

TOWNSVILLE


Plans for a prawn farm north of Bowen have been given a major boost

The original plans are almost two decades old, but that hasn't stopped the applicants from pushing on

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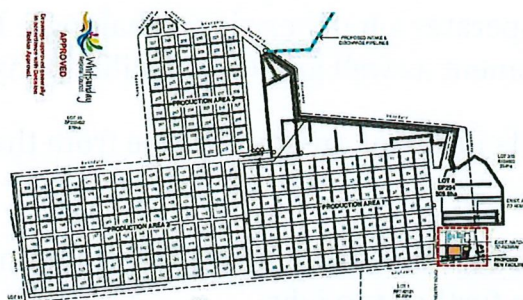
 A development application for a new prawn farm north of Bowen has been given a three-year extension. PIC: SUPPLIED


PLANS for a new prawn farm north of Bowen have been given a breath of life after almost two decades in the works.

Whitsunday Regional Council extended the currency period for the farm last week, giving applicants until 2023 to get the project under way.

Pacific Reef Fisheries, the company behind the project, originally referred the application to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage in 2001.

The proposed facility would produce 1600 tonnes of black tiger prawns for the domestic and export market every year and was earmarked for a lot on Coventry Rd in Guthalungra near the Elliot River.



 The farm would have three separate

production areas with more than 250 ponds.
Picture: Supplied


More than 250 aquaculture ponds would be built, each measuring about one hectare each.

Seawater would be pumped from Abbot Bay before being treated and pumped back.

The site would also include a seafood processing facility, feed storage, workshops, office facilities and employee accommodation.

The farm will operate as three independent farms on a large site and with the three production areas set to total 259ha of the 769ha lot.



 The prawn farm would also include onsite accommodation for workers. Picture: Supplied

Production would increase in stages and start at about 550 tonnes in the first year before rising to about 900 tonnes in year two, 1300 tonnes in year three and full production of about 1600 tonnes from year four onwards.

The aquaculture facility would provide more than 118 full-time jobs.

It was estimated that the facility would be built over four years with a capital investment of \$40 million.

A report prepared in 2008 also indicated the construction of the farm would add about \$21.8 million to GSP and more than 200 full-time jobs.

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The application was subject to several environmental and water quality management studies with conditions applied to reduce impacts.

The company already operates a hatchery in Guthalungra that would remain as part of the new development as well as a 98ha facility in Ayr.

The proposed facility sits just over an hour's drive from the Tassal prawn farm in Gregory River.

[An \\$85 million extension to the Tassal facility was announced earlier this year, which was set to bring a further 150 jobs.](#)