



**BASS STRAIT BLUE ECONOMY ZONE
AQUACULTURE RESEARCH TRIAL
IN COMMONWEALTH WATERS**

Proposed Trial Site Description

REPORT

AUGUST 2024



Australian Government
Department of Industry,
Science and Resources

Cooperative Research
Centres Program

Location

The proposed Research Trial Site is in Commonwealth waters, adjacent to Tasmanian coastal waters and approximately 12km off the coast of Burnie, Tasmania. The Trial Site is characterised by open ocean, higher energy, deeper waters and stronger currents.

Figure 1. Location of Proposed Trial site within existing MOU Fisheries Arrangements Area.

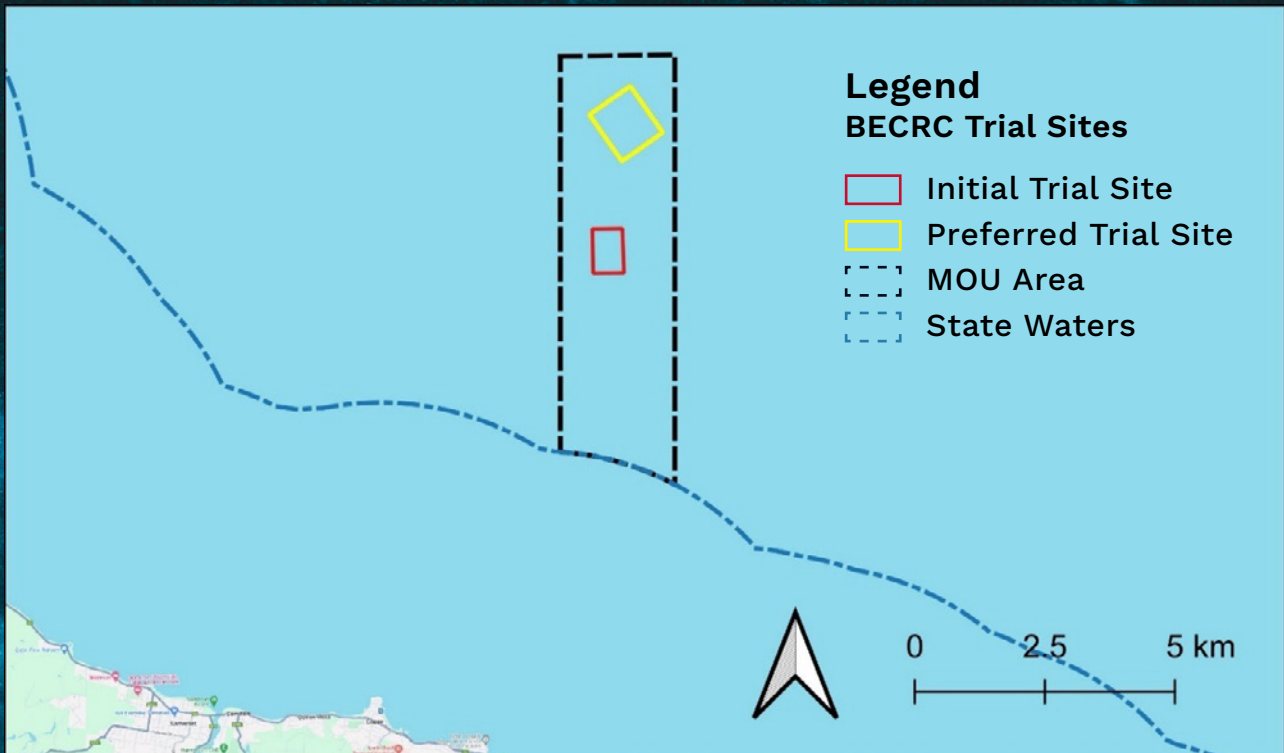


Table 1. Coordinates of Proposed trial site.

	E	N	Lat	Long
NW	409626	5467732	40.936546964	145.926455813
SW	410251	5466838	40.944667894	145.933749403
NE	410412	5468282	40.931679776	145.935870587
SE	411038	5467389	40.939791227	145.943176841

The proposed Research Trial Site sits within a Blue Economy Zone (BEZ), which is an open ocean site for research focused aquaculture and renewable energy activities and is supported by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Commonwealth and Tasmanian governments.

The Commonwealth Government has previously consulted on and a Fisheries Arrangement Area and a trial site in 2022. This proposed Research Trial Site varies from the coordinates within that consultation and outlined within the 2022 MOU.

The variation provides for more suitable benthic conditions, deeper water and safer positioning of infrastructure given known sea and wind characteristics. The broader Fisheries Arrangement Area remains the same.

Site selection

The Blue Economy CRC initially investigated a broad area of Bass Strait, settling on the area subject to the Fisheries Arrangement Area after considering the broadscale biophysical environment and other users and uses of the area. Within this area, the Trial Site was initially proposed approximately ~700m closer to the Tasmanian coastline.

Data for a baseline survey was collected across a broad area between March 2021 and December 2022 (Cossu, et al., 2021). Included in the scope of the baseline survey was seafloor mapping, sediment and high-level benthic habitat characterisation, hydrodynamics characterisation, and biological community characterisation. Within this area, the Trial Site was initially proposed approximately ~700m closer to the Tasmanian coastline.

This baseline survey provided initial data to plan for a more detailed site characterisation survey and for industry partners to feed into the project planning process.

In 2023, benthic habitat surveys of the initial trial site identified the presence of dense sponge communities and bedrock. Due to the sensitive nature of this habitat type and the unsuitable seabed geology, the original potential trial site was deemed unsuitable, and investigations were abandoned at this site. The Marine Environmental Assessment of a Trial Site for a Proposed Blue Economy Zone provides the outcomes of the site investigations.

A subsequent survey in 2024 of the new proposed Trial Site, involving bathymetry, benthic habitat mapping, sediment composition and ecological community characterisation has determined the Trial Site presented in this referral as suitable for the proposed BEZ Trial Site. Full details are in the Marine Solutions report – **Marine Environmental Assessment of a Trial Site for a Proposed Blue Economy Zone 2024.**

For operational reasons, the proposed research trial site was also rotated to better align mooring systems and activities with prevailing wave and wind directions.





Figure 2. Example of high-biodiversity benthos in the original potential trial site.



Figure 3. Example of dominant, low-biodiversity benthos in the preferred trial site.



Project footprint

The proposed action is located in the Bass Strait within Commonwealth waters. The proposed action also includes related transitory activities between the Port of Burnie and the Trial Site.

The site is Crown Land with a Memorandum of Understanding between the Commonwealth and Tasmanian Governments for occupation for the research trial. The MOU sets out that a permit under relevant Tasmanian Government legislation is required for activation of a research trial.



BLUE ECONOMY

COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE

Blue Economy CRC

PO Box 897, Launceston, Tasmania 7250

www.blueeconomycrc.com.au

enquiries@blueeconomycrc.com.au



Australian Government
Department of Industry,
Science and Resources

Cooperative Research
Centres Program