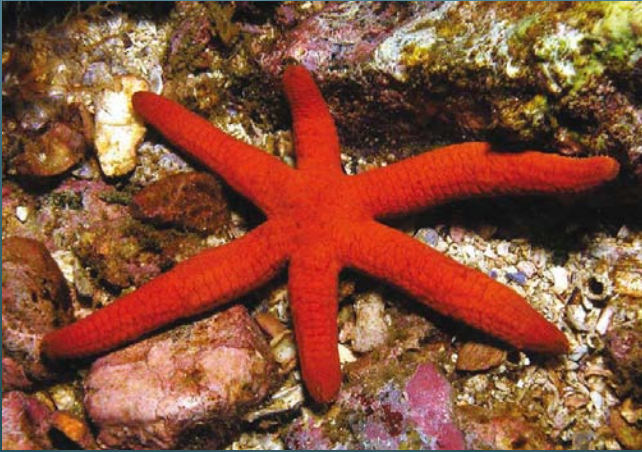


# Review of Solitary Islands Marine Park zoning plan



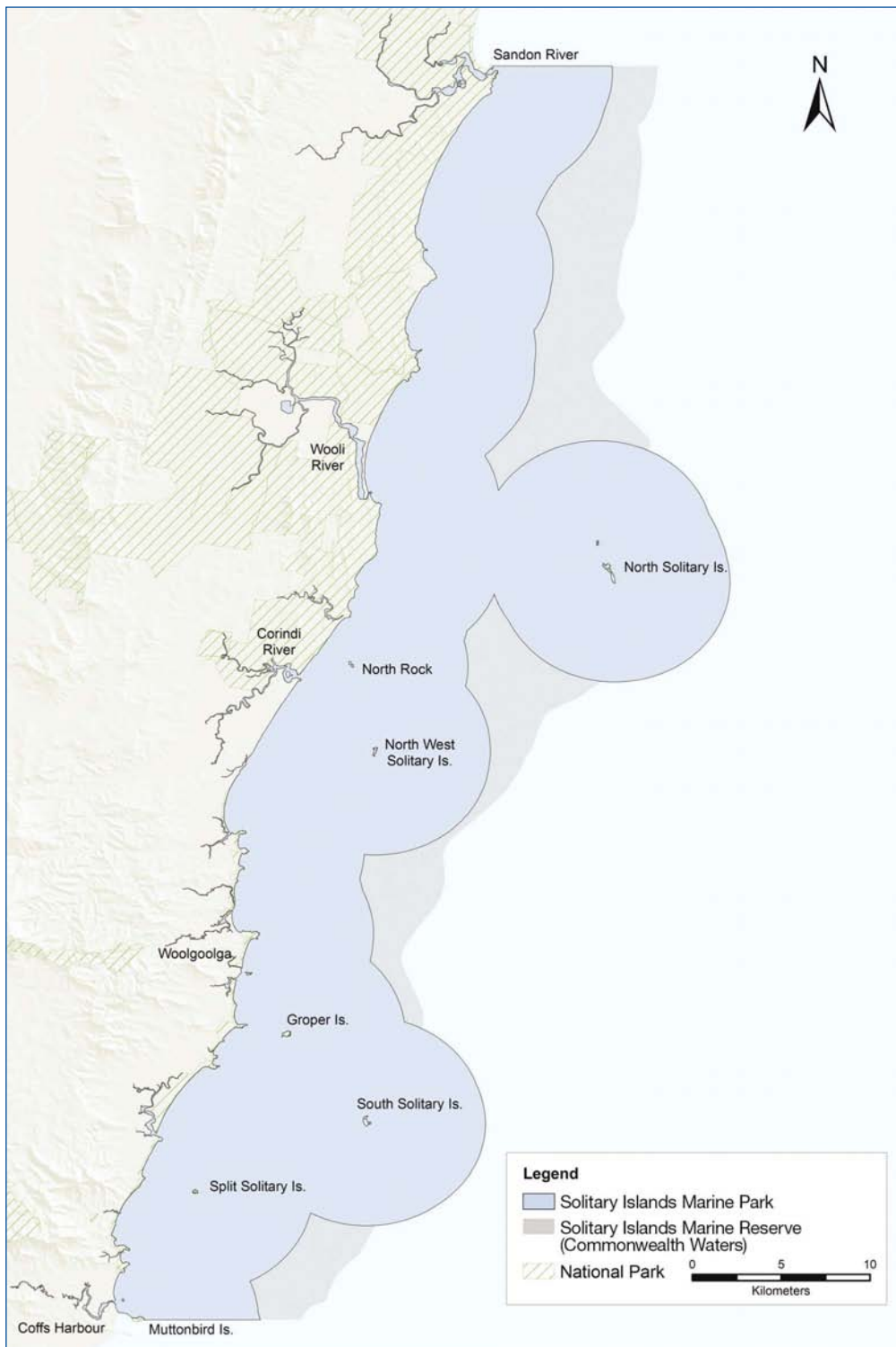
# Introduction

NSW marine parks conserve marine biodiversity, maintain valuable ecosystems and support sustainable uses of the marine environment. The six marine parks in NSW cover 345,000 hectares or around 34% of NSW coastal waters.

The marine parks are managed through zoning plans, which protect sensitive areas and designate where sustainable activities can occur.

Solitary Islands Marine Park extends north, from Coffs Harbour to the Sandon River along about 75 kilometres of the coastline. It includes most of the Solitary Islands, and was one of the first marine parks to be declared in NSW.

Extent of Solitary Islands Marine Park and Solitary Islands Marine Reserve



Solitary Islands Marine Reserve (Commonwealth Waters) shares the same northern and southern boundary as the state marine park, and extends seaward from the three nautical mile limit of state jurisdiction to the 50-metre depth contour. The NSW Marine Parks Authority manages the Reserve on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

The current zoning plan for the marine park came into effect in August 2002, and the Government committed to a review of the plan after five years of operation.

## General principles of marine parks and zoning plans

Marine protected areas are recognised internationally as a key tool for conserving marine biodiversity. Australia is a signatory to the International Convention on Biodiversity (see <http://www.cbd.int/>), and as part of its responsibilities under the convention has developed the *National strategy for the conservation of Australia's biological diversity* (see [www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/strategy/index.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/strategy/index.html)).

