



Solitary Islands Marine Park: zoning plan review report

Appendix 2: Summary of stakeholder consultations and submissions

**Including comments on the review of the
Solitary Islands Marine Reserve
(Commonwealth waters) management plan**

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Abbreviations

ACoRF	Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing
AMCS	Australian Marine Conservation Society
BEC	Bellingen Environment Centre
CMA	Catchment Management Authority
DECC	Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW
DEWHA	Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
DPI	NSW Department of Primary Industries
FAD	fish aggregating device
GNS	grey nurse shark
GUZ	general use zone
HPZ	habitat protection zone
ICOLL	intermittently closed and open lakes and lagoons
MPA	Marine Parks Authority NSW
NCC	Nature Conservation Council
NPA	National Parks Association
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
PWC	Personal watercraft
SIMP	Solitary Islands Marine Park
SIMPAC	Solitary Islands Marine Park Advisory Committee
SIMR	Solitary Islands Marine Reserve (Commonwealth waters)
SPZ	special purpose zone
SZ	sanctuary zone

Executive summary

Solitary Islands Marine Park on the mid-north coast of NSW and Jervis Bay Marine Park on the south coast of NSW were the first marine parks to be established in NSW. The zoning plan for the Solitary Islands Marine Park, which commenced in 2002, protects the important natural and cultural values of the marine park, while providing for a range of sustainable uses including commercial and recreational fishing, diving, water sports and other activities.

The NSW Government committed to a review of the zoning plan for Solitary Islands Marine Park after five years of operation, and a review has been undertaken in accordance with section 17D of the *Marine Park Act 1997*.

Public consultation for the zoning plan review ran for two months in April and May 2008. During this period 47 meetings were held with stakeholder groups, including information sessions with the community, presentations to local community groups and focus group meetings. Several meetings were also held in the month before the official public consultation phase to discuss the review with adjacent land managers and local community leaders. The Solitary Islands Marine Park Advisory Committee (SIMPAC) met twice during this period (see the end of Part A of this document for details).

Meetings	Approx. number of community attendees
Business community	50
Commercial fishers	34
Conservation community	16
Indigenous community	20
Marine science	17
Recreational fishers	54
Spearfishers	7
Aquaculture operators	4
Other	43
Community information days	285
TOTAL	530

In addition to focus group meetings, various mechanisms were used to advertise the zoning plan review and to encourage public comments on the current zoning plan. These included media releases, advertising, information displays and briefings conducted with individuals and groups. Over 280 community members attended information days on the review and provided feedback to staff or collected information. Information on the review was made available at local visitor information centres, council offices and other community outlets.

A total of 1,079 submissions were received during the review period: 1,039 from individuals and 40 on behalf of organisations. Of all submissions, 26% were from the local area, 26% from Sydney, 12% from other parts of NSW, 19.5% from Queensland, 10% from other states in Australia and 6% from overseas (0.5% did not provide a postcode).

On the submission form, respondents were asked to identify their main interests in the marine park and many indicated several interests:

Main interest	No. of responses
Conservation	851
Spearfishing	134
Recreational fishing	122
Beach activities	76
Swimming	73
Tourist/visitor	67
Scuba diving	65
Surfing	60
Snorkelling	55
Recreational boating	55
Wildlife observation	54
Scenic amenity	45
Kayaking/canoeing	33
Commercial fishers	15
Research	17
PWC/Watersports	9
Underwater photography	5
Tourism operator	5
Charter fishing	2
Local government	2
Sailing	2
Indigenous	1

Note: the total number of interests exceeds the number of submissions received because individuals were able to identify multiple interests.

Submission formats varied and included individual and group submissions, letters, emails, form letters, petitions, maps, reports and the marine park submission form in hardcopy or from the NSW Marine Parks Authority (MPA) website.

Five different form letters (81.6% of total submissions) were received. These form letters were prepared by the Australian Marine Conservation Society (469 submissions), Bellingen Environment Centre (99 submissions), Nature Conservation Council (31 submissions), National Parks Association (172 submissions) and spearfishers (110 submissions). Three individuals submitted more than one type of form letter. Two community petitions were received, one from Friends of Solitary Islands Marine Park with 225 signatures, and one from Moonee Creek residents and visitors with 220 signatures. The Marine Parks Authority did not give any particular weighting to the various formats of the submissions or the numbers received, and has reviewed all submissions and considered the issues raised regarding the zoning plan for Solitary Islands Marine Park.

The majority of the submissions originated from the environment/conservation sector.

The most commonly expressed opinions were as follows.

Zoning-related issues included the following comments and suggestions:

- The current area designated as sanctuary zone is inadequate, with many groups seeking a sanctuary zone increase to 20–50% of each habitat type:
 - there is a lack of representation of various habitat types in sanctuary zone, particularly estuaries, intermediate and deep reefs and island-fringing reefs
 - a lack of contiguous habitat protection in sanctuary zone was also identified.
- Specific locations that received the majority of comments were:
 - Minnie Water Back Beach (allow recreational fishing)
 - the southern sanctuary zone: Groper Island, Bare Bluff, Sandy Back Beach (allow fishing and spearfishing in specific areas), and
 - North and South Solitary Islands (various comments).
- Generally, extractive users reported they had learned to adjust to the current zoning plan but wanted no further increases in the area of sanctuary zone.

Activity-related issues included the following suggestions:

- ban or phase out prawn trawling
- ban or phase out vehicles on beaches
- differentiate between the requirements of spearfishers and recreational fishers
- use gear, method, bag and size restrictions to increase protection rather than sanctuary zones so recreational fishing can continue
- reduce commercial fishing effort and mud crab trapping in estuaries.

Species-related issues included the following suggestions and comments:

- increase protection for all shark species
- current levels of grey nurse shark protection are inadequate, and
- protect the critically endangered alga at Muttonbird Island.

The Solitary Islands Marine Reserve (SIMR) (Commonwealth waters) shares the same northern and southern boundaries as the state's Solitary Islands Marine Park, and extends seaward from the three nautical mile limit of state jurisdiction to the 50-metre depth contour. The reserve was declared in 1993. Its management plan commenced in 2001 and expired on 4 April 2008. The MPA manages the reserve on a day-to-day basis on behalf of the Commonwealth Government. The reserve's management plan is being reviewed concurrently with the state's marine park zoning plan, and so consultation and submissions also involved opportunities to comment on the reserve.

The managers of the reserve (SIMR) attended many of the focus group meetings and the SIMPAC meetings, and have been fully involved in the review to ascertain issues associated with the reserve's management plan. The Commonwealth Government contributed information to the Solitary Islands Marine Park review package as well as producing a Commonwealth-specific review package.

This report presents the results of the public consultation and submission components of the zoning plan review and is in two parts: Part A summarises the feedback received from focus group meetings and other public meetings held during the consultation phase of the review; Part B is a summary of the information provided in the submissions received during the review period.

Part A: Consultations with stakeholders

1. Introduction

Part A of this report summarises the information received from focus group meetings and other public meetings held during the review. It does not fully report the detailed information discussed. Individual comments may not be reported 'word for word', but have been aggregated with similar comments or issues. The Solitary Islands Marine Park Advisory Committee generally met every eight weeks, with the first meeting concerning the zoning plan review held in February 2008.

2. Aquaculture

Consultation

Dates	9 and 23 April 2008
Locations	Yamba and by phone
Attendance	Oyster farmers (4)

2.1 Issues

- Oyster farmers are generally supportive of the SIMP and happy with the current zoning plan, including zoning offshore.
- Water quality is very good and a range of fish life and turtles are observed around leases.
- There are some issues with oyster theft.
- A small change to the Toumbaal Creek sanctuary zone (SZ) boundary is suggested – ideally move the boundary upstream to the end of the houses to allow kids to fish from shore and provide a better signage point.
- Oyster farmers seek to continue to conduct oyster aquaculture in the special purpose zone (SPZ).
- There is some concern about development adjacent to some areas.
- Signage at the Breakaway launching location at the Sandon River is suggested, because not all vessels launch at the campground. More signage is needed at camp sites, van parks and national park visitor areas. Install a pamphlet box and display.

3. Business community

Consultation

Dates	7, 10 and 22 April 2008 and 19 May 2008
Locations	National Marine Science Centre, Coffs Harbour Meeting rooms, Park Beach Plaza, Coffs Harbour Wooli Community Hall, Wooli Solitary Islands Marine Park office, Coffs Harbour Jetty
Attendance	Commercial tour operators, Coffs Harbour Chamber of Commerce members, and Coffs Coast Tourism Association members (66)

3.1 General issues

- Increase promotion of the SIMP and its value and uniqueness. The latest tourism magazine featuring SIMP has been very successful.
- The Coffs Harbour Tourism Association is attempting to increase promotion of the Coffs Coast in NSW and Queensland, covering a range of metropolitan and regional newspapers in both states.
- The tourism association and members will continue to work collaboratively with SIMP and tourism promotion.
- Zoning boundaries should be simplified, and larger zones are more effective.
- Provide more signage at boat ramps.
- Charter dive operators commented that diving should not be prohibited in grey nurse shark (GNS) aggregation areas. The diving code of conduct is working well; more juvenile GNSs are being sighted and more GNSs have been sighted in the last three years than ever before. Past GNS research is criticised by some operators.
- Charter fishers are generally happy with the current zoning plan. Further changes would impact on business. Detailed comments include:
 - key areas of operation are the reefs east of South Solitary Island and reefs in the vicinity of North Solitary Island
 - permitting needs to be streamlined because at present there are permits required from SIMP, Solitary Island Marine Reserve (Commonwealth waters) (SIMR) and DPI. The SIMR permit application form needs to be simplified
 - charter fishers don't support sanctuary zoning to protect the GNS, although they would consider method restrictions similar to commercial fishers to enhance protection
 - introduce stricter bag and size limits in the marine park
 - don't increase the number of charter operators in the marine park.

3.2 Location issues

Pimpernel Rock

- There are no issues with the current rounded boundary; a central GPS point is adequate to determine the SZ boundary.
- Anchoring needs to be done sensitively; a mooring would not help as it would be washed away or encourage more use.
- The current SZ is adequate.

South Solitary Island

- The SZ (100 metres on the northern side) is too small and hardly protecting habitat, and it is difficult to enforce.
- A larger SZ would be easier to manage but would impact on fishers because this area is highly used.
- Anchor damage to coral in the habitat protection zone (HPZ) adjacent to the SZ is an issue.
- There is concern about the number of GNSs there with wire traces.
- A 40-tonne mooring is needed, to allow combined tours with other operators on a single larger vessel.
- No conflict with other users was reported.
- This is an important area for charter fishers, and provides the only safe place in adverse weather conditions.

Split Solitary Island

- This is a high-use area for fishers.
- There are compliance issues as the SZ is so small.
- Better signage is needed at boat ramps.
- A 40-tonne mooring is needed for larger vessels.

Groper Island (South West Solitary Island)

- The SZ is good, and easy to comply with because it is larger.
- There is concern about commercial bait netting being permitted nearby in the HPZ.

Park Beach

- Dog excrement on the beach is an issue. There is no bag dispenser there so this should be raised with the local council.

Muttonbird Island

- The reef is getting more sand deposited on it.

4. Commercial fishers

Consultation

Date	8, 9 and 10 April 2008
Location	Solitary Islands Marine Park office, Coffs Harbour Jetty Clarence Fishermen's Cooperative, Iluka Wooli Community Hall, Wooli
Attendance	Commercial fishers (34)

4.1 Principal issues by fishery

Beach hauling

- Not enough beaches are open to hauling; when the weather is poor there is no place to haul.
- There is an issue with weekend and night bans on hauling, and daytime hauling time needs to be set because it is difficult to manage 'daylight hours' conditions.
- The northern end of Station Creek Beach should be open to hauling, not the southern end. Haulers would like to access Minnie Water Main Beach and Hearn's Lake Beach (and the beach north of Flat Top Rock).
- Boat-based hauling should be permitted in some areas.

Trawling

- Ideally keep the zoning plan as is; trawlers cannot afford to lose any ground. Areas east of the islands are very important. Any further loss will impact on the fishermen's cooperatives.
- Methods used now are environmentally friendly. There is concern about the Commonwealth phasing out trawling in the adjacent marine reserve because there will be no place left to trawl.
- Trawling has impacted on snapper grounds as there is nowhere for them to feed.

Trap and line

- 90% of fishing effort is inside the SIMP.
- They can live with the current zoning but cannot afford any zone increases (especially with new DPI restrictions around GNS sites).
- They ideally want surface trolling allowed in Forty Acres within the southern section sanctuary zone.
- Fishers voiced concern with the black market recreational fishing take, and the use of soft plastic lures by recreational anglers, with many of these lures found in kingfish.
- More than ten fish traps per commercial fisher in the SIMP need to be able to set to be viable due to fuel, bait and gear costs.

Estuary fishing

- Mud crab trapping by commercial fishers is in competition with recreational fishers.

- Fishers see stock as sacrificial breeding stock from Queensland.
- Some areas are difficult to access.
- Keep the zoning plan as is because fishers have learned to live with it.
- They would accept temporary closures for trapping (e.g. one year closed, one year open).

Tuna longliners

- They can only use lift net for bait, which is slow and ineffective; purse seine netting for bait needs to be allowed.

Lobster fishing

- New lobster quotas are high and some areas cannot sustain the quotas; there is a need to go back to historically determined quotas.
- Do not change the SZ inshore as this would affect important lobster ground.
- Modify some SZs to open up traditional lobster trapping spots.

4.2 General issues

- Fishing effort in open areas increased following the introduction of closed areas in 2002.
- There was no reduction in trawl effort after buy-out in 2002 as only one trawler was bought out; there is a need for a more equitable and fair buy-out scheme if changes occur.
- A cap on the number of commercial fishers in the SIMP is more appropriate than buying out fishers. Following the buy-out in 2002, fishers returned and new ones are moving to Coffs to fish commercially, so no reduction in effort has resulted.
- The Coffs Harbour Fishermen's Cooperative revenue was down \$1 million a year after the zoning plan began, but tourism has not increased as was predicted.
- There is concern with pest species and possible impacts.
- More moorings are needed at North Solitary Island because there can be up to 15 boats there at any one time.
- More funding is needed for enforcement and moorings.
- Better science is needed to inform GNS decision-making as it is currently unbalanced.
- There is concern with the level of recreational fishing and its impacts; a daily boat limit rather than a bag limit has been suggested.
- Gear restrictions are recommended for recreational fishers at North and South Solitary Island.
- Prohibit scuba diving in the SZ.
- More signage is needed so recreational fishers realise commercial fishers are permitted to fish in the SIMP.
- Commercial fishers have made huge changes to gear and methods of fishing for environmental reasons and this needs to be communicated to the public more effectively.
- Restrictions implemented by the DPI in May 2008 at North and South Solitary Islands for ocean trap and line fishers need to be incorporated into the zoning plan.
- Straighten boundaries – move away from the rounded 'distance-off' boundaries.

- Buy out fishers if any further restrictions are introduced. Any further decrease in available area will have a significant economic impact.

4.3 Location issues

Pimpernel Rock

- Restrictions here impact on ocean trap and line fishers. Allow hand lining with a single hook temporarily at Pimpernel Rock SZ.
- Ocean trap and line fishers do not impact on the GNS.
 - The Commonwealth should ask fishers about when the sharks are there (for their research) because they can give movement and numbers information, and can police the area too.
 - GNSs are most active at dusk, then when it is dark they leave. Divers would not see this as they do not dive at dusk.
 - Scuba divers have impacted on jewfish areas, so would definitely be impacting on the GNS.
- It is easy to know if you are in or out of the current zone.
- There are compliance issues – commercial fishers are seeing recreational fishers and spearfishers within the 500-metre zone.
- The area is still pristine after 50 years of commercial fishing but divers are anchoring inappropriately and damaging the area.

Minnie Water Back Beach SZ

- The marker at the southern end keeps disappearing.
- 250 metres of beach at the southern end need to be accessible for shore fishers and lobster trapping.
- Move the SZ to south of Diggers Camp where the reef is not as productive.

Northern SZ

- Allow access to the north-east corner and north-west corner of this SZ.
- Seasonal quota-based access at these locations and Minnie Water Back Beach would be acceptable.

Wooli Wooli River

- Swap the zoning over in the river branches and make the south arm the SZ; this will yield a better result because the current zoning has compliance issues.

North Solitary Island

- This is the only safe area to work in a southerly, but new DPI regulations have taken this away.
- GNS are most active at dusk and are mostly right up against the island.

