



New zoning plan for Solitary Islands Marine Park starts March 1st

Coffs coast locals and visitors are reminded that changes to the zoning plan for the Solitary Islands Marine Park come into effect on Tuesday 1st of March, 2011.

Solitary Islands Marine Park Manager, Nicola Johnstone, said the new zoning plan protects the important natural and cultural values of the marine park while providing for a range of sustainable uses including beach activities, swimming, surfing, commercial and recreational fishing, scuba diving, whale and dolphin watching, research and other activities.

“Signage at key points such as boat ramps and zone boundaries has been updated and a new detailed zoning plan user guide is also available,” Ms Johnstone said.

“Marine Park officers will be out and about helping people understand the new arrangements’, she said.

“Changes include increased protection of deep reef communities in sanctuary zones, reduced complexity of rounded zone boundaries particularly around the islands, and improved access to key fishing spots near Bare Bluff, Groper Island and Minnie Water Back Beach.

“The new zoning plan follows a detailed review and two consultation periods between 2008 and 2010 that included over 80 meetings and information days; more than 7500 submissions were received providing feedback and comment from marine park users.

Extensive research, some of which has been recently published in the scientific literature, involving seabed habitat mapping, biodiversity assessments, targeted studies on key fish species, assessments of pests and disease, and cultural, social and economic studies underpin the zoning changes.

“Maps of the [new zoning plan](#) are on display at the local libraries in Toormina, Coffs Harbour, Woolgoolga, Grafton and Yamba as well as at Coffs Harbour City Council, Clarence Valley Council Chambers and the Grafton National Parks & Wildlife Office.

“Zoning plan information will also be available at a range of local outlets, the marine parks web site, local tourist information centres and the Solitary Islands Marine Park Office.”

Anglers and spearfishers should obtain a copy of the zoning plan user guide, complete with GPS marks, prior to their next fishing outing to ensure they don’t fish in sanctuary zones.

Solitary Islands Marine Park was the first marine park established in NSW; it stretches over 75 km from Muttonbird Island in the south to the Sandon River and Plover Island in the north. The marine park incorporates estuaries to their tidal limit, foreshores to the mean high water mark and extends offshore to the 3 nautical mile state waters boundary.

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Covering around 72 000 hectares the park includes over 550 species of reef fish, 90 species of hard coral and 600 species of molluscs.

The Solitary Islands Marine Park is one of six multiple use marine parks in NSW which form part of a worldwide effort to protect marine biodiversity, maintain ecological processes and provide for a range of sustainable uses of the marine environment.

Further details can also be found at www.mpa.nsw.gov.au or by visiting the Solitary Islands Marine Park Office at 32 Marina Drive Coffs Harbour Jetty or call (02) 6652 0900.

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