As part of this strategy, all Australian governments have committed to establishing a national representative system of marine protected areas (NRSMPA) (see [www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mpa/publications/nrsmpa-guidelines.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mpa/publications/nrsmpa-guidelines.html)). This commitment is reflected in actions being taken under the NSW State Plan Priority E4 to achieve better biodiversity outcomes (see [www.nsw.gov.au/stateplan/](http://www.nsw.gov.au/stateplan/)).

NSW marine parks aim to be **comprehensive**, **adequate** and **representative** to ensure conservation of the state's marine biodiversity:

- **Comprehensive** means the degree to which the areas encompass the full range of marine biodiversity and habitats from the six bioregions that occur in NSW.
- **Adequate** means the capability of the areas to maintain biodiversity and ecological processes into the future.
- **Representative** means areas selected for inclusion in marine protected areas should reflect the full spectrum of marine biodiversity that occurs in NSW.

Photo: D. Haratsi



Nudibranch

# Current zoning plan for Solitary Islands Marine Park

The Solitary Islands Marine Park zoning plan protects marine habitats, plants and animals in four zones that establish the activities that can be undertaken in different areas of the marine park. These zones are:

- **Sanctuary zones:** these areas provide the highest level of protection to biodiversity, natural and cultural features by prohibiting all forms of fishing and collecting activities. Activities that do not harm plants, animals and habitats are permitted.
- **Habitat protection zones:** these areas conserve marine biodiversity by protecting habitats and reducing high impact activities. Recreational fishing and some forms of commercial fishing are permitted in these zones.
- **General use zones:** these areas allow a wide range of activities including both commercial and recreational fishing, provided that they are ecologically sustainable.
- **Special purpose zones:** these zones are used when special management needs are required, including protection of Aboriginal and other cultural features or marine facilities. These zones are also used for specific park management reasons.

The current zoning plan for Solitary Islands Marine Park includes approximately 12% of the marine park in sanctuary zones, 54% in habitat protection zones, 34% in general use zones and 0.1% in special purpose zones.

A summary of the current zoning plan is available from [www.mpa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.mpa.nsw.gov.au), and the entire plan is documented in Schedule 1 of the Marine Parks Regulation 1999 which is available from [www.legislation.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au).

## Purpose of the review

The review will determine whether the current zoning plan for Solitary Islands Marine Park remains appropriate for meeting the objects of the *Marine Parks Act 1997*, which are:

- (a) to conserve marine biodiversity and marine habitats by declaring and providing for the management of a comprehensive system of marine parks;
- (b) to maintain ecological processes in marine parks;
- (c) where consistent with the preceding objects:
  - (i) to provide for ecologically sustainable use of fish (including commercial and recreational fishing) and marine vegetation in marine parks;
  - (ii) to provide opportunities for public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of marine parks.

## The review process

The review process involves using input from stakeholders and the wider community and the results of scientific and socioeconomic research, to assess the extent to which the existing zoning plan meets the objects of the *Marine Parks Act 1997*.

The review will only consider the zoning plan for Solitary Islands Marine Park and will not include any review of the external boundaries of the park. While a range of day-to-day operational activities within the marine park such as research, monitoring, education and compliance support implementation of the zoning plan, the review focuses on the effectiveness of the zoning plan itself.

## Stages of the review

The knowledge and experience of local communities and groups that use the Solitary Islands Marine Park are extremely important. As a result, the review of the zoning plan will progress through three stages to provide for extensive consultation with community groups, the Solitary Islands Marine Park Advisory Committee, industry representatives, organisations and individuals. These stages are set out in the table below.



Photo: D. Haratsi

Yellow moon wrasse

**Table 1. Reviewing the Solitary Islands Marine Park zoning plan**

| <b>Stage 1: Identifying key issues with the current zoning plan</b>   |
|---|
| <p>An information package will be placed on <a href="http://www.mpa.nsw.gov.au">www.mpa.nsw.gov.au</a>. This package will advise on ways in which the community can get involved in the review, and contains the following documents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. this guide</li> <li>2. a form for making submissions</li> <li>3. a copy of the current zoning plan users guide</li> <li>4. an updated habitat map</li> <li>5. a summary of the natural values of the marine park</li> <li>6. a summary of the social, economic and cultural uses of the marine park</li> <li>7. a summary of research and monitoring in the marine park</li> <li>8. a summary of management of the marine park</li> <li>9. frequently asked questions.</li> </ol> |
| <p>Meetings and information days will be held so stakeholder groups and the community can comment on the current zoning plan. Details of these activities will be advertised in local newspapers and on <a href="http://www.mpa.nsw.gov.au">www.mpa.nsw.gov.au</a></p>  |
| <p>A formal consultation period of two months will enable the public to comment on the current zoning plan and make submissions. The closing date for submissions will be 2 June 2008.</p>  |
| <b>Stage 2: Preparing the review report</b>   |
| <p>A review report will be prepared which will include a summary of community submissions, feedback from focus group meetings and an analysis of the current zoning plan against assessment criteria.</p>   |
| <p>The review report will be provided to the Solitary Islands Marine Park Advisory Committee for comment.</p>   |
| <p>The review report, including any comments from the advisory committee, will be provided by the NSW Marine Parks Authority to the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, and the Minister for Primary Industries, for their consideration.</p>  |
| <b>Stage 3: Finalising the review</b>   |
| <p>On the basis of the review report, the Ministers will direct the Marine Parks Authority to either prepare a draft zoning plan to amend the current zoning plan, or to continue with the current zoning plan.</p>   |
| <p>If the Ministers decide that a draft zoning plan is to be prepared, this will occur in consultation with the Solitary Islands Marine Park Advisory Committee. The new draft zoning plan will be subject to further public consultation, including a three-month public exhibition period.</p>  |

## Community consultation

The main ways of getting involved in the review of the Solitary Islands Marine Park zoning plan are to:

- participate in relevant focus group workshops or information days
- talk with a member of the Solitary Islands Marine Park Advisory Committee who represents your interests
- make a submission.

For more information:

- phone Solitary Islands Marine Park on (02) 6652 0900
- email [solitary.islands@mpa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:solitary.islands@mpa.nsw.gov.au)
- visit [www.mpa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.mpa.nsw.gov.au)
- check key local newspapers for details.

## Making a submission

Submissions should focus on issues related to the current zoning plan.

Forms are available:

- at [www.mpa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.mpa.nsw.gov.au)
- from Solitary Islands Marine Park office, 32 Marine Drive, Coffs Harbour Jetty
- by calling 1300 361 967

Submission forms and other comments on the review can be:

- posted to Solitary Islands Marine Park, Reply Paid 297, Coffs Harbour, NSW 2450
- faxed to (02) 6651 9525
- emailed to [solitary.islands@mpa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:solitary.islands@mpa.nsw.gov.au)

A two month period is available for making submissions. The closing date for submissions is 2 June 2008.

Submissions will be summarised and considered in the assessment of the current zoning plan and development of the review report.

## How will the current zoning plan be assessed?

The criteria listed in Table 2 will guide the assessment of how effective the current zoning plan for the Solitary Islands Marine Park is in meeting the objects of the Marine Parks Act. The criteria are grouped according to the objects of the Act.

These criteria are based on zoning guidelines in *Developing a representative system of marine protected areas in NSW – an overview* (NSW Government 2001) which were used to guide development of the current zoning plan (visit [www.mpa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.mpa.nsw.gov.au) for details).

**Table 2. Assessing the current zoning plan**

| No.   | Criterion   |
|---|---|
| <b>Marine Parks Act object: Conserve marine biological diversity and marine habitats by declaring and providing for the management of a comprehensive system of marine parks</b>  |   |
| <b>Establish a system of marine parks that contains a comprehensive, adequate and representative sample of marine biodiversity, including a full range of ecosystems consistent with State Plan Priority E4</b>           |   |
| 1   | Establish the current level of knowledge of marine biodiversity and ecosystems in the marine park.  |
| 2   | Comprehensiveness and representativeness: represent in sanctuary zones the full range of habitats that occur in the marine park.  |
| 3   | Adequacy: ensure that sanctuary zones have the capability to maintain biodiversity and ecological patterns and processes over time.   |
| 4   | Include protective zoning for areas of international, national, regional or local significance, or that are otherwise of high conservation value for marine biota and habitat conservation. |
| 5   | Include protective zoning for potentially threatened species that occur within the marine park.   |
| <b>Ensuring effective management of zones</b>   |   |
| 6   | Limit complexity of zoning.   |
| 7   | Maintain consistency with management of areas adjacent to the marine park, particularly Commonwealth and state marine and terrestrial protected areas and historic shipwrecks.              |
| <b>Marine Parks Act object: Maintain ecological processes in marine parks</b>   |   |
| 8   | When determining zonings, ensure that ecological processes can continue to operate effectively.   |
| 9   | Provide for adequate buffering of key habitats that are included within protective zones (buffers should be included within sanctuary zones, when practical)                                |
| 10  | Protect biologically productive areas.  |
| <b>Marine Parks Act object: Where consistent with the