



Reviewing marine park zoning plans

Frequently asked questions

Why are the zoning plans for Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay marine parks being reviewed?

Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay marine parks were the first marine parks declared in NSW. The current zoning plans for the parks came into effect in 2002. The NSW Government has committed to an initial review of the zoning plans after five years of operation and introduced amendments to the *Marine Parks Act 1997* which establish a clear process for reviewing zoning plans.

The review of the zoning plans will assess how well they are meeting the objects of the Marine Parks Act. In summary, the Act aims to conserve marine biological diversity and habitats and maintain ecological processes, while also providing for ecologically sustainable use and opportunities for the public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of marine parks.

Zoning plans are the main management tool for marine parks. However, there is a range of other park management activities, such as education programs, which are not part of zoning plans but which also help in achieving the objects of the Act. These operational programs are reviewed by the Marine Parks Authority on an ongoing basis but are not covered by the present review.

How will the two zoning plans be assessed?

Assessment criteria have been defined to help determine how well the current zoning plans are meeting the objects of the Marine Parks Act. These criteria are linked with the objects of the Act. More detailed guides to the review of both parks' zoning plans are available at www.mpa.nsw.gov.au.

A review report will be prepared based on an assessment of the current zoning plans against the criteria as well as feedback received from the community during a two-month consultation period (closing date for submissions is 2 June 2008).

Will the area of Sanctuary Zones in the marine parks increase?

There are no predetermined outcomes for the zoning plan reviews.

The reviews will assess the current zoning plans against the objects of the Marine Parks Act and identify community issues with the plans.

What is the process for undertaking the reviews?

The reviews will follow a staged process:

Stage 1: Identifying key issues with the current zoning plans

The Marine Parks Authority will be working with the Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay Marine Park Advisory Committees, key stakeholders and the community to build on the data held by government agencies. The review process will also involve a formal two-month consultation period, as well as stakeholder workshops and other forums where people can have their say.

Stage 2: Preparing the review reports

The Marine Parks Authority will prepare review reports for each park which will then be provided to both advisory committees for comment. Following this, the reports will be forwarded to the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment and the Minister for Primary Industries for their consideration, along with the advisory committees' comments and a summary of comments from the public consultation.

Stage 3: Finalising the review

The Ministers may decide either that:

- the current zoning plan will continue, or
- the current zoning plan will be changed.

If the Ministers decide that a zoning plan should be changed, the Marine Parks Authority will prepare a draft zoning plan. Further extensive public consultation over a period of three months will follow.

Will the review consider changing the external boundaries of the marine parks?

The reviews will only consider the zoning plans for the two parks and will not include any review of the external boundaries of the parks.

This means that any calls to increase or decrease the size of the marine parks are beyond the scope of the reviews, which are concerned only with the current zoning arrangements within the parks.

If the reviews identify a need to revisit the current zoning arrangements, will there be further community consultation?

Yes, further community consultation will occur if a decision is made to change the current zoning plans on the basis of the reviews. Consultation would include public exhibition of new draft zoning plans for a minimum of three months.

Does the Marine Parks Authority have new zoning plans in mind?

No, there are no predetermined outcomes for the zoning plan review.

It is critical that meetings with key interest groups, communities and individuals are undertaken first to identify any issues with the current zoning plans.

The community and the advisory committees have first-hand experience with the operation of the existing zoning plans over the past five years and this needs to be fed back into ongoing management. Additionally, research and monitoring programs have provided new information on the marine parks, their biodiversity and use. The reviews provide an opportunity for these matters to be formally considered in the assessment of the current zoning plans.

Will we still be able to fish in the marine parks?

Yes, the marine parks are zoned to provide for multiple uses. The use of four different types of zones allows for the conservation of biological diversity and ecological processes in combination with ongoing sustainable use and opportunities for appreciation and enjoyment of the marine parks.

Recreational fishing is an important activity enjoyed by locals and visitors in the marine parks and will be considered as such during the reviews. Commercial fishing provides an important source of fresh seafood to both local and more distant markets.

Will the reviews use the best available information?

Yes, the review process has been designed to incorporate any relevant new knowledge and information on the two marine parks and marine protected areas more generally.

This will mainly be done by gathering and publishing information on the values of the marine parks, park management, research and monitoring and by consulting the community and stakeholder groups.

Input from the community and user groups at workshops and information days and in submissions are important avenues for gathering the latest views on the zoning plans.

Is the management of land-based impacts on the marine parks, such as pollution and sedimentation, being reviewed?

No, the current review is focused specifically on the existing zoning plans.

Integrated coastal zone management is important in maintaining the health of all marine parks, particularly their coastal lakes and estuaries. The Marine Parks Authority will continue to work closely with a range of agencies, local councils and community groups to secure suitable management of catchments, lands and towns adjacent to the two marine parks.

Will social and economic benefits and impacts of the marine parks be considered in the review?

Yes. A summary of the social, economic and cultural uses of the marine parks is included in the information package available at www.mpa.nsw.gov.au or by calling Environment Line on 1300 361 967. The Marine Parks Authority will be seeking community input during the public consultation period on the social and economic effects of the marine park zoning plans.

Contact details

For more information, contact Environment Line on 1300 361 967 or go to www.mpa.nsw.gov.au

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