myself as the Proposed designated proponent for the purposes of the action described in this EPBC Act Referral. *

You may receive automated notifications that aim to assist you in tracking the progress of your project. You can opt out of these notifications by updating your communication preferences on your profile.