5. Community information days

5.1 Coffs Harbour

Consultation

Dates	17, 18 and 19 April 2008
Location	Park Beach Plaza, Coffs Harbour
Attendance	Members of the local community (over 70)

Comments

- **Scuba divers and snorkellers** – many people came to get zoning maps and posters and ask about locations for diving and snorkelling.
- **Recreational fishers:**
 - Many were very positive about the fishing since the zoning came into place in 2002. Many were involved in the 2001–2002 zoning process.
 - Some commented on the improvement in snapper.
 - Some are unhappy that the south side of Bare Bluff was put into the SZ in 2002; some reported Bare Bluff needed more protection.
- **Teachers** – a few collected materials for their schools.
- **Tourists** – many tourists from interstate collected zoning plan user guides.
- **The review:**
 - many came to enquire about the review
 - some commended the fact that we (the MPA) were information gathering before making any changes
 - some were disillusioned by the last zoning process but supported protection
 - some commended working with the Commonwealth.
- One member of the community suggested a DVD be developed and played in coffee shops and restaurants around the area to promote the marine park and its value.
- Generally, feedback was positive from all groups.
- There are general concerns with the sustainability of fishing. People commented on a need for stricter bag limits. There is concern about how much change would occur to the zoning.
- Education for visitors and tourists is poor.

5.2 Red Rock/Corindi

Consultation

Date	26 April 2008
Location	Red Rock Multi-Use Centre, Red Rock
Attendance	Members of the local community (6)

Comments

- There should be no further coastal development or highways because they impact on the SIMP and the entire area.
- **North West Solitary Island** – a recreational diver has noticed a decline in anemone fish there, especially in the last year.
- **Recreational fishing** – stricter size and bag limits are needed; many recreational fishers are taking large female flathead from the Corindi River.
- Current SZ and HPZ in Corindi River is easy to comply with and navigate (if you stick to the main arm you can fish and you cannot fish in the smaller arms).
- Closure of Station Creek Beach to 4WDs impacted on the local village as campers now go to Corindi for supplies and entertainment, not to Red Rock.

5.3 Wooli

Consultation

Date	10 May 2008
Location	Wooli Community Hall, Wooli
Attendance	Members of the local community (20)

Comments

- **Recreational fishers** – allow fishing access to Minnie Water Back Beach: either a 100-metre HPZ along the entire beach, or access to the northern and southern ends of the beach to the 'fresh influences', or, as a minimum, access to the southern end of the beach.
- Prohibit spearfishing in the Minnie Water lagoon.
- The current zoning plan is fine as is, apart from the issue with Minnie Water Back Beach.
- Use method and gear restrictions in the HPZ to increase protection, rather than a SZ.
- Straight-line boundaries in northern SZs are preferable.
- Maintain access to lobster reefs.
- Impose more restrictions on trawling (except some inshore areas) and trap fishing.

5.4 Yamba

Consultation

Date	16 May 2008
Location	Yamba Shopping Fair, Yamba
Attendance	Members of the local community (17)

Comments

- All but one person (16 out of 17) was supportive of the SIMP and protection; five identified themselves as fishers:
 - two people enquired about jobs with the MPA

- a number of scuba divers and a number of senior citizens stated more protection was needed
- one person commented they participated in the random telephone attitudinal survey conducted in January 2008
- another person commented they use the marine park in every way (swimming, surfing, fishing, diving) and supported protection.

5.5 Grafton

Consultation

Date	17 May 2008
Location	Grafton Shopping World, Grafton
Attendance	Members of the local community (22)

Comments

- A number of people came specifically to visit the display (they had seen advertisements for the information days), including a number of Woolli residents and two commercial fishers, a number of recreational fishers, and representatives from the Clarence Environment Centre.
- Most stated they were very supportive of the SIMP, specifically:
 - more protection is needed
 - more protection of GNSs is needed
 - more promotion of the marine park is required.
- The whole coast needs to be under protection.
- The zoning plan is not working because people ignore it.
- Trawling should be removed from the SIMP.
- **Estuaries** – boating speeds are of concern for safety reasons.
- **Riparian vegetation** – there is concern that there are riparian plantings for harvesting in 10 years time; permanent riparian vegetation is needed.
- **Commercial fishing** – fishers are concerned with losing more ground and with public ignorance of trawling and its limited impacts, and the lack of recognition of the seasonal nature of fishing and the fact that not all areas are always fished.
- **Diggers Camp** – this area needs further protection.

5.6 Emerald Beach

Consultation

Date	25 May 2008
Location	Emerald Beach Fair, Emerald Beach
Attendance	Members of the local community (approximately 150)

Comments

- Generally the attendees were supportive of the SIMP in all aspects.
- Many enquiries were about diving in the SIMP, the diversity of marine life in the SIMP, the fact that it is better than the Great Barrier Reef, the beaches are beautiful, the islands are very special.
- Many community members reported they were pleased with the SIMP as is.
- The display was constantly inspected by visitors to the fair.

6. Conservation

Consultation

Dates	8 and 26 May 2008
Locations	Solitary Islands Marine Park office, Coffs Harbour Maiden Theatre, Botanic Gardens, Sydney
Attendance	Marine conservation representatives (16)

6.1 General issues

Comments

- Commercial fishers must report more accurate catch information if they are permitted to fish in the SIMP and SIMR.
- The Commonwealth phase-out of trawling has not happened in the SIMR as detailed in the management plan; there is concern that the Commonwealth will not finalise its East Marine Region assessment until 2010 and that trawling will continue until then – it needs to end sooner.
- Zones and activities between Commonwealth and state waters need to be better aligned.
- **GNS:**
 - provide a 1200-metre to 1500-metre SZ around all aggregation sites in the SIMP and SIMR
 - a decent SZ is needed around all islands with aggregation sites
 - The current SZs do not adequately protect species or habitats.
- **Swath/seafloor mapping** – the whole marine park needs to be mapped.
- Only 6% of NSW waters are included in ‘no take’ areas:
 - look at a 33% minimum to get anywhere near a level that is appropriate
 - we cannot afford to wait 15–20 years for the information/science to be available before we start introducing larger SZs.
- Too much extraction is permitted in the HPZ.
- End trawling in both the SIMP and SIMR. The Fisheries Management Strategy (FMS) for the fishery states that areas would be set aside in NSW to remove trawling.
- If high-impact activities are eliminated then zoning could be simplified to two zones only, i.e. SZs and HPZs.
- The SIMP is not meeting the objectives of the Marine Parks Act and the MPA should be sued. If 33% is included in SZs, then it will meet the objects of the Act.
- SZs need to include areas of deep reef.
- We are not moving fast enough to adequately protect the SIMP.
- The review process needs to be supported – local issues need to be sought before any decisions are made regarding zoning.
- It is vital to link SZs. Small isolated SZs are ineffective. Corridors need to link terrestrial areas to marine habitats.

- **Spearfishing** – safety issues are of concern with potential conflicts between different user groups:
 - there are two types of spearfishers: (1) professionals that target specific species and (2) kids or young adults who swim within 50 metres of the shore and target everything that moves
 - a 50-metre exclusion zone from the shore needs to be introduced for spearfishing.
- Conservation groups support the rights of traditional users to access resources within the marine park.
- The relationship between SIMP and adjacent land managers and land uses needs to be looked at in a strategic way to minimise potential impacts on the marine park.

6.2 Conservation proposal

- See attached map (Appendix 2a).
- The minimum position is to create SZs covering 33% of each habitat type in the marine park.
- **Sandon Beach** – the suggested SZ is 100 metres off Sandon Beach to allow vehicular access to Sandon Village.
- **Islands** – create a 1200-metre SZ around all islands, including Pimpernel Rock in Commonwealth waters.
- **Estuaries** – we need to recognise the important function estuaries provide to marine areas and consider carefully the impacts of development:
 - Sandon and Wooli Wooli estuaries need the utmost protection, given the potential for a wilderness declaration
 - logging upstream of Sandon River creates an issue with sediment load
 - at Coffs Creek, pollution is the biggest issue. A solution such as gross pollutant traps is needed. There is an opportunity for collaboration between SIMP (MPA), Landcare and the local council
 - sewage overflows at Coffs Creek are a problem – there are seven overflow points into the SIMP
 - there is a need to focus on land-based impacts, as the Great Barrier Reef MPA is doing
 - protection has appeared to go backwards since the last zoning plan for estuary protection, more SZs are needed
 - seagrass damage from boats is a problem, e.g. wake and propeller damage, disturbance and increased turbidity. Reviewing boating and speed limits (to 4 knots) needs to be a priority.
- The southern area requires a cross-shelf transect to get coast-to-deep reef representation.
- Larger SZs are needed to be more responsive to changes and threats.
- **Sharks:**
 - shark fishing should be prohibited in the SIMP
 - phase out shark and ray fishing in the HPZ
 - add wobbegongs to Table 2 – Species that are prohibited from being taken from the entire marine park
- Commercial fishers should have a permit for the SIMP and SIMR.

- North Solitary Island SZ should be enlarged to link up with the existing North West Rock SZ.
- Beaches are under-represented in SZs, the area represented needs to increase to 33%.
- At Station Creek, the whole estuary should be included in the SZ and it should extend offshore. Vehicle access to the beach should be closed.

7. Government agencies

Consultation

Dates	1, 15, 22, 23 and 24 April 2008 and 14 and 15 May 2008
Locations	Solitary Islands Marine Park office, Coffs Harbour Jetty Council Chambers, Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Maclean Water Police office, Coffs Harbour Maclean Fisheries office Department of Lands office, Grafton Department of Environment and Climate Change office, Grafton
Attendance	Coffs Harbour City Council (11) Clarence Valley Council (13) Department of Lands (3) Department of Environment and Climate Change (9) Department of Primary Industries (5) Catchment Management Authority (4) NSW Water Police, NSW Maritime, and Customs (6)

7.1 Principal issues

Fishing

- The SIMP is supported; fishing has definitely improved since SIMP zoning was introduced, especially around Woolli.
- The fishing industry is very important to the Clarence Valley, as is recreational fishing.

Education, media and signage

- Education of visitors is very important; signage at boat ramps should be consolidated to reduce sign numbers.
- Signage should be jointly planned for all agencies e.g. Diggers Beach signage.
- Educational collecting should be permitted.
- More funding is needed for education and extension of adult and fisher education. Education about sustainable fishing practices is needed, including boating, catch and release, the inland interface with the catchment, pollution reduction, estuary functions and threats.
- More joint media about enforcement and compliance is needed.

Zoning

- It is important to consider adequate protection for the future, particularly considering climate change – invoke the precautionary principle.

Enforcement and policing

- More enforcement and policing is required in remote estuaries.
- Inconsistencies in regulations need to be rectified (e.g. vehicles on beaches, fishing closures).
- Seasonal closures are not recommended as they are too difficult to enforce.

Zone boundaries

- Boundaries should be a series of known GPS points or a given distance from a known GPS point. Straight lines are best for compliance, with defined points. Downloadable GPS points are needed.

Habitat representation

- An area of deep reef habitat needs to be considered in SZs within state waters.

Process

- The permit approvals/consent process needs to be streamlined between agencies and publicised, particularly to inform the community that some approvals must go through other departments e.g. the Department of Lands.

Shorebird disturbance

- Critical time for shorebirds is from August to February, but currently there is too much disturbance for breeding to occur in some areas.

Agency coordination

- Agencies need to collaborate better on signage, water quality, pollution management, vehicles and dogs on beaches, and development.

7.2 Activities issues

- Agencies need to manage dogs and vehicles on beaches consistently.

Vehicle access

- Controlling access is difficult as other agencies manage 4WD on beaches. Council's definitions and regulations are too vague.
- Access to Woolli Beach is an issue as it is through the main use area.
- Management arrangements at Arrawarra Beach are inconsistent – it is closed under SIMP but open under Council regulations.
- There is no need for vehicles on the beach near Flat Top Rock.
- At Sandon Beach, there are issues of dangerous driving and impacts on sensitive habitats.
- At Illaroo Beach north of Minnie Water, vehicle access to the beach is no longer required because there is now a road behind the beach for access.
- Southern Station Creek Beach should be closed to all vehicles (but still open to commercial beach haulers).

- At Woolgoolga Back Beach and Hearnese Lake Beach, the vehicle entrances are adjacent to a little tern area, and there is lots of damage at the entrance points.
- There is concern with commercial fishers being allowed to drive on closed beaches.

Dogs on beaches

- **Sandon River estuary** – there is important beach stone-curlew habitat near the river mouth, so it is important that it remain a dog-free area.
- **Minnie Water Back Beach** – it is confusing as to what is permitted here for dogs.
- **Wooli Wooli River** – this area supports oystercatchers and beach stone-curlews, so this area should be dog-free.
- **Red Rock Beach** – this is a turtle nesting area, so this area should be dog-free.
- **Corindi River** – the island sand flats support important wader birds including beach stone-curlews, oystercatchers, little terns and red capped plovers, so this area should be dog-free.
- **Moonee Beach** – this is an exception to the rule that no dogs are permitted on beaches adjacent to national parks and nature reserves. There is an issue with disturbance to little terns and oystercatchers. The beach is currently listed by the local council as a dog beach but needs to be made dog-free to be consistent with the adjacent SZ and nature reserve.
- **Flat Top Rock** – The Department of Environment and Climate Change has erected a sign to identify Flat Top Rock itself as a ‘no-dog area’ as it is now part of the regional park. This area is a new little tern nesting site. The adjacent Hearnese Lake Beach is a leash-free dog area.
- **Hearnese Lake** – the leash-free dog area is an issue because little terns are now successfully nesting there. This is also a shorebird area generally. South of Hearnese Lake is a turtle nesting area. A seasonal closure or a seasonal leashed area could be imposed during breeding time.

Commercial activities

- **Tour operators** – numbers of operators are likely to increase due to marina expansions in Coffs Harbour and Yamba. There is concern about future tour capacity for operators.
- **Moorings** – fees for operators should be considered to assist with funding moorings.
- **Commercial fishing:**
 - consider capping effort and access within the SIMP and limit it to specific fishers.
 - consider a ban on the use of push/scissors prawn nets in estuaries as gear can damage estuarine habitat.
- **Estuary general fishery:**
 - consider a ban on hoop nets/dillies in estuaries and the taking of female crabs
 - consider a ban on fish traps in estuaries (recreational and commercial) as commercial fishers use ten crab traps plus ten fish traps in some estuaries
 - consider prohibiting commercial crab trapping in estuaries as per the previous plan
 - commercial crabbing in the Sandon is increasing and the river has the potential to be under substantial commercial pressure
 - complaints from public are received weekly by a number of agencies regarding the number of commercial crab traps.

- **Ocean trap and line fishery** – consider the buy-out of existing fish trapping and remove this method from the marine park.
- **Ocean haul fishery:**
 - beach hauling times are an issue. Either change to defined times or use the official Bureau of Meteorology sunrise and sunset.
 - define where boat-based hauling is permitted and the species allowed to be taken.
- **Oyster leases in the Sandon** – the river is so clean it is ideal for oyster growing, but leases do not appear to be of high use, and need a further clean-up. Consider buy-out as an option.

Recreational activities

- **Estuaries and boating:**
 - consider a ban on wake boarding/waterskiing rather than impacting on general boating
 - speed zones for boating to protect seagrass tend not to work in shallow areas due to lack of compliance.
- **Spearfishing** – retain closure to spearfishing in estuaries based on conflict with other users (swimmers, boaters) – this is a safety issue.
- **Recreational fishing:**
 - consider a ban on hoop nets/dillies in the marine park (they impact on juvenile crabs) and restrict numbers to one crab trap only
 - designate ‘catch and release’ areas and use them to study the effects
 - consider a ban on fishing while on a SIMP mooring.
- **Aquarium collection** – coordinate the assessment and issuing of permits for aquarium collection between the agencies (DPI, MPA).

7.3 Species issues

- Prohibit the taking of female mud crabs.
- Consider adding gear and method restrictions to GNS aggregation sites similar to commercial fishing restrictions. Square up commercial trapping closures around islands and enlarge them, and use method restrictions to increase protection.
- All anemone fish species should be listed in Table 2 – Species that are prohibited from being taken from the entire marine park.

7.4 Location issues

Sandon River

- The SZ around the island is well-accepted. It is used by canoeists, and is very shallow so any motor boat use would be damaging. Clarence Valley Council is preparing a Sandon River estuary management plan.
- There is some illegal mud crab trapping in the Sandon River SZs. More patrols are needed on long weekends.
- Sandon River water quality is pristine except when forestry logging is being carried out, then sediment enters the river after heavy rains. This is the only time in eight years that the river has been dirty. A sediment management plan is needed.

Toumbaal Creek

- The SZ boundary is hard to manage.

Sandon and Wooli

- An approval to cover emergency work is needed, rather than having to wait for an approval when emergency work is required. A set of triggers which would allow work to go ahead could be defined.

Wooli Wooli River

- An estuary management plan is in the process of gazettal and the Wooli Coastal Management Plan is also under review. There is concern about recent reports of cutting of mangroves along the river. Updated information about the location of oyster leases in the river is requested. The SIMP should be involved in future saltmarsh inspections.

Minnie Water

- Clarence Valley Council have provided an off-leash dog exercising area away from the beach to encourage owners to exercise their dogs off the beach. Dogs are not permitted on Minnie Water Back Beach but are permitted on a leash at Minnie Water Main Beach.

Wooli Beach

- The need for vehicles on the south end of Wooli Beach is queried because of safety issues – this is the highest use area for beach goers.

Islands

- Boundaries should be a set distance in a circle from a set point e.g. Pimpernel Rock SZ.

Central Section SZ (northern box)

- Straighten the inshore boundary north of Pebbly Beach.

Moonee Creek/Green Bluff SZ

- The boundary should be 600 metres from GPS marks, but states 500 metres. Straighten the boundary for easier compliance.

Arrawarra Headland SPZ

- Currently three permits are required for this area (NPWS/DPI/MPA); the permit process needs to be coordinated.

Willis Creek

- This area is not fished and should be considered as a SZ.

Hearn's Lake

- Keep as a HPZ because it is adjacent to a caravan park.

8. Indigenous groups

Consultation

Dates	6 and 29 May 2008 and 2 June 2008
Locations	Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation, Red Rock Coffs Harbour – various locations (2 meetings) Elders meeting rooms, Emerald Beach
Attendance	Local Aboriginal communities (20)

Marine park staff attended meetings with several groups including the Garby Elders, Gumbular Julipi Elders and Coffs Harbour Local Aboriginal Land Council, and spoke by phone with the Birrigan Gargle Elders and Grafton Ngeerie Local Aboriginal Land Council.

8.1 General issues

- There is no mention of indigenous culture or use in the SIMP brochure.
- People are generally happy with the current zoning plan.
- Elders would like better representation on SIMPAC as no one Elder group can truly represent another.
- The coastline from Woolgoolga to Muttonbird Island is very culturally important. Significant sites are located throughout the area, but it is preferable to keep these sites unmarked due to potential vandalism and site destruction.

8.2 Location issues

Pipe Clay Lake

- An estuary management plan is needed; the impact of development on the lake is an issue.

Station Creek

- Zoning should remain as is.
- There is a culturally important area from Corindi/Red Rock north to Pebbly Beach.
- No groups as yet have identified additional areas below the mean high water mark that could be put into SPZs.

Estuaries

- Coffs Creek used to be a traditional camping area (near where the pool is now) and black tip reef sharks would be seen there many years ago.
- Moonee Creek is a very significant area culturally and needs further protection because development is destroying sites. A protective buffer zone of 200 metres from the high water mark of the creek is required to protect culturally important sites.

Split Solitary Island

- The southern SZ should be extended to include Split Solitary Island.

Hearnes Lake

- This is an important area culturally.

South Solitary Island

- This area needs better protection than is there currently.

Bare Bluff, Green Bluff, Look at Me Now Headland

- These all require protective zoning to protect culturally significant areas.

8.3 Activity issues

- Traditional collecting is requested by all groups, with a family bag limit and a set species list (pipis, periwinkles, abalone, mangrove worms, cunjevoi). The Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) issues members with fishing permits, so the LALC could issue a collecting permit for the SIMP.
- Ban beach hauling at Pebbly Beach.
- Compliance with 4WD closure from Arrawarra to Pipe Clay is an issue. A local council sign permits 4WDs on beaches but the SIMP zoning plan prohibits vehicles on Arrawarra Beach (if not launching a boat) and Corindi Beach.
- Interpretation shelters are needed at Arrawarra and Muttonbird Island (work is under way). Other sites include Diggers Beach, Moonee (midden site and Green Bluff) and Emerald Beach.

9. Marine science

Consultation

Dates	8 and 26 May 2008
Locations	Marine Parks Office, Coffs Harbour Jetty Maiden Theatre, Botanic Gardens, Sydney
Attendance	Marine scientists and researchers (17)

9.1 Principal issues

- The lack of consistency across the SIMP and SIMR in regard to activities permitted is an issue.
- The best example of the offshore reef habitat type is in the SIMR, adjacent to the northern SZ. This habitat type is not represented in SZs so needs to be incorporated into the SIMR SZ. Swath mapping shows continuous deep reef east of South Solitary Island and the paleo coastline.
- With the next review due in 10 years, it is critical to take into account now the predicted huge increase in local population over the next 10 years.
- It should be possible to put SPZs in place if they are needed within the next 10 years, to allow an appropriate response to changes in species.
- Impacts of climate change need to be incorporated into zone planning so that local protection can be achieved over the next ten years. Use the precautionary principle.
- Oceanography will change with climate change.
- Long-term human population changes and climate change impacts need to be considered:
 - how are these factors being incorporated into the planning process? Erosion and deposition of sediment and increases in storm events will need to be taken into account.
 - mangroves appear to be doing quite well and should cope well with sea level rise
 - saltmarsh habitat is the most susceptible to change, and to a lesser extent seagrass habitat – more saltmarsh needs to be incorporated into the SZ if possible
 - there is potentially a large loss of intertidal areas through climate change, due to the use of ‘hard’ engineering such as retaining walls. ‘Soft’ options need to be looked at.
 - how will the SIMP deal with incremental increases in nutrient pollution and its potential impacts over time?
- It is important to link terrestrial national parks with marine SZs because this will protect catchments feeding into marine parks and limit some of the negative impacts.
- More research into soft sediments is needed to understand their diversity and the invertebrate communities within them.
- Deep reef sponges are largely undocumented; 60% are as yet undescribed.
- What type or size of event detected during monitoring will trigger a change in management or ‘ring alarm bells’ – how are results being interpreted?

- What sort of surveys or monitoring are being carried out to look at ecologically sustainable use?
 - recreational catch data – a survey redesign is needed for gathering information about recreational fishing. In the past, refusal to participate has resulted in biased information. DPI indicates they have experience in this area which they are willing to share.
 - the best option is for MPAs to focus on fish surveys and species monitoring to determine protection and sustainability.
- There is some evidence that warmer water fish are turning up in areas where they have not been recorded before, e.g. pearl perch which are showing up in sufficient numbers to be included in commercial fishing catch returns. This species was not being caught ten years ago.
- In the Great Barrier Reef MPA, rotational SZs were attempted but did not work.
- There is a need for continuous protection from the estuary to the ocean in the SIMP.

9.2 Location issues

Estuaries

- Classification by estuary type can be aided by preliminary data from a PhD study (by Adam Davey). At least two ICOLLS (intermittently closed and open lakes and lagoons) need to be fully included in SZs.

Sandon River

- The SZ in Toumbaal Creek is essential for crabs and turtles, but has easy access so compliance is an issue. Move the SZ boundary upstream by 500 metres because this is where the main issue is. Good signage will be needed to improve compliance. This area needs support from DPI Maclean office.

Islands

- Fishing gear is found around moorings at the islands. CCTV monitoring is needed to enforce compliance. Get involved with Coastwatch to assist with enforcement.

Minnie Waters Lagoon and Diggers Lagoon

- These areas have unique assemblages requiring protection.

Diggers Camp rock platform

- This is the best example of an intertidal rock platform. It is not highly used and is a unique area needing protection.

Pebbly Beach

- This area has the highest diversity for mollusc death-assemblages of any area in SIMP. If it is included in a SZ this will impact on lobster fishers, and effort will be redistributed unless a buy-out scheme is effective. Recreational fishing effort here also needs to be considered, with a possible SPZ for lobster trapping only.

Barcoongere to North Solitary Island

- A cross-shelf transect is needed here.

Jones Point

- There are diverse intertidal communities here. The area has natural protection and is rarely visited. The SZ is currently too small and should be enlarged.

Wooli Wooli River

- Extend the crab trapping closure downstream. Maintain the size limit as this prevents the large females being taken. There is no issue with use of dillies as the crabs can break out of them.

North Solitary Island

- Reef fringes the island but there is no reef east or west of the island.
- This area has the greatest diversity in the entire marine park, and is highly used by fishers and divers.
- A GNS aggregation site and the best site for fish assemblages are just outside the current SZ. The current SZ is inadequate.
- The area off the 'Steps' has high shark diversity (7–8 species).
- The SZ is very close to the GUZ. The HPZ needs to extend to the east of the island.
- All attendees supported a motion calling for an increase in SZs in this area to protect the range of values.

North West Rock

- Fish Soup has huge fish abundance and diversity. The existing area of HPZ with trapping restrictions should become a SZ. This is a high-use area for local fishers.

Corindi River

- Two sections of SZ should be linked. The SZ protects a shorebird area, is the only example of a downstream estuary in the SZ and is surrounded by national park. The main arm (southern arm) needs to be protected. Ideally, the arms could be 'swapped' because the current arm in the SZ is very small and less significant. The red jasper outcrop is unique. It runs to Corindi and should be a SZ.

North West Solitary Island

- E-gutters are not in the SZ and are an aggregation site for GNS. The site benefits from natural protection because it is difficult to get there and fish there. Technically it should be in the SZ.

Arrawarra Headland SPZ

- This is the best rocky shore for access to research specimens and few other places are available for collection. Collection under permit and with strict conditions would be desirable. In Cape Byron Marine Park, Elders are responsible for giving consent to collect scientifically in a SPZ – this could be done at Arrawarra.

Woolgoolga Reef

- This is a diverse area with complex topography and diverse inshore corals. It is highly used by aquarium collectors. Was it ever considered for inclusion in a SZ?

Southern SZ

- Groper Island (South West Solitary Island) is the best example of an island SZ in the SIMP.
- If the SZ is extended to the east, where there is contiguous reef, this would achieve cross-shelf protection and deep reef would be represented in the SZ.
- Cross-shelf transects are ideal in marine park design.
- A cross-shelf transect will impact on extractive users

South Solitary Island

- This is the highest use area in the SIMP but also the hardest to comply with as the SZ is so small.
- This appears to be a recruitment site for tropical species from the east Pacific.
- Giant cuttlefish breed at Manta Arch and North Boulder Wall – this is a distinct habitat type with good depth range over a small scale.
- North Boulder Wall has the highest population of *Distortio anus* (a tropical mollusc species) which is rarely found in NSW.
- The area adjacent to the cleaner station mooring on the edge of the SZ has high biodiversity with a range of habitats and species occurring.
- Manta Arch should be included in the SZ because it supports the GNS and kelp forest.
- This is a significant environment that scientists can build a case around for protection.
- It would be ideal to look at any data from areas adjacent to the island, especially in Commonwealth waters.

Muttonbird Island

- A marine brown alga on the north side of Muttonbird Island is critically endangered, and needs protection in a SZ.
- Important near-shore reef contains corals and kelp forests.
- Impacts need to be investigated, and the best way to zone this area needs to be identified.

Islands generally

- Other islands need the same level of protection as Groper Island.
- SZs are needed around each island because the species change from island to island.

Park Beach

- Dredge spoil dumping for beach nourishment has been undertaken at Park Beach, using clean dredge spoil with the same particle size, and spread thinly, which results in no significant impact.
- This should not be done too close to the north side of Muttonbird Island or it will impact on the algae and habitats there.
- A SPZ is needed for dredge spoil dumping to ensure sand is placed in the appropriate area and to avoid impacting on Muttonbird Island.
- There may be no need for a SZ as this area is not extensively used for extraction.

9.3 Activity issues

Commercial methods

- It is inappropriate that methods that are banned in the SIMP are permitted in the SIMR and are occurring in areas adjacent to SZs. These methods should be removed from the SIMR.

Spearfishing

- Better policing is needed before and after spearfishing competitions, when high numbers of spearfishers are present.

Commonwealth shark fishery

- This does not operate within the SIMP but happens adjacent to North and South Solitary Islands and is too close to the SIMP SZs.

Commercial crab trapping

- This has increased substantially in some estuaries so there is an impact on mud crabs.

Development

- Development is impacting on riparian vegetation at Moonee Creek.

Land use

- There are high nutrient loads in Moonee Creek from adjacent land use.
- Increasing siltation is causing mangrove areas to increase.
- Seagrass is impacted on by boat movement.

9.4 Species issues

- There is a decline in the wide-band anemone fish at some sites (subtropical) and an increase in brown anemone fish (tropical).
- Nursery anemones have declined, which would impact on the fish, but another species of anemone has increased.
- Endemic species will not cope with climate change, so we must protect them and implement adaptive management.
- **GNS:**
 - current protection in the SZ is inadequate. If GNS aggregation areas are not currently protected in a SZ this needs to be rectified, or adequate buffer zones 1–1.5 km around aggregation sites need to be implemented.
 - If a 1.5–2 km SZ is established around known aggregation sites, how will this impact on the total percentage of park area designated as 'sanctuary zone'?

10. Recreational fishers

Consultation

Dates	8, 9 and 22 April 2008 and 27 May 2008
Locations	Community Village, Earl Street, Coffs Harbour (2 meetings) Wooli Community Hall, Wooli Grafton Community and Civic Centre, Grafton
Attendance	Recreational fishers (54)

10.1 General

- Fishers are generally happy with current zoning. The current SZ does not impact too much on recreational fishing, but the consensus is they cannot lose any more area to sanctuary zoning. They state that the current SZ is sufficient and open areas are very good.
- Local people are very accepting of the SIMP and zoning; most only take what they need when fishing; visitors tend to take more.

Compliance

- It is difficult to know when you are in or out of a SZ.
- Local people are aware but tourists are not and are going elsewhere because they believe they cannot fish in the SIMP.
- More markers are needed for zones, especially for people with no GPS equipment.

Reviews

- Reviews should be at five-yearly intervals to account for new information and climate change. There is still limited species information.
- There is no trust in the process after the last zoning. There is concern about the process because some changes made in 2002 were never brought up during consultation (e.g. Sandy Back Beach and Bare Bluff southern headland).
- What changes can be made by Ministers without consultation, and what constitutes a minor or major change?
- There are concerns:
 - that the Ministers do not understand the issues
 - that groups are fragmented, with separate meetings to ‘divide and conquer’, and consultation is carried out because it has to be but it is not actually valued or used
 - that green groups outnumber fishers
 - that more-populated areas have more say and population influences decision making.

Research

- Science is needed to back up the zoning. Most fishers are conservative and responsible and do not want changes without science to back them up.
- Better science is needed to manage marine parks – peer reviewed studies are needed, with preservation based on that information.

- More economic research is needed. What research has been done in this area over the past five years on the economic value of the SIMP?

Sanctuary zones

- SZs are not based on science. The northern end of the SIMP has a higher number of SZs than the southern end. The concern is that more areas will become SZs out of greed.
- Research is not there to back up SZs.
- Any increases in sanctuary zoning will impact on fishers.
- Protection is useless unless impacts from development are controlled.
- Trolling across SZs should be allowed because it does not impact on habitats.
- The marking of SZs is inadequate, especially in ocean areas.
- Some believe an increase in sanctuary zoning is needed as recreational effort is so large.
- The recommendation from one meeting was to advise Ministers that there should be no increase in SZs unless there is scientific evidence for it.
- Enforcement is an issue – more policing is needed. There are issues with illegal spearing in Wooli Wooli River, with visitors from Queensland and holiday-makers not knowing the rules.
- There is better fishing since the buy-out of commercial fishers and introduction of the zone plan. Bream and flathead have improved.
- It is requested that the Ministers visit during the course of the review. A select group of fishers would like to meet with the Ministers.

10.2 Location issues

- Fishers would support an extension of the northern SZ out into Commonwealth Reserve to straighten the boundary.

Islands

- Fishers cannot afford to lose more areas around the three main southern islands.

Sandon River SZ

- Open up Toumbaal Creek SZ. The current marker is too hard to find and keeps disappearing. The other shallow seagrass SZ is fine as is.

Northern SZ

- Fishers are fairly happy with this as it is.

Pimpernel Rock

- Straightening boundaries will not help. Keep with a central GPS point.

North Solitary Island

- This is well-accepted as it is. The North West Rock 100-metre zone is difficult to comply with. There is some conflict with divers.

Central SZ

- Fishers are generally fine with this zone.

Minnie Water Back Beach

- Open up the southern end of the SZ 100 metres offshore to allow fishing from the rocks. Signage is frequently lost here.

North West Solitary Island

- There are no significant issues.

Jones Beach

- This is an ideal anchoring point for boat fishing – a mooring here would be ideal.

Sandy Beach

- Open up the south side of Bare Bluff. The SZ was never in drafts or discussion in the development of the current zoning plan. It should be open to recreational fishing.

Look at me now Headland

- The marker is very difficult to see, and there is conflict over use between surfers, fishers and beach haulers.

Flat Top Rock

- There are no issues with zoning.

Split Solitary Island

- Two moorings in the HPZ ruin a good mackerel run – maybe they could be removed seasonally. Fishers are generally happy with the current zoning.

South Solitary Island

- This is accepted as it is. If more ground is lost on the northern side, it would be devastating for recreational fishers.

Groper Island

- This is generally a pelagic area – recreational fishers are happy with the spearfishers' proposal for that area (see Appendix 2b).

10.3 Activity issues

Beach hauling

- There is concern that this activity is permitted on Sandy Beach adjacent to a SZ, and concern about by-catch dumping from this fishery.

Commercial fishing

- This is doomed, costs are too high, fishers can only survive on subsidies. Information on catches needs to be collected because catches have declined over the past eight years.

Mud crab trapping

- Dillies should be used. You can catch a lot of crabs in dillies, and there are no ghost fishing issues because crabs can break out of dillies if they are left.

- Trapping in estuaries is currently substantial and the number and sizes of crabs caught have decreased.
- There is concern that crab numbers may never recover. SZs do not protect crabs – during floods crabs are washed out and then get trapped.

Fish trapping

- Closure in the north is effective. Line fishing has improved since trapping was removed from this area, and there is no more problem with running over ropes in the boat.

Permits for recreational fishing competitions

- Meeting permit conditions is an administrative burden for fishing clubs.

Recreational fishing

- Bag and size limits are reasonable.
- There is concern about the efficiency of soft plastic lures used by recreational fishers as they make it too easy to catch fish, and with GPSs, the increasing numbers of fish caught will have an impact.

Vehicles on beaches

- Why are vehicles permitted adjacent to the national park and the marine park?
- Others stated driving on beaches is the only way older people can get to fishing spots.
- Vehicle disturbance to shorebirds is a concern. Another view is that birds will not go where the vehicles are.

Canoeists

- Woolli Woolli River and Sandon Rivers are popular areas.

10.4 Species issues

Grey nurse shark

- There is concern about the credibility of the research as the numbers of GNS are much better than the research states.
- Divers disrupt GNSs by accessing critical habitat sites, and do not pay fees. The endangered status for GNSs is based on dive operators wanting more business, then scientists started talking to divers.
- Fishers believe that the movement of GNSs away from sites is due to disturbance by divers, and there are a lot of GNSs out there.
- There is concern about recreational fishers being blamed for hooking, but the hooks seen are too large to be used recreationally.
- The use of shark-friendly fishing methods needs to be reinforced around North Solitary Island.

11. Spearfishers

Consultation

Date	27 March 2008
Location	Marine Parks Office, Coffs Harbour Jetty
Attendance	Spearfishers (7)

11.1 General issues

- Spearfishers are generally pleased with the marine park.
- There is general community ignorance about what spearfishers do.
- There is a need for areas for youngsters to learn to spear.
- Very few areas are diveable for spearfishers, and these tend to coincide with shallow reef areas.
- Inshore, shallow reef is currently well represented in the SIMP, so there is no need for more of this habitat type in SZs.
- There is concern about further loss of diveable area if GNS areas change, and if rounded boundaries are squared up.
- More juvenile GNSs are being seen in spearing areas (i.e. outside critical habitat areas) – 90% of GNSs are sighted outside critical habitat areas.
- Deepwater areas have no GNS protection.
- Spearfishers have a policy on marine protected areas.
- Risk assessment is requested for decision making and issue resolution.
- There is concerned about the review report – will SIMPAC get an opportunity to comment before it goes to the Ministers?
- Spearfishers are willing to assist with factsheets to increase public understanding.
- Make zoning complementary with the adjacent Commonwealth reserve.
- Spearfishers generally feel that the marine park manages spearfishing and spearfishing competitions very well.
- Shallow reef is needed for learners. If more shallow reef is lost (i.e. closed to spearfishers) there will be nowhere for learners to go. Learners currently use North and South Solitary Islands as there are no inshore areas available.

11.2 Location issues

South West Solitary Island

- There is a specific issue with the west side of Groper Island (South West Solitary Island) – the SZ west of Groper Island should be amended to allow access to ‘the best mackerel spot’ in the marine park and allow access to the southern side of Bare Bluff.
- Spearfishers have provided a map to show how this could be achieved, and it includes an extension to the eastern boundary of the southern section of the SZ that results in an overall increase in SZ area (Appendix 2b).

- Mackerel is the primary target. Spearfishers would consider a species list, and, potentially, seasonal access from January to June or thereabouts.

Split Solitary Island

- Leave the zoning as is.

South Solitary Island

- There is a limited area to spear around the lighthouse. It is a good area, with no issues or conflict with divers or recreational fishers. It is a very high use area for all groups. A south and a north area for spearing in bad weather are needed on each island as these spots offer protection.

North Solitary Island

- The markers appear to be in a different position which changes the line of sight for determining the zone boundary. The zone needs to be marked from the northernmost point of the island.

12. List of meetings and information days

Dates and locations of meetings and information days held to 2 June 2008

Date	Stakeholder group	Location
27/03/08	Spearfishers focus group	Coffs Harbour
01/04/08	Joint Aquatic and Waterfront Services briefing	Coffs Harbour
07/04/08	Tour operators focus group	Coffs Harbour
08/04/08	Commercial fishers focus group	Coffs Harbour
08/04/08	Recreational fishers focus group	Coffs Harbour
09/04/08	Oyster growers meeting	Yamba
09/04/08	Commercial fishers focus group	Iluka
09/04/08	Recreational fishers focus group	Grafton
10/04/08	Commercial fishers focus group	Wooli
10/04/08	Tour operators focus group	Wooli
12/04/08	Discovery tour – Muttonbird Island	Coffs Harbour
14/04/08	MP briefing – Andrew Fraser, State Member for Coffs Harbour	Coffs Harbour
15/04/08	Clarence Valley Council – councillors briefing	Grafton
15/04/08	Clarence Valley Council – staff briefing	Grafton
15/04/08	MP briefing – Steve Cansdell, State Member for Clarence	Grafton
15/04/08	NPWS staff	Grafton
17/04/08	Information day – Park Beach Plaza	Coffs Harbour
18/04/08	Information day – Park Beach Plaza	Coffs Harbour
19/04/08	Information day – Park Beach Plaza	Coffs Harbour
22/04/08	Coffs Harbour Chamber of Commerce	Coffs Harbour
22/04/08	NSW DPI – Fisheries	Coffs Harbour
22/04/08	Recreational fishers focus group	Wooli
23/04/08	Department of Environment and Climate Change staff	Coffs Harbour
23/04/08	Mayoral briefing – Clarence Valley Council	Macleay
24/04/08	DPI – Fisheries	Macleay
24/04/08	Department of Lands	Grafton
26/04/08	Information day – Red Rock/Corindi multi-use centre	Red Rock
26/04/08	Information day – Woolgoolga neighbourhood centre	Woolgoolga
05/05/08	Conservation focus group	Coffs Harbour
06/05/08	Indigenous focus group – Garby Elders	Yarrowarra Aboriginal Corporation Red Rock
06/05/08	Indigenous focus group – Coffs Harbour Local Aboriginal Land Council	Coffs Harbour
07/05/08	Solitary Islands Underwater Research Group	Coffs Harbour
08/05/08	Marine science focus group	Coffs Harbour
10/05/08	Information day – Wooli community hall	Wooli
14/05/08	Coffs Harbour City Council – staff briefing	Coffs Harbour

Date	Stakeholder group	Location
14/05/08	Coffs Harbour City Council – councillors and mayoral briefing	Coffs Harbour
15/05/08	Catchment Management Authority	Coffs Harbour
16/05/08	Information day – Yamba Shopping Fair	Yamba
17/05/08	Information day – Grafton Shopping World	Grafton
19/05/08	Coffs Coast Tourism Association	Coffs Harbour
25/05/08	Information day – Emerald Beach Fair	Emerald Beach
26/05/08	Peak conservation groups focus group	Sydney
26/05/08	Marine science focus group	Sydney
27/05/08	Recreational fishers focus group	Coffs Harbour
29/05/08	Indigenous focus group – Gumbular Julipi Elders	Coffs Harbour
02/06/08	Indigenous focus group – Bagawa Birra Murri Aboriginal Corporation	Coffs Harbour

Note: a number of other meetings with individuals were held on request during the consultation period. These meetings are not listed to ensure confidentiality for the individuals concerned.

Part B: Submissions

1. Introduction

Part B of this report summarises the submissions received during the review of the Solitary Islands Marine Park zoning plan. Public consultation for Stage 1 of the review was conducted over a period of two months from 31 March 2008 to 2 June 2008.

This summary provides an overview of submissions and does not fully report the detailed information presented in many submissions. For this reason, individual comments may not be reported 'word for word', but are aggregated with similar comments or issues.

It is not uncommon for specific interest groups to generate large volumes of submissions on one particular issue. The MPA recognises this may not necessarily reflect the level of interest in the community generally, but may be due to other factors such as:

- there may only be a limited number of people involved in a specific activity
- some groups are more organised than others in encouraging submissions from their members
- the time and resources available to prepare a response varies between different groups
- in some cases there is a lack of understanding or assumption that specific groups or communities will or will not be affected.

This summary does not attempt to analyse, interpret, comment, or weight submissions or issues. Submissions received are generally from groups of individuals that have an interest in marine park issues or feel they may be affected by proposed management options. This summary does not represent or assume the views of the broader community in its entirety.

1.1 Overview of submissions

A total of 1,079 submissions were received from a wide range of stakeholders. Of all submissions, 26% were from the local area, 26% from Sydney, 19.5% from Queensland, and 6% from overseas. The remainder were from elsewhere in Australia.

Submission formats varied and included individual and group submissions, letters, emails, form letters, petitions, maps, reports and the marine park submission form in hardcopy or from the MPA website.

The NSW Marine Parks Authority did not give any particular weighting to the various submission formats or numbers received and has reviewed and considered all submissions.

Summary of submissions by type:

Submission type	Total received
SIMP submission form	129
Letter	64
Petition	2
Spearfishers form letter	110
Australian Marine Conservation Society form letter	469
Nature Conservation Council form letter	31
National Parks Association form letter	172
Bellingen Environment Centre form letter	99
Individuals that sent in more than one type of form letter submission	3

Zoning-related issues included the following comments and suggestions:

- The current area designated as sanctuary zone is inadequate, with many groups seeking a SZ increase to 20–50% of each habitat type:
 - there is a lack of representation of various habitat types in SZs, particularly estuaries, intermediate and deep reefs and island-fringing reefs
 - a lack of contiguous habitat protection in SZs was also identified.
- Specific locations that received most comments were:
 - Minnie Water Back Beach (allow recreational fishing)
 - the southern sanctuary zone: Groper Island, Bare Bluff, Sandy Back Beach (allow fishing and spearfishing in specific areas)
 - North and South Solitary Islands (various comments).
- Generally, extractive users reported they had learned to adjust to the current zoning plan but wanted no further increases in sanctuary zoning.

Activity-related issues included the following suggestions:

- ban or phase out prawn trawling
- ban or phase out vehicles on beaches
- differentiate between the requirements of spearfishers and recreational fishers
- use gear, method, bag and size restrictions to increase protection rather than sanctuary zones so recreational fishing can continue
- reduce commercial fishing effort and mud crab trapping in estuaries.

Species-related issues included the following suggestions and comments:

- increase protection for all shark species
- current levels of grey nurse shark protection are inadequate
- protect the critically endangered alga at Muttonbird Island.

2. Submissions – general information

2.1 Process for recording submissions

Submissions were received by fax, email, post and at focus group meetings and community information sessions. Formats varied and included individual and group submissions, letters, emails, form letters, petitions, maps, reports and the marine park submission forms distributed in hard copy or via the MPA website.

All submissions were date stamped on receipt and secured until processing. Details of the individual or group making the submission were recorded and allocated a unique record number to allow for easy identification and subsequent data retrieval.

Each submission was reviewed to identify issues with specific zones, particular locations within existing zones, main reasons for proposed modification of the current zones and any key themes or issues relating to the current zoning plan, management of activities and species protection. Maps were also considered because many people had drawn on the current zoning plan map to offer zone suggestions or alterations. Some individuals provided more than one submission. In these cases, subsequent submissions were compared to the original submission and new information added to the database under the original record number.

A Microsoft Access database was used to store submission details and report on the range of comments made. The content of each submission was read and key words, issues and statements highlighted and entered into the database under headings that corresponded to those used on the submission form.

2.2 Submissions received by type

The number of submissions received by type is summarised below:

Submission type	No. received	% of total
SIMP submission form	129	12
Letter	64	5.9
Petition	2	0.2
Australian Marine Conservation Society form letter	469	43.5
Bellingen Environment Centre form letter	99	9.2
Nature Conservation Council form letter	31	2.8
National Parks Association form letter	172	15.9
Spearfishers form letter	110	10.2
Individuals submitting more than one type of form letter	3	0.3
TOTAL submissions received	1,079	100

Approximately 82% of the submissions received were form letters, with the remaining 18% being submission forms or letters. Two petitions were received from local community groups (see Appendix 2e). Of the five types of form letters received, three gave the opportunity to provide personal comments. Copies of the form letters are provided in Appendix 2c and Appendix 2d.

The MPA did not give any particular weighting to the various submission types or numbers, and has reviewed and considered the content of all submissions.

2.3 Location of respondents

The locations of respondents are summarised in the table below:

Region	No. of responses	% of total
Marine park area*	277	26
Sydney metropolitan	278	26
Queensland	210	19.5
NSW (all other areas)	107	10
Other states	128	12
International	69	6
No postcode given	9	0.5
TOTAL	1,079	100

* includes all areas with postcodes from 2448 to 2463

Approximately 26% of the submissions received were from the local area (including the two petitions), 26% from Sydney, nearly 20% from Queensland, 12% from other parts of NSW, 10% from other states of Australia, and 6% from overseas, including such countries such as Canada, the USA, UK, Belgium, Norway, Fiji, Poland, Tonga, South Africa and many others.

2.4 Age of respondents

On the SIMP submission form, respondents were asked to identify their age group, with 126 people doing so. This information is summarised below:

Age group	Count	% of total
0–17	1	0.8
18–24	4	3.2
25–34	7	5.6
35–44	16	12.6
45–54	40	31.7
55–64	36	28.6
65+	22	17.5
TOTAL	126	100

The majority of respondents identified their age group as being between 45 and 64 years (61%), with approximately 17% of the respondents being above this age group, and 22% below. Unfortunately, no age group information was given for the form letter submissions.

2.5 Main interests in the marine park

Respondents who completed a submission form were asked to identify their main interests in the marine park in order of importance. Many submissions contained this information in letters and in some personal comments on form letters, and all have been included. While some respondents numbered their interests in order of importance, others just marked their interests with an 'x'. For the sake of reporting, all responses have been recorded and given the same weighting, and a count made of each time the particular activity/interest was recorded by the respondents. The total number of interests exceeds the number of submissions received as individuals identified multiple interests.

The interest reported by respondents may reflect a direct involvement in a particular activity, or an opinion on the management of that activity within the marine park. Submissions received as form letters were designated an interest which depended on the origin of the form letter (conservation group or fishing group) and their personal comments about interests.

Reported main interests in the marine park were:

Stakeholder interest	No. of responses
Conservation	851
Spearfishing	134
Recreational fishing	122
Beach activities	76
Swimming	73
Tourist/visitor	67
Scuba diving	65
Surfing	60
Snorkelling	55
Recreational boating	55
Wildlife observation	54
Scenic amenity	45
Kayaking/canoeing	33
Commercial fishers	15
Research	17
PWC/watersports	9
Underwater photography	5
Tourism operator	5
Charter fishing	2
Local government	2
Sailing	2
Indigenous	1

The highest interest category was conservation, however many recreational fishers also selected conservation as an interest. Many of the overseas respondents were scuba divers.

2.6 Views on conserving Solitary Islands Marine Park

Respondents who completed a SIMP submission form were also asked to indicate their view of conserving the marine park by selecting one of six responses that most closely represented their view. A total of 132 responses were received, with the breakdown of answers on the next page:

View on conserving SIMP	Count	% of total
Strongly in favour	54	41
In favour	35	26
Neutral	22	17
Against	8	6
Strongly against	13	10
Don't know/not sure	0	0
TOTAL	132	100

Approximately 67% of respondents were in favour of conserving the SIMP, 17% were neutral, and 16% were against conservation of this area.

2.7 Support for sanctuary zones in Solitary Islands Marine Park

Respondents who completed a marine park submission form were asked to indicate how strongly they supported the sanctuary zones in the marine park by selecting one of six responses that most closely represented their view. A total of 129 responses were provided to this question. The breakdown of answers is as follows:

Support for sanctuary zones	Count	% of total
Strongly in favour	44	34
In favour	21	16
Neutral	23	18
Against	14	11
Strongly against	23	18
Don't know/Not sure	4	3
TOTAL	129	100

Support for sanctuary zones within the SIMP was divided, with 50% supporting them, 18% neutral, and 29% against them.

2.8 Provision of opportunities for ecologically sustainable use, public appreciation and enjoyment

Respondents who completed a submission form were also asked to indicate whether they thought the zoning plan provided appropriate opportunities for ecologically sustainable use, public appreciation and enjoyment.

Provision of appropriate opportunities for ecologically sustainable use, public appreciation and enjoyment	Count	% of total
No	67	56
Yes	52	44
TOTAL	119	100

A total of 119 responses were provided to this question with 56% of respondents stating 'No' and 44% stating 'Yes'. Many respondents provided additional comment on this question, some stating the question confused them, and many giving a reason for their answer.

Responses included:

If responded 'No':

- current sanctuary zones are inadequate or deficient, therefore use is not ecologically sustainable
- not properly enforced or policed, therefore use is not sustainable
- current zoning does not ensure sustainability
- not enough area remaining for recreational fishing.

If responded 'Yes':

- if properly enforced or policed
- current zoning provides adequate fishing opportunities but cannot lose any more ground.

3. Summary of comments on marine park zones

A variety of submissions were received that commented on issues with the current zoning. These comments ranged from the need for significantly increased protection, to removal of specific SZs, or specific recommendations for zone modifications.

Specific zones that received the majority of comments were:

Zone	No. of submissions
Southern SZ – Bare Bluff Headland, Sandy Back Beach and the western side of Groper Island	155
South Solitary Island	139
North Solitary Island	135
North West Rock	123
Northern SZ – adjacent to Sandon Beach	123
All estuary SZs	40
Northern SZ –Minnie Water Back Beach	34
Pimpinel Rock – Commonwealth waters	33
Diggers Camp Rock Platform	17

The majority of zone-specific comments were from recreational anglers and spearfishers requesting access to particular areas. The comments specific to zoning at the islands generally reflected differing views between recreational fishing, commercial fishing and conservation interests.

General comments relating to zoning were also received and the key comments are listed below:

- Conservation groups requested a minimum of 33–50% of habitats within the marine park area and the adjacent Commonwealth reserve to be included in SZs to adequately protect the biodiversity in the marine park.
- Greater sanctuary zoning was requested around the islands both for coral and threatened species protection and to increase compliance.
- Greater conservation of the GNS was requested by conservation interests and many local residents.
- Comments relating to changes to the current habitat protection and general use zones included extending the HPZ to buffer North and South Solitary Islands from the impacts of trawling, or to increase GUZ area to allow more area for trawling.

Recreational fishers generally accepted the current zoning, recommending no change, and stating any increases in sanctuary zoning would impact on them greatly.

Many additional general comments were made which reflect the value of this area. These include:

- SIMP is an iconic area requiring greater protection.
- SIMP should be a World Heritage Area.
- Current zoning breaches the Marine Parks Act as it fails to adequately protect marine biodiversity.

Comments from international submissions stated SIMP is one of the best diving areas in the world and failure to adequately protect it will lead to economic impacts through lost tourism and declining fish stocks.

There were many comments from fishers requesting increased protection for the sustainability of fishing.

4. Comments on sanctuary zones

The majority of submissions made general comments regarding SZs overall, and many local submissions made comments specific to individual SZs. Hence, responses have been divided into two categories for general and specific comments.

4.1 Sanctuary zones overall

General comments referring to SZs are categorised below:

Comment	Count
Increase SZs to 33% for SIMP and SIMR (includes one petition with 225 signatures, counted as a single submission)	754
Increase area of SZ in SIMP/meet IUCN recommendations	101
Increase SZ to 50% in SIMP and SIMR	43
Represent and replicate all habitat types in SZss	38
Increase size and number of SZs	35
SZ inadequate for species/habitats/GNS protection	12
Increase SZ to varying degrees (from 20% up to 50%)	12
SZs benefit habitats and species both within them and adjacent to them	11
No changes required	8
Disagree with/remove all SZs	7
Allow surface trolling in SZs (seasonal or all year) – no anchoring	6
SZs are required for all coral and sponge communities	3
Reduce size and number of SZs	3
No changes to SZs without a scientific basis	3
Over-representation of inshore habitats impacting spearfishers greatly; need to increase deep water SZ area	2
Increase SZ areas for intermediate and deep reef representation	2
Current SZ too small for compliance	2
Whole marine park should be a SZ	1
Marine floral diversity should be in SZ	1
SZs should reflect adjacent areas nominated for wilderness protection, especially rivers	1
SZs are required 5–10 km offshore	1
No further sanctuary zoning in SIMP – use method and gear restrictions instead to increase protection	1
No changes required but simplify boundaries	1
Need for scientific reference zones as in Great Barrier Reef MP	1
Need for cross-shelf transect to protect intertidal to deep offshore habitats	1
Need artificial reefs for coral	1
Inadequate beach representation in SZs	1
Areas adjacent to national park to be SZs with permits for traditional use	1
Allow beach fishing in all SZs	1
TOTAL	1,048

The majority of general comments regarding SZs came from the form letter submissions, which called for a significant increase in the SZ area within the marine park and adjacent marine reserve (Commonwealth waters) of between 33% and 50% of each habitat type.

The petition from the Friends of SIMP (Bellinghen Environment Centre) with 225 signatures called for an increase in sanctuary zoning to 33% of the marine park.

4.2 Sanctuary zones by location

Many individual submissions, and the spearfishing submission and associated form letter, commented on specific SZs. Most comments were received on:

Zone	No. of submissions
Southern section SZ	155
South Solitary Island SZ	139
North Solitary Island SZ	135
North West Rock SZ	123
Northern SZ – northern section	123
All estuary SZs	40
Northern SZ	34

Not all submissions commented on all zones, therefore the number of comments for each zone does not equate to the total number of submissions received. The order in which comments are reported here does not necessarily reflect the frequency with which those comments occurred in submissions.

All estuary sanctuary zones

Comment	Count
All estuaries to have seagrass in SZs and limit boat speeds to 4 knots	39
Additional SZs required for ICOLLS (intermittently closed and open lakes and lagoons) in the marine park	1
TOTAL	40

The majority of these submissions came from the Nature Conservation Council's form letter which called for all seagrass to be protected by sanctuary zoning, and a 4-knot speed limit to be applied in those areas.

All islands sanctuary zones

Comment	Count
Extend sanctuary zoning – submissions include: SZs to encircle all islands (no distance specified) 1200 m SZ required for GNS protection 1500 m SZ required for GNS protection 500 m SZ required for species and coral protection	40
No changes required	2
Restrict fishing methods rather than increasing SZ to increase protection	1
Straighten boundaries for compliance but maintain size	1
TOTAL	44

The majority of submissions came from the Nature Conservation Council form letters, which specified 1500 metres of sanctuary zoning for GNS protection (32 submissions).

Sandon River System sanctuary zone

Comment	Count
Alternate the SZ in the river arms so Candole Creek becomes SZ, and the Sandon River is HPZ	2
Increase protection of seagrass	1
Toumbaal Creek – move downstream boundary upstream to the end of houses for better compliance and signage, and to allow locals to fish	1
Remove SZ and change to HPZ	1
Maintain SZ to maintain pristine area	1
TOTAL	6

Wooli Wooli River System sanctuary zones

Comment	Count
Extend the SZ to include the area upstream of the caravan park	2
Alternate the SZ in the river arms for better compliance as there is limited access to the southern arm	2
Increase protection by managing the river as a recreational fishery, and eliminating commercial fishing to encourage tourism and sustainable use	2
TOTAL	6

Station Creek sanctuary zone

Comment	Count
Extend SZ to include little tern nesting sites at the creek mouth	2
TOTAL	2

Corindi River sanctuary zone

Comment	Count
No changes required	1
Remove SZ	1
Allow fishing in Saltwater Creek	1
TOTAL	3

Northern sanctuary zone – northern section

Comment	Count
Extend SZ out to the Commonwealth marine reserve boundary (SIMR) for cross-shelf transect and deep reef representation	112
Decrease SZ size/remove SZ	5
Straighten eastern boundary for ease of compliance	2
Move western boundary east to allow lobster trapping	2
Increase SZ to include Sandon Shoals and inshore area, with beach as HPZ	1
No changes required	1
TOTAL	123

Of the above submissions, 112 supporting extension of the eastern boundary into Commonwealth waters were from the spearfishers who submitted a detailed proposal with supporting form letters.

Northern sanctuary zone – southern section

Comment	Count
Allow beach fishing on Minnie Water Back Beach – submissions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> beach to be HPZ out to 100 metres offshore beach to be HPZ out to 250 metres offshore allow 500-metre HPZ at northern and southern ends of the beach allow HPZ at northern and southern ends of the beach 100 metres offshore, marked by the freshwater inlets south western boundary to be moved 400 metres north and 500 metres offshore 	23
Remove or reduce SZ	3
No changes required	2
Extend SZ south to include Diggers Camp Rock Platform	2
Extend SZ to boundary of SIMR (Commonwealth waters)	2
Simplify eastern boundary for compliance – straight lines with set points	2
TOTAL	34

These submissions were predominantly from the residents of Minnie Water, Diggers Camp and Woolli requesting some access to Minnie Water Back Beach for recreational fishing.

Jones Point sanctuary zone

Comment	Count
Extend SZ to join central section (inshore) SZ at Barcoongere Rocks	1
TOTAL	1

Central section sanctuary zone – northern box

Comment	Count
Extend SZ – submissions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a transect across to North Solitary Island • eastern boundary to be the same as the southern box • include Pebbly Beach in SZ and extend to North Solitary Island 	3
No changes required	1
Remove SZ as no GNS at this site	1
Allow beach fishing at Pebbly Beach	1
TOTAL	6

Central section sanctuary zone – southern box

Comment	Count
Remove SZ as no GNS at this site	2
Extend SZ: – submissions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • east across to west of North Solitary Island • west to form a square with the northern box 	2
Reduce size of SZ	1
TOTAL	5

Flat Top Rock sanctuary zone

Comment	Count
Remove SZ to allow recreational fishing	6
No changes required	1
Reduce SZ to 50 metres	1
TOTAL	8

Southern section sanctuary zone

Comment	Count
Modify SZ as per spearfishers proposal (see Appendix 2b) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allow pelagic fishing (no anchoring) west of Groper Island across to south of Bare Bluff; set species list provided • possibility of seasonal fishing if necessary 	113
Reduce SZ to allow beach and shore fishing at Sandy Back Beach and Bare Bluff	21
Remove or modify SZ at Groper Island	8
Allow surface trolling in SZ at various locations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groper Island 100 m from mean high water mark • Sidney Shoals/40 Acres 	7
Extend SZ to South Solitary Island (and Split Solitary)	2
Bare Bluff requires greater protection	1
Reduce SZ around area off Green Bluff	1
Allow beach fishing at northern Moonee Beach	1
Remove SZ	1
TOTAL	155

Of the above submissions, 112 were from spearfishers supporting the proposal to allow pelagic fishing from west of Groper Island to Bare Bluff with a set species list. (See Appendix 2b for maps.)

Local recreational fishers requested access to Sandy Back Beach and Bare Bluff (21 submissions).

Split Solitary Island sanctuary zone

Comment	Count
Extend SZ – submissions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encircle island • encircle island out to 250 metres from the mean high water mark • encircle island out to 500 metres from the mean high water mark • extend out to 1200 metres for GNS protection 	8
No changes required	3
Allow surface trolling from 100 metres offshore	2
Reduce SZ	1
TOTAL	14

South Solitary Island sanctuary zone

Comment	Count
Modify SZ as per spearfishers proposal – incorporate Manta Arch in SZ, straighten boundaries, and extend SZ to the west (see Appendix 2b)	112
Extend SZ – submissions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encircle island and include Manta Arch • encircle island out to 200/250/300 metres from the mean high water mark • encircle island out to 500 m from mean high water mark • extend the SZ to 1200 metres for GNS protection • extend the SZ to a 3,000-metre radius 	22
Reduce the SZ to 100 metres or remove the SZ around ‘Birdie’	2
No changes required	2
A SPZ around the gantry is required	1
TOTAL	139

Of the above submissions, 112 were from spearfishers supporting the spearfishing proposal to modify the SZ at South Solitary Island to incorporate Manta Arch, straighten the boundaries, reduce the northern and southern boundaries, and extend the SZ west. See Appendix 2b for details.

All other submissions came from local individuals.

North West Solitary Island sanctuary zone

Comment	Count
Extend the SZ – submissions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> including the E-gutters and nocturnal GNS foraging areas in the SZ extending the SZ to encircle the island extending the SZ to encircle the island out to 250 metres from the mean high water mark extending the SZ out to 1200 metres for GNS protection extending the SZ out to 1500 metres for GNS protection 	8
No changes required	3
Straighten boundary for ease of compliance	1
TOTAL	12

North Solitary Island sanctuary zone

Comment	Count
No changes required	113
Extend the SZ – submissions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> encircling the island encircling the island out to 200/250/500 metres from the mean high water mark extending the SZ out to 1200 metres/1500 metres/2 kilometres for GNS protection extending the SZ to include a continuous area around the island and North West Rock out to 200 metres including the north eastern portion and GNS site in the SZ including the GNS site, nocturnal foraging areas, coral areas, and high fish assemblage sites in the SZ 	19
removing or reducing the SZ	3
TOTAL	134

Of the submissions stating 'no changes required', 112 of 113 responses were received from the spearfishers' proposal.

North West Rock sanctuary zone

Comment	Count
No changes required	112
Extend the SZ – submissions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> encircling the island encircling the island out to 200/300/500 metres from the mean high water mark extending the SZ out to 1200 metres for GNS protection extending the SZ out to 2 kilometres as it is an iconic area 	8
Remove or reduce the SZ	3
TOTAL	123

Of the submission comment 'no changes required', all responses were received from the spearfishers' proposal.

Pimpernel Rock sanctuary zone (Commonwealth waters)

Comment	Count
Extend the SZ – submissions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing it, as it is currently inadequate • extending it to SIMR boundaries and to meet the SIMP northern SZ (northern section) • extending it out to 1200/1500 metres for GNS protection • extending the SZ to 2 kilometres or 5 kilometres as it is an iconic area and needs buffering from adjacent trawling 	43
Remove or reduce the SZ – submissions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowing spearfishing • allowing trolling • allowing gear-restricted commercial fishing • allowing recreational fishing 	13
No changes required	9
TOTAL	65

The Nature Conservation Council requested a 1500-metre SZ for GNS protection in their form letter (32 submissions).

5. Comments on habitat protection zones

Comments on HPZs have been separated into two categories: general comments relating to all HPZs in the marine park (section 5.1) and location specific comments (section 5.2)

5.1 Habitat protection zones

General comments relating to HPZs are categorised below:

Comment	Count
No changes required	14
Decrease area of HPZ and change to SZ	3
Increase area of HPZ and reduce SZs	2
Increase HPZs	1
Provide FADs (fish aggregating devices) and artificial reefs in HPZs to offset SZs	1
Reduce HPZs and increase GUZs to allow prawn trawling	1
TOTAL	22

5.2 Habitat protection zones by location

Not all submissions commented on all zones, therefore the number of comments for each zone does not equate to the total number of submissions received. The order in which comments are reported here does not necessarily reflect the frequency with which those comments occurred in submissions.

Northern section habitat protection zone

Comment	Count
Reduce HPZs and provide SZs for deficiency in inshore reef representation in the north	1
Retain the HPZ in Minnie Water Lagoon but ban spearfishing	1
TOTAL	2

Diggers Camp to Pebbly Beach habitat protection zone

Comment	Count
Change the HPZ to a SZ at Diggers Camp Rock Platform	8
Increase protection at Diggers Camp Rock Platform	3
Extend the HPZ east of North Solitary Island to prevent trawling occurring so close to a SZ	2
There is a need for increased inshore reef representation here for diverse algal species	1
There should be a new SZ from the northern end of Wooli Beach out to the GUZ (leaving the beach as a HPZ)	1
There should be a new SZ including Diggers Camp Rock Platform and linking it with Minnie Water Back Beach SZ	1
A cross-shelf SZ is required in this area including North Solitary Island	1
TOTAL	17

The majority of comments regarding Diggers Camp Rock Platform were from local Diggers Camp residents and house owners. The rock platform is currently in a HPZ with no collecting allowed.

Station Creek to Bare Bluff habitat protection zone

Comment	Count
New SZ required at Wrights Reef for GNS	1
New SZ required at Woolgoolga Reef – 100 metres	1
Red Rock Headland requires protection for cultural purposes – SZ or SPZ possible	1
TOTAL	3

Southern Section habitat protection zone

Comment	Count
New SZ required at Muttonbird Island to protect the critically endangered brown alga <i>Nereia lophocladia</i>	4
Extend the HPZ east of South Solitary Island to prevent trawling occurring so close to a SZ	2
Create a SZ in Moonee Creek for greater protection of seagrass and cultural heritage sites	2
No changes required	1
TOTAL	9

Emerald Beach habitat protection zone

Comment	Count
No change to Look at Me Now Headland HPZ as it is a critical area for local kayak fishers – ideally increase the HPZ out further	1
No changes required	1
Emerald Beach HPZ strip should become a SZ	1
Look at Me Now Headland significant site needs protection – change to a SPZ	1
TOTAL	4

Fish trapping closures in habitat protection zone

Comment	Count
Remove fish trapping closure at North West Solitary Island	1
Upgrade fish trapping closure to a SZ around North West Solitary Island	1
TOTAL	2

SIMR habitat protection zone (Commonwealth waters)

Comment	Count
Extend the HPZ to align with SIMP HPZ boundary	3
No changes required	3
Change to a SZ to incorporate deep reef representation	3
Allow setlines with or without gear restrictions	2
Change to a SZ and align with SIMP's northern SZ	2
Adds no conservation value	1
TOTAL	14

6. Comments on general use zones

Comments on GUZs are summarised below:

SIMP general use zone (State waters)

Comment	Count
No changes required	11
Remove all GUZs and change to HPZs	3
The GUZ adjacent to North and South Solitary Islands should be a HPZ out to 3 nautical miles to buffer islands from the impacts of prawn trawling	1
Remove commercial fishing from the GUZ	1
Increase the GUZ to allow an increased area for trawling	1
Install artificial reefs and FADs to offset lost fishing areas and manage displaced effort	1
TOTAL	18

SIMR general use zone (Commonwealth waters)

Comment	Count
Change areas to SZs out to the SIMR boundary that align with the SIMP SZs, and increase deep reef representation	3
No changes required	2
Adds no conservation value	2
Reduce the GUZ	2
Increase the GUZ	1
TOTAL	10

7. Special purpose zones overall

SPZs in the SIMP are areas designated for specific management of an activity, area or structure.

There are four SPZs within the SIMP. The Sandon River and Wooli Wooli River SPZs are for the management of oyster aquaculture, while Pipe Clay Lake and Arrawarra Headland are primarily for traditional use by the Gumbaynggirr people, and also for rehabilitation and research. Arrawarra Headland has a Conservation Plan in place which regulates permitted activities.

Comments relating generally to SPZs are below, followed by comments relevant to the individual SPZ:

Comment	Count
No changes required	9
TOTAL	9

7.1 Special purpose zones by location

Sandon River

Comment	Count
Reduce or remove oyster leases	2
Remain as is	1
Support if impacts are monitored	1
TOTAL	4

Wooli Wooli River

Comment	Count
Remain as is	1
Remove oyster leases	1
Support if impacts are monitored	1
TOTAL	3

Pipe Clay Lake

Comment	Count
Remain as is	4
Remove the SPZ	1
TOTAL	5

Arrawarra Headland

Comment	Count
Change to a HPZ to allow recreational fishing	8
Remove the SPZ	4
Allow collecting for research purposes with permission and involvement of Garby Elders	3
Remain as is	2
Change to a SZ	1
Allow indigenous-only fishing and collecting by the Garby people	1
TOTAL	19

Comments on this SPZ indicated that most respondents were unaware that this area was for cultural use, suggesting that more education is required.

8. Comments on activities within the Solitary Islands Marine Park

The zoning plan review also sought comment on the regulation of specific activities permitted in the Marine Parks Amendment (Solitary Islands) Regulation 2002.

Comments on individual activities have been summarised into categories in the tables below.

8.1 All activities

Comment	Count
Need for consistency across SIMP and SIMR for all activities	4
Allow all activities	3
No changes required	2
Reduce activities permitted in HPZs to increase protection	1
Ban all activities in GNS areas	1
Introduce an entry fee for all users	1
Revise activities list to ensure consistency with regulations	1
Simplify regulations	1
TOTAL	13

Comments received included emphasis on requiring the extractor to prove their sustainability.

8.2 Anchoring and moorings

Comment	Count
Ban anchoring within 500 metres of all of the Solitary Islands	6
Maintain as is	3
More moorings are required in the SZ and around islands	2
More moorings are required in the HPZ/out of the SZ for use by spearfishers	2
More heavy vessel moorings required	1
Ban anchoring at Black Rock and The Wash to protect corals	1
Anchoring does not cause damage	1
Ban fishing while moored or anchored within 500 metres of the islands	1
TOTAL	17

In addition, individual comments on some form letters expressed concern with the high levels of anchor damage to corals observed around the islands.

8.3 Aquaculture

Comment	Count
Need for closer assessment and monitoring of adjacent land use for its impact on oyster production	1
Need to monitor aquaculture in high conservation areas	1
Compensation required if zoning impacts on operation	1
Aquaculture should be increased to replace wild harvest fisheries	1
TOTAL	4

8.4 Charter fishing

Comment	Count
Need for full environmental impact assessment/assessment of sustainability, and restrict this activity in high conservation areas	2
Support safe, sustainable and permit-limited charter fishing in SIMP	1
Commercial fishing restrictions at North and South Solitary Islands should apply to charter fishers (see below for details)	1
Ban in SIMP	1
Ban all methods targeting sharks	1
TOTAL	6

Note: On 16 May 2008, following an Administrative Appeals Tribunal decision, the NSW Department of Primary Industries introduced method/gear restrictions on commercial fishing within 500 metres of North Solitary and South Solitary islands to reduce the impact on the GNS.

The closure at North Solitary Island is seasonal (1 June to 31 December) and prohibits handlining and jigging within 500 metres of the GNS aggregation site, and burleying within 1000 metres.

At South Solitary Island, the same restrictions apply all year round. Trolling, spinning and leadlining are still permitted, with restrictions on night fishing. There must be no stainless steel hooks and limited line and hook numbers, and the boat must be under way at all times.

See www.dpi.nsw.gov.au for more information. Some submissions have recommended that these restrictions be applied to both recreational and charter fishing as an alternative to increasing SZs for species protection.

8.5 Commercial fishing

This section has been divided into general comments on commercial fishing, and comments on specific fishing methods.

Commercial fishing – general

Comment	Count
Ban shark fishing and all fishing methods that target sharks	647
Introduce a permit for commercial fishers in SIMP	41
Reduce the level of commercial fishing to improve sustainability	36
All commercial catch records to be provided to SIMP Advisory Committee	34
Ban in SIMP	18
Any zoning changes will impact on commercial fishing, and compensation or buy-back must be provided	6
Ban in estuaries, particularly Moonee Creek (includes one petition with 220 signatures, counted as one submission)	6
Better enforcement, management and regulation required, including improving user guide and improving fisher compliance	8
Is a viable, sustainable and important industry locally	3
Restrict to local fishers only with a catch history	1
Maintain access for all zone-endorsed fishers to fish in SIMP	1
Full environmental impact assessment for SIMP required	1
New commercial fishing restrictions (North and South Solitary Islands) will impact on commercial fishers greatly – allow fishing in these areas	1
Introduce seasonal closures during spawning times	1
TOTAL	804

710 of the above responses were received through various form letters, with the remaining 93 from individual or group submissions.

One petition was received, signed by 220 Moonee local residents or visitors, requesting the banning of commercial fishing and trapping in Moonee Creek. The 220 signatures have been recorded as one petition in accordance with the reporting guidelines (see Appendix 2e).

One submission recommended viewing the documentary 'Sharkwater' to show the impacts of fishing on sharks.

Commercial beach hauling

Comment	Count
Ban beach hauling in SIMP	8
Ban hauling on Sandy Beach – there is conflict with recreational fishers and it is adjacent to a SZ	4
Ban hauling in the HPZ – allow only in the GUZ	2
Limit or reduce number of haulers in SIMP and permit local fishers only	2
Concerned with level of beach hauling – do not increase	2
Maintain access for all endorsed fishers in SIMP	1
Allow weekend and night hauling	1
Monitor carefully for fish stocks and public complaints	1
Impacts on scenic amenity	1
TOTAL	22

Commercial fish trapping

Comment	Count
Ban fish trapping in SIMP	6
Limit fish trap numbers further and set escape panels to 85 millimetres for snapper	2
Phase out fish trapping in SIMP	1
Limit fish trapping to waters greater than 30 metres	1
Ban trapping in Moonee Creek (petition with 220 signatures)	1
TOTAL	10

The petition signed by 220 local residents and visitors seeks a prohibition on commercial trapping in Moonee Creek (see Appendix 2e).

Commercial mud crab trapping

Comment	Count
Ban commercial trapping in Moonee Creek (includes one petition with 220 signatures)	12
Ban the taking of female mud crabs	2
Ban commercial mud crab trapping in estuaries	1
Phase out commercial crab trapping	1
Review trapping after species population surveys	1
TOTAL	17

The submissions seeking a ban on commercial mud crab trapping in Moonee Creek were from local residents and holiday-makers concerned with the apparent high level of commercial trapping in the estuary, and the decline in the number and size of recreationally caught mud crabs. The petition signed by 220 local residents and visitors seeks a prohibition on commercial trapping in Moonee Creek (see Appendix 2e).

Commercial lobster trapping

Comment	Count
Review trapping after species population surveys	1
TOTAL	1

Commercial prawn trawling

Comment	Count
Stop trawling and seine netting in SIMP and SIMR	648
Phase out trawling	82
Phase out trawling within two years (includes one petition with 225 signatures, counted as one submission)	57
Ban trawling	14
Reduce number of trawlers through buy-out	2
Inappropriate to allow trawling adjacent to biodiversity hot spots such as North and South Solitary islands	1
Ban from SIMP except for school prawn trawling at Sandon and Wooli beaches inside 10 fathoms	1
Increase area available for prawn trawling	1
TOTAL	806

The majority of submissions received were from the four conservation form letters (see Appendix 2c for examples) requesting an end to prawn trawling in both the SIMP and SIMR. The petition from the Friends of SIMP (Bellingen Environment Centre) with 225 signatures sought a phase-out of trawling within the SIMP (see Appendix 2e).

The Fishermen's Cooperatives requested increased prawn trawling access to areas currently within a HPZ in the SIMP.

Commercial line fishing – surface trolling

Comment	Count
Allow in all zones including SZs	2
Allow in southern SZ by permit	1
TOTAL	3

Commercial purse seine netting, setline/dropline/driftline fishing

Note that these fishing methods are prohibited within the SIMP under the current zoning plan and regulation.

Comment	Count
Maintain ban on setlining, droplining in SIMP	2
Maintain ban on purse seine netting in SIMP	2
Allow purse seine netting in SIMP	2
Allow driftline fishing in SIMP	2
TOTAL	8

8.6 Domestic/companion animals

Comment	Count
Ban dogs on beaches adjacent to the national park and nature reserve, and specific beaches where there are shorebird and turtle sites	5
Companion animals must be leashed on foreshores, reinforce leashed areas	2
Increase education and better enforce disturbance to shorebirds and turtles	2
Maintain some access for dogs on beaches	1
Support in a controlled manner to minimise disturbance	1
TOTAL	11

The beaches identified in submissions as having shorebird species and turtles requiring minimal disturbance are: Sandon Beach, Diggers Camp Beach, Wooli Beach, Station Creek Beach, Hearn's Lake Beach and Corindi Beach.

8.7 Fish feeding/cleaning

Comment	Count
Maintain facilities at existing areas	4
Provide at all boat ramps – seek recreational fishing trust funding to assist with costs	1
Facility required at Arrawarra Headland carpark	1
TOTAL	6

8.8 Fishing competitions

Comment	Count
Ban fishing competitions	4
Better assess and ensure competitions adhere to strict conditions	4
Make competitions catch and release only	1
Revoke permits for those competitions failing to adhere to conditions as there are impacts on the SZ	1
Streamline competition data collection, and the SIMP should be involved in competition management	1
Differentiate between club competitions and commercial competitions	1
TOTAL	12

8.9 Personal watercraft (PWC)

Comment	Count
Ban PWC in SIMP	7
Ban PWC and high-powered watercraft in Moonee Creek and Wooli Wooli River	3
Monitor impacts carefully for wildlife disturbance and user conflict	2
Ban in SZs and HPZs	1
TOTAL	13

8.10 Recreational boating

Comment	Count
Introduce a 10-knot speed limit within 500 metres of islands for turtle protection	2
Introduce a 4-knot speed limit in seagrass areas	2
Support safe estuarine and ocean boating in pristine waters with great wildlife	2
Improve boat launching facilities	1
Enforce speed limits in Wooli Wooli River	1
Maintain estuaries for boating by dredging	1
TOTAL	9

8.11 Recreational fishing

Comment	Count
Conduct surveys of recreational catch and effort	36
Reduce impacts to increase sustainability	33
Introduce stricter bag and size limits in the SIMP	11
Clearer zone boundaries are required for compliance	8
Better access for recreational fishing is required given the rising population and no sustainability issues	7
Establish catch and release areas or surface trolling only areas, and include estuaries – Moonee Creek in particular	4
Areas for safe access in poor weather and for children and the elderly are essential	3
Use size and bag limits, gear and method restrictions, to regulate fishing, not the SZ	3
Introduce a daily boat catch limit in SIMP	3
Promote more fishing in SIMP, very important tourist activity	2
Full environmental impact assessment is required as there are sustainability issues	2
Ban all bottom fishing and any other methods that target sharks/threaten the GNS	2
Allow in all zones	2
Install FADs in SIMP	2
Ban stainless steel hooks	2
Commercial fishing restrictions at North and South Solitary Islands should apply to recreational fishers	2
Introduce seasonal 'no-take' to protect spawning stocks	1
Restrict fishing around all islands	1
Create recreational fishing only areas	1
Buffer the SZs at GNS sites by banning night fishing and restricting methods, not increasing the SZs	1
Estimation that 5.5% of the local population fishes, so with 33% of the area in SZs, there is still majority access for recreational fishing (working method provided)	1
Ban in SIMP	1
Extractors should prove their sustainability	1
TOTAL	129

The majority of submissions focused on determining the level of recreational catch in the SIMP to assist with estimating sustainability. Many fishers recommended ways to increase species protection and improve sustainability through gear and method restrictions, and setting SIMP size, bag and boat limits. Very few submissions were against recreational fishing in the SIMP.

8.12 Research

Comment	Count
More funding is urgently required for research and monitoring	8
There is a lack of research on zoning effectiveness, fishing impacts and human use impacts	6
Increase research, monitoring, collaborative research, long-term studies with peer review	5
Assessment of the Sandon and Wooli Wooli Rivers for wilderness nomination is required	3
Lack of research information has been provided for the review	2
There is a lack of research to assess commercial fishing impacts	1
TOTAL	25

The majority of comments on research came from universities throughout NSW.

8.13 Scuba diving

Comment	Count
There are impacts on GNSs and corals – restrict or ban at GNS sites and sensitive areas	7
Introduce a diving fee to assist with SIMP management	3
There is no scuba diving in the SZ – there are the same restrictions as for recreational fishers	2
Increase restrictions on areas for scuba diving	2
Ban at Pimpernel Rock (SIMR)	1
Stricter permit conditions are required	1
Increase education of divers on potential habitat damage	1
TOTAL	17

8.14 Spearfishing

Comment	Count
Very limited areas for spearfishing are available in SIMP – need to consider additional shallow sheltered areas for learners	115
Is sustainable, selective and does not impact on the GNS in any way	114
Allow in estuaries for learners and recognise that spearfishing is a selective and sustainable activity which does not threaten the GNS, and is very limited within the SIMP and SIMR due to the amount of shallow reef available	112
Ban spearfishing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in SIMP and SIMR • at Diggers Camp Rock Platform specifically 	12
Some issues with compliance – need for increased education and signage	2
Increase catch restrictions, conduct an environmental impact statement	2
TOTAL	357

Of the submissions received on this activity, 112 were from the spearfishers' form letter supporting the proposal prepared on behalf of spearfishers by the Coffs Harbour Bluewater Freedivers Club (see Appendix 2b).

8.15 Vehicle access on beaches

Comment	Count
Phase out 4WDs from all beaches in SIMP (includes one petition with 225 signatures, counted as one submission)	154
Ban vehicles on all beaches in SIMP	15
Ban vehicles from specific beaches (listed below)	8
Maintain closure of Diggers Camp Beach – gate very successful	5
Maintain vehicle access as is	3
Reopen vehicle access to Minnie Water Back Beach	3
Provide a carparking area behind Minnie Water Back Beach	2
Ban commercial fishers driving on closed beaches	2
Allow vehicle access to all beaches for the elderly and disabled	2
Sandon Beach – find an alternative route, or have a permit system for access	2
Assess and restrict access in high conservation areas	2
Maintain access for boat launching at existing sites	1
No further restrictions without quantifying the effect	1
Only permit in areas without beach users, car parks or alternative access points	1
Coordinate approach to vehicle access with Council	1
Issue with boat launching area at Diggers Camp – cars left on the beach	1
Better access points required to stop drivers making their own way	1
TOTAL	204

Beaches requested for no vehicular access in submissions included: Woolgoolga Back Beach, Hearnese Lake Beach, Sandy Beach, Corindi/Pipeclay Beach, Arrawarra Beach, Station Creek Beach, Diggers Camp and Pebbly Beach.

The petition from the Friends of SIMP (Bellingen Environment Centre) with 225 signatures called for a phase-out of vehicles from all beaches within the SIMP (see Appendix 2e).

8.16 Other activities

Activities listed below received only a few comments:

- **kayaking/canoeing** – this is increasing on the Woolli Woolli River, which should be encouraged (1 submission).
- **conservation** – rehabilitation of riverbanks is required (1 submission).
- **camping** – ban camping on the headland at Diggers Camp (2 submissions).
- **collecting (scientific, educational, bait, aquarium and seaweed)** – strictly limit and control this; introduce fees or restrict it further (3 submissions).

8.17 Activities in SIMR (Commonwealth waters)

A number of comments were received on activities within the adjacent Commonwealth marine reserve and these are summarised below. Note that many submissions made more than one comment on activities; therefore the total number of comments is greater than the number of submissions.

Comment	Count
Commercial fishing	
Stop trawling and seine netting in SIMP & SIMR	652
Stop fishing that targets sharks	651
Phase out or ban trawling in SIMR	148
Licence commercial fishers	34
Ban fish trapping in SIMR	5
Ban all commercial fishing in SIMR	4
No changes – any changes will impact on commercial fishers and compensation will be required	4
Ban droplines and setlines – they target sharks and are inappropriate when adjacent to a SZ	2
Primary fished species are declining – fishing is unsustainable	2
Buy out trawlers to reduce numbers	1
Ban longlining in SIMR	1
Allow purse seine netting in SIMR	1
There is no evidence that prawn trawling is damaging	1
Need for better assessment of commercial fishing in SIMR and restrict commercial fishing in high conservation areas	1
Juvenile prawn closure north of SIMR is an example of trawlers committed to sustainability	1
Need for increased access for commercial fishing to maintain economic viability	1
Need for better reporting of catch data	1
Limit fish trap numbers	1
Lobster trapping – review after species population surveys	1
Provide commercial catch data to SIMP Advisory Committee	1
View documentary ‘Sharkwater’ to see impacts of commercial fishing on sharks	1
Recreational fishing	
Regular surveys of recreational fishing catch are needed	33
Ban fishing competitions	2
Ban bottom fishing as it targets sharks	2
There are compliance issues with a few fishers in the SZ	2
Reduce recreational fishing bag limits	1
Introduce catch and release only fishing	1
Scuba diving	
Ban scuba diving	3
Have strict permit conditions for scuba diving at Pimpernel Rock due to the difficult nature of the dive and weather conditions	1
Introduce a scuba diving fee	1
Other activities and comments	

Ensure consistency across SIMP and SIMR for activities	3
Allow all activities	2
East Marine Region planning is of concern as the outcome is unknown	1
There is a lack of research to justify closures	1
Ban spearfishing	1
Reduce activities permitted in the HPZ to increase protection	1
Research – more funding is required for mapping	1
Prepare a species inventory	1
TOTAL	1,571

9. General comments from submissions

Many submissions commented on issues not covered by zoning arrangements or other aspects of the regulations. These comments have been categorised and are summarised below.

9.1 Review process

Comment	Count
Need for substantial increase in protection now because next review is 10 years away	26
Good opportunity to make amendments and to change areas that were not changed five years ago	3
More publicity and meetings required – many did not know of the review	3
Reviews should be at five-yearly intervals	2
Lack of information provided for the review on scientific evaluation of zoning, benefits, assessment procedures	1
Need for weighting of the zoning assessment criteria – criteria 1–10 should have a higher weighting than 11–14	1
Any changes need full justification	1
TOTAL	37

9.2 Marine protected areas

Comment	Count
Current level of marine protection in NSW inadequate and fails to meet international standards	28
Supportive of SIMP, SIMR and marine protected areas	12
Substantially increased protection required now for SIMP and will still provide for adequate use and ensure sustainability for the future of tourism and fishing	10
SIMP demonstrates good community support and a good balance of conservation and use – maintain as is	5
Current SIMP zoning does not manage for sustainability	5
Do not support marine protected areas	4
Some boundary refinement is required in certain areas	3
Support wilderness assessment and management for Woolli Woolli and Sandon rivers and ensure zoning reflects the wild characteristics	3
Increase collaboration and involvement with recreational and spearfishing bodies	3
Review zoning methods – do not use percentages, or exclude any user groups, need for risk assessments	3
Marine protected areas appear to cater for extraction – need for conservation focus now	3
A network of marine protected areas is needed for species protection, for when species shift occurs due to climate change	2
SIMP is an iconic wilderness area deserving more protection	2
Need to extend SIMP boundaries	2
Employ Aboriginal staff, more involvement of local Aboriginal communities required	2
There is a need to take a stand against the vocal minority	2

Should be managed by NSW DPI	1
MPA needs to meet with industry if any commercial restrictions are introduced	1
There is a need for full assessment of economic impacts of marine protected areas with compensation	1
Support the creation of artificial reefs in marine protected areas as protection for species	1
There is a need for strategies to address non-zoning related issues, presented to Ministers	1
TOTAL	94

9.3 Education

Comment	Count
More education of public and visitors is required	2
Increase the number of education staff	1
Increase the level of interaction with community groups and other organisations	1
Educational days are excellent and very well-received	1
More information on recreational fishing is required	1
If the zoning changes, all users will need to be re-educated	1
TOTAL	7

9.4 Sustainability

Comment	Count
Preserve SIMP for current and future generations	81
Need to protect against increasing population, pollution and climate change and other human-induced pressures	23
Rapid decline in species noted over past 20 or so years	12
Current SIMP zoning does not manage for sustainability	5
The increased SZ will enable ongoing ecologically sustainable use of fish resources	3
Use the precautionary principle and protect more now to err on the side of caution	2
With unregulated recreational fishing and poor commercial catch data, the sustainability of extractive activities is unknown	2
There are many examples overseas where the collapse of marine ecosystems has led to the collapse of tourism and industry	1
There is an unwanted species increase in SZs while there is species change in non-SZ areas	1
TOTAL	130

9.5 Enforcement and policing

Comment	Count
More enforcement is required	14
More funding is required	3
Tougher laws for environmental protection are required	1
Easier reporting of compliance issues is required	1
More policing at Pimpernel Rock is needed – there is constant non-compliance here	1
There is the need for an Aboriginal ranger, or train local Elders in basic compliance	1
Use webcams for surveillance at islands	1
TOTAL	22

9.6 Economic impacts

Comment	Count
SIMP extremely important economically due to its natural values attracting international and local visitors – need to increase protection to ensure future economic benefits	20
SZs have negatively impacted on business, tourism and commercial fishing viability	4
SZs have been shown to increase tourism and economic benefit	2
There is the need for more social and economic research and independent data	2
Any further restrictions on commercial fishing will require compensation	1
Work more closely with local regional tourism associations and Tourism NSW	1
The majority of tourism is passive and economically outweighs the benefits from extractive activities	1
Pimpernel Rock closure resulted in a loss of 50% of commercial fishing income with no compensation	1
TOTAL	32

Demonstrating the tourism value of the SIMP, 68 submissions were received from overseas, all emphasising the unique values of the SIMP and the wonderful experiences had while visiting (mostly scuba divers). Many submissions stated the need to increase protection to ensure tourism continues and is not impacted on by habitat deterioration and species decline.

9.7 Indigenous issues

Comment	Count
There is a need for recognition of all Aboriginal groups in SIMP publications; use traditional names	2
There is a need for increased protection around estuaries for cultural heritage sites – 200 metres is required	1
TOTAL	3

9.8 Permits

Comment	Count
There is the need to simplify permit system and permits should last five years to reduce the administrative burden	2
The current system discriminates against charter fishing businesses	1
TOTAL	3

9.9 Pollution/adjacent land use

Comment	Count
Sewage, stormwater, run-off and other land-based pollutants are the biggest threats to SIMP – need to address these	5
SIMP to support the acquisition of key habitats/areas within adjacent catchments	3
Use Great Barrier Reef MPA approach to adjacent land use	3
Gross pollutant traps are required in Coffs Creek	1
More education is required for the impacts of rubbish	1
TOTAL	13

9.10 Signage and interpretation

Comment	Count
Better and more signage is required at key points. Make use of existing facilities with other agencies. Signage is needed particularly for visitors	6
Signage will all need changing if zoning changes	1
TOTAL	7

9.11 Other

Comment	Count
There is a concern with pest species	1
There is a need to dredge estuaries for fish to enter	1
NPWS cannot be trusted to look after anything	1
Maintain the track to Minnie Water Back Beach for emergency purposes	1
TOTAL	4

10. Species lists for SIMP and SIMR

The zoning plan review also sought comment on the taking of specific species detailed in the Marine Parks Amendment (Solitary Islands) Regulation 2002.

10.1 Sharks and rays

Comment	Count
Increase protection for all shark species including the GNS	284
Fully protect all sharks and rays within the SIMP	39
Increase protection at all GNS sites	8
There is a noticeable decline in shark species and numbers at the islands	2
More GNSs are seen outside dived areas at lesser-known locations	1
Fully protect all sharks and rays by adding them to Table 2 – Species that cannot be taken from anywhere in SIMP	1
There is a need for a risk matrix for the GNS by activity (example provided)	1
The credibility of GNS research is questioned	1
TOTAL	337

Some general comments included in submissions were:

- there has been a noticeable decline in shark species in the past five years
- sharks are essential for ecosystem function and will impact on fisheries if the decline continues.

The petition from the Friends of SIMP (Bellingen Environment Centre) with 225 signatures called for an increase in protection for all shark species including the GNS. All conservation groups seek an increase in protection for all shark species including the GNS (see Appendix 2e).

10.2 All species

Comment	Count
Increased protection for all species is required	17
All species should be regulated by DPI Fisheries	3
Current restrictions are adequate – no changes are required	2
Include cunjevoi in species that may be taken from a HPZ	1
Review bag and size limits regularly	1
Reduce bag limit for pipis to six per day as the decline since before WWII is apparent	1
Increase protection for mangroves in Woolli Woolli River	1
There is a need to protect Pacific cuttlefish	1
A comprehensive species inventory is required for SIMP and SIMR	1
TOTAL	28

Comments received included:

- many scuba divers noted a decline in habitats and species within SIMP over the past 20 years.

10.3 Species that may be taken from habitat protection zones

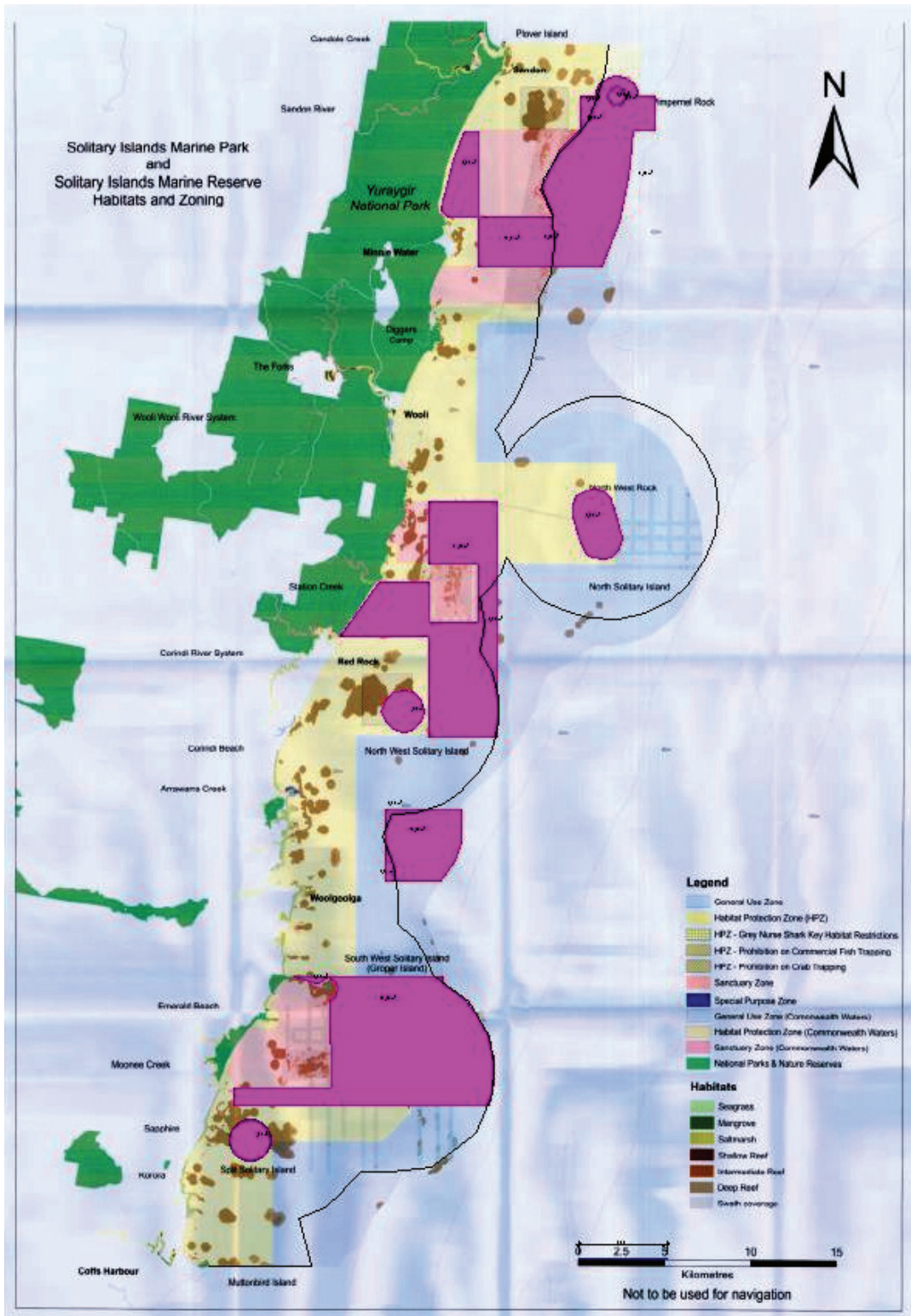
Comment	Count
Restrict the taking of yabbies from sandflats	1
Ban shark fishing	1
Prepare a comprehensive species inventory	1
TOTAL	3

10.4 Threatened species

Comment	Count
More independent research is required for all threatened species	1
The current zoning adequately protects all species	1
All threatened species require better SZ protection	1
The better education of fishers is required to help protection	1
Current bag and size limits are appropriate for management	1
TOTAL	5

Appendices

Appendix 2a – Conservation proposal



Appendix 2b – Spearfishers’ proposal

Extract from the spearfishers’ submissions and proposal:

Submission on Review of Solitary Islands Marine Park 2008

1. Summary

This submission responds to the current 5 year review process initiated by the Marine Parks Authority for the Solitary Islands Marine Park. The information contained in this submission summarises the major issues of concern for spearfishers within the SIMP under the current zoning arrangements, and identifies options for improvements to the current situation.

We note that the Australian Underwater Federation (AUF) Spearfishing Branch, which has over 700 financial members, has confirmed it’s full support for this submission. In addition, being on behalf of Coffs Harbour Bluewater Freedivers (CHBF), this submission represents a further 42 club members.

Over the past 5 years Coffs Harbour Bluewater Freedivers (CHBF) have endeavored to ensure all member activities are conducted entirely in accordance with the Marine Park zoning plan. The club now boasts a significant number of junior members, who are also totally conversant with the rules and regulation of the Park and it’s zoning system.

As part of our (almost daily) usage of the Marine Park we have identified a number of key issue areas that we would like to be addressed in this review. These include issues such as:

- Massive over-representation of inshore and shallow reefs in Sanctuary Zones that severely impact on spearfishers usable area within the SIMP
- The under representation of deep offshore reefs and sandy bottom habitats in both the State and Commonwealth waters associated with the Marine Park and Marine Reserve
- Return of access to pelagic fishing grounds and shallow inshore reef at South West Solitary (Groper) Island (an area of shallow reef already over represented in the Marine Park)
- Access safety considerations for sanctuary zones
- Simplified sanctuary zoning boundaries and increased zone marking
- Additional access to estuaries to help facilitate junior development
- The acknowledgement that spearfishers have zero impact on GNS and that where the issue of hooking of sharks arise, that spearfishers not be included with line fishermen as a usergroup.

Figure 1
 Proposed new zoning arrangement for South West Solitary Island
 and the major southern sanctuary

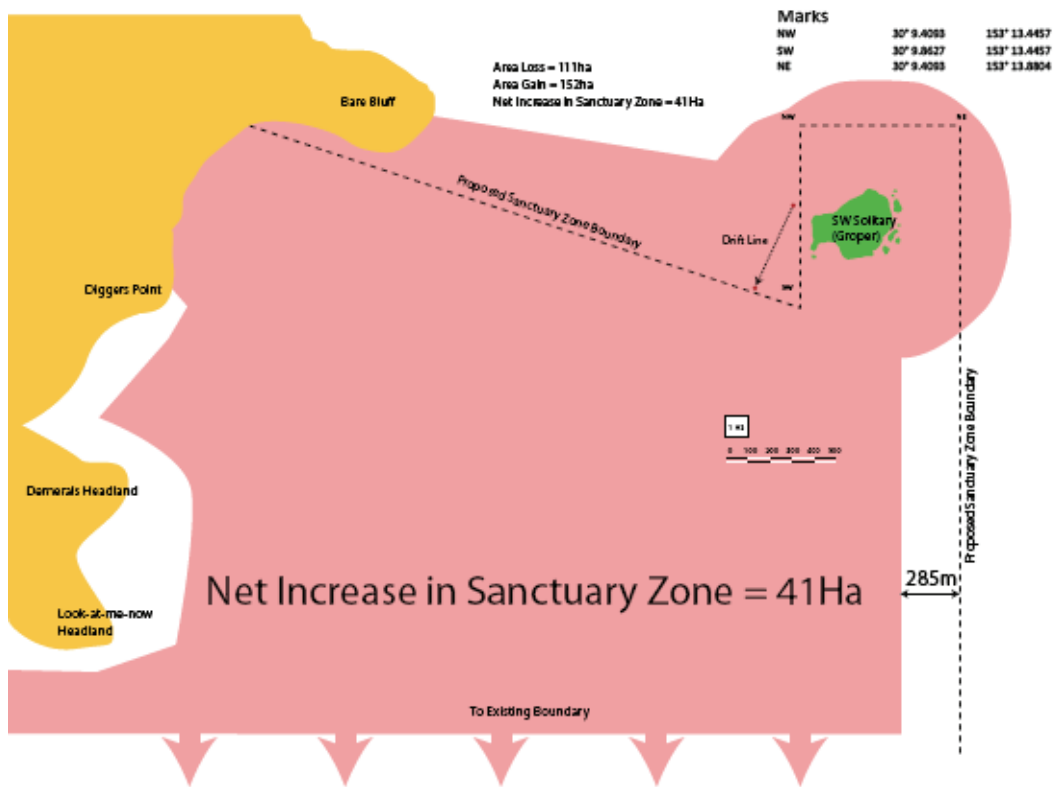
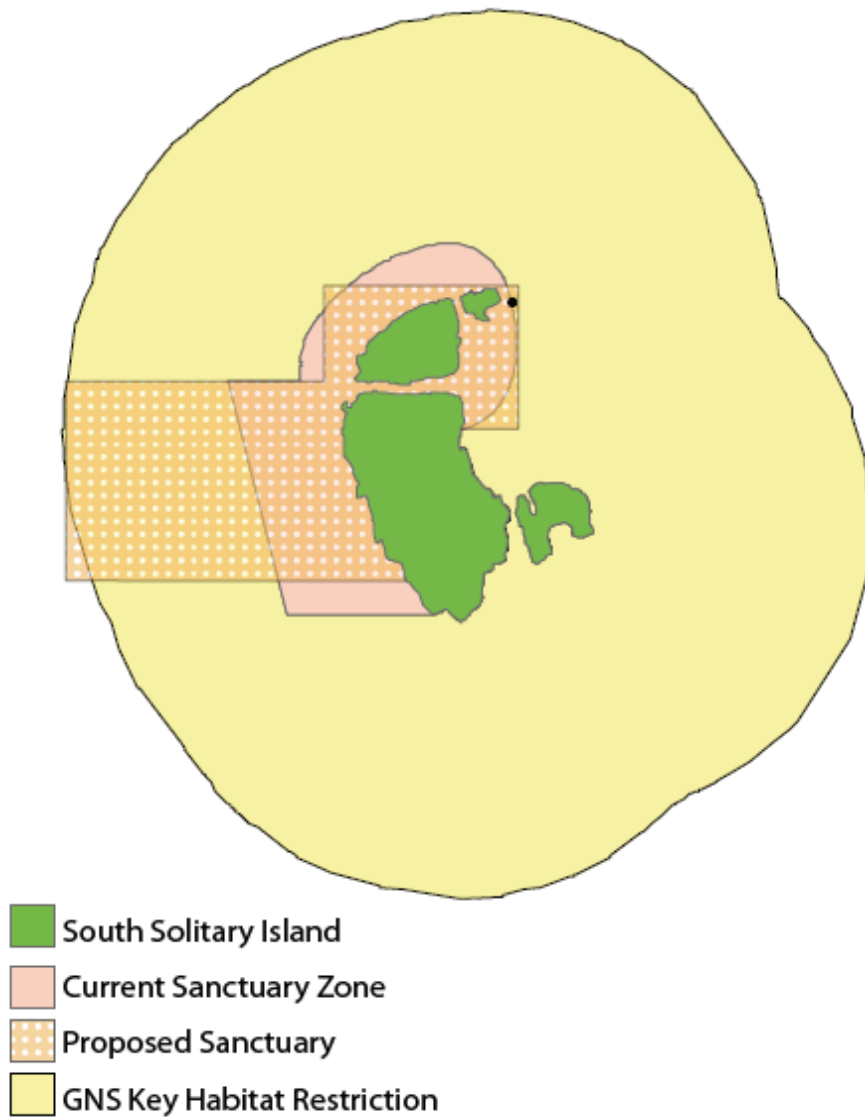


Figure 2
Proposed new Sanctuary Zone for South Solitary Island



Proposal considers the importance of including 'Manta Arch' within the confines of the Sanctuary Zone for South Solitary Island. The southern boundary on the sanctuary is move north to allow access to safe mooring on the southern end of the Island.

Appendix 2c – Form letters from conservation groups

Nature Conservation Council form letter

Solitary Island Marine Park zoning plan review and Marine Reserve management plan review

Currently only 12% of the Solitary Island Marine Park is zoned as a sanctuary zone. According to scientists, up to 50% of all marine waters should have this top level of protection in order for ecosystems to regenerate and be self sustaining. Increasing the sanctuary zone to 50% together with increased protection within the park is a small step to achieving this.

The 50% of waters that should be protected in sanctuary zones must include a mix of habitat types such as seagrass, rocky reefs and sand to allow maximum protection of a broad range of species.

Increase the sanctuary zone to 50%

It is important to note that the percentages above refer to the entire ocean, not only to areas included in Marine Parks. With this in mind, a call for 50% of the Marine Parks as sanctuary zones is only a first step towards a sustainable network of protected areas.

The expansion of sanctuary zones to 50% must be a priority to protect marine life, conserve marine biodiversity and to maintain valuable ecosystems.

Of particular and immediate concern is the threat to the grey nurse shark posed by inadequate sanctuary zones around critical habitat sites. To provide proper protection for this endangered species, all known grey nurse congregation sites must be protected by at least a 1500 metre radius sanctuary zone.

Increase protection within the park

- All sharks and rays should be fully protected within the park.
- All seagrass beds within the park should be included in sanctuary zones and a speed limit of 4 knots introduced to those areas.
- A phasing out of all trawling within the park.
- All commercial fishing within the park should be licensed.
- Commercial fishing records, showing all catches within the park, should be made available to the Solitary Islands Marine Park Committee.
- Periodic surveys to be carried out on the recreational catch within the park with a view to determining the effect of recreational fishing.

NSW Marine Parks Authority vision:

‘Locations and boundaries for marine parks and the zoning arrangements within them will have been derived from thorough scientific assessments of all available information and data, to provide the best combination of areas for the conservation of biodiversity.’

This vision is yet to be fulfilled. However, an increase of Sanctuary areas to 50% of the Solitary Island Marine Parks would go a long way to achieving it.

Observations to support increasing sanctuary zones in the Solitary Islands Marine Park

- Small sanctuary areas have been associated with an increase in numbers of certain fish species, such as red morwong. Larger sanctuary areas have seen a much stronger increase in numbers of the same fish. This underlines the need for an increase in size of existing sanctuary zones.

- Larger sanctuary zones are considered to have a higher chance of containing sites suitable for a wider range of species and are therefore to be strongly encouraged.
- Monitoring of snapper populations in sanctuary zones has shown that numbers within these protected zones are negatively affected by fishing in adjacent areas. This also supports a call for increasing the sizes of current sanctuary zones.
- Monitoring has shown that swift and significant growth of mud crabs occurs within sanctuary zones. In addition, a significant spill over of these crabs to unprotected areas has been recorded. This shows a direct benefit of sanctuary areas to this fishery and supports the idea that more sanctuary areas are required.
- Habitat and species composition mapping has shown that reefs in close proximity to one another do not necessarily have the same types or range of associated organisms. This reinforces the urgent need to increase the number and area of sanctuary zones to ensure that all habitats are represented and replicated within the Park.

I call on you to significantly increase the percentage of the Marine Park that is protected in sanctuary zones and that all habitat types have protection under the zoning plan.

Thank you for your consideration

Yours sincerely

Australian Marine Conservation Society Form Letter

I, xxxxx of

wish to submit the following:

Submission to: Solitary Islands Marine Park

PO Box J297

Coffs Harbour Jetty NSW 2450

Solitary.islands@mpa.nsw.gov.au

cc: The Hon. Morris IEMMA, BEc, LLB MP

ThePremier@www.nsw.gov.au

Dear Manager,

Solitary Islands Marine Park Review

The Solitary Islands Marine Park (SIMP) and Solitary Islands Marine Reserve (SIMR) contain some of New South Wales' most outstanding marine wildlife. I request that you increase protection for these marine parks to bring NSW closer to meeting world targets of 20–30% full protection of our oceans by 2012. Increasing protection in these areas will help give our oceans some resilience against the effects of climate change and overfishing.

I strongly recommend that you take the following steps for both the Solitary Islands Marine Park and the adjacent Solitary Islands Marine Reserve:

1. Increase sanctuary zone protection. Currently, only 12% of the Solitary Islands Marine Park and only 1% of the Solitary Islands Marine Reserve are fully protected in 'no-fishing' sanctuary areas. Sanctuaries have been shown to increase the numbers, species and size of marine wildlife. Please increase the sanctuary zone protection to at least a 33% for both the SIMP and the SIMR. These levels of protection will be much closer to the protection afforded to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Ningaloo Marine Park.

2. Stop trawling and seine netting in these areas. Currently, only 12% of the SIMP and only 1% of the SIMR are fully protected in sanctuary areas. Sanctuaries have been shown to increase the numbers, species and size of marine wildlife. Please increase the sanctuary zone protection to at least a 33% for both the SIMP and the SIMR. These levels of protection

will be much closer to the protection afforded to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Ningaloo Marine Park.

3. Stop shark fishing in the Solitary Islands. The Commonwealth Government committed in 2001 to ending trawling and seine netting in the SIMR. Despite this commitment, the Marine Parks Authority has not upheld its commitment and therefore the reserves suffer continued fishing pressure.

Yours sincerely

As per above

National Parks Association form letter

Submission: Solitary Islands Marine Park Review

I am writing to urge you to support an increase in fully protected sanctuary zones within the Solitary Islands Marine Park (SIMP) and the Solitary Islands Marine Reserve (SIMR). An increase in sanctuary protection for these parks will bring New South Wales closer to world targets of 20–30% full protection of the oceans by 2012 and put in place better long-term management for our marine waters. At present, a mere 6.7% of NSW marine waters are fully protected from fishing activities.

I strongly support the following actions for both the Solitary Islands Marine Park and the Solitary Islands Marine Reserve during this review process:

1. Increased sanctuary zone protection.

Currently, only 12% of the SIMP and only 1% of the SIMR are fully protected as sanctuary. Sanctuaries have been shown to increase the numbers, species and size of marine life in these fully protected areas. I support at least a 33% sanctuary zone percentage for both the SIMP and the SIMR. These levels of protection would be much closer to the level of protection of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Ningaloo Marine Park.

2. No more trawling and seine netting in these waters.

Even though the Commonwealth Government committed in 2001 to ending trawling and seine netting in the SIMR, the Marine Parks Authority has not upheld its commitment and therefore the reserve continues to be under pressure from fishing. The SIMP faces similar pressure from fishing as the SIMR.

3. More protection for our shark species.

Shark fishing has increased significantly in recent years in the SIMP, placing increased pressures on these important apex predators. Meanwhile, inadequate protection exists for the critically endangered grey nurse shark from the threats of incidental catch in other shark fisheries and from recreational fishing.

Therefore, fishing within the SIMP and SIMR is negatively impacting the recovery of the grey nurse shark and targeted shark fishing should be removed from the parks to alleviate pressure on the grey nurse and other shark species.

This is the first review for both the Solitary Islands Marine Park and the Solitary Islands Marine Reserve and another review will not occur before 2018. It is therefore critical that the NSW Government act now to increase protection of these marine waters and safeguard them for the future.

Yours sincerely

Personal Comment from Sender:

Bellingen Environment Centre form letter

I submit the following to the review of the SIMP Management Plan:

That a minimum of 33% will be protected within a sanctuary zone

That trawling will be phased out within 2 years of the declaration of a new plan.

That there will be increased protection of all shark species.

That 4 wheel drive vehicles will be banned from all beaches in the Marine Park

Yours faithfully

NOTE: many letters contained variations on the above and personal comments.

Appendix 2d – Form letter from the Coffs Harbour Bluewater Spearfishers Club

Solitary Islands Marine Park

Coffs Harbour Jetty

NSW 2450

Subject: SIMP Review Submission

I refer to the current review of the Solitary Islands Marine Park zoning plan.

My primary interest in the SIMP is spearfishing.

I fully support all details contained within the Coffs Harbour Bluewater Freedivers submission.

Please accept this as my formal submission to the review process.

Yours faithfully

Name

Address

Date

Signature

Appendix 2e – Petitions

Petition 1: Moonee Creek residents and visitors

'We the undersigned hereby support the closure of Moonee Creek to commercial fishing and trapping'

Includes one petition with 220 signatures attached

Petition 2: Friends of the Solitary Islands Marine Park and Bellinghen Environment Centre

'We the undersigned petition to SIMPA to implement the following in the review of the SIMP management plan:

- A minimum of 33% of the SIMP to be protected within a sanctuary zone
- The phasing out of trawling within 2 years of the declaration of a new plan.
- Increased protection of all shark species including the critically endangered grey nurse shark.
- Phase out 4WDs from all beaches in the SI Marine Park

Includes one petition with 225 signatures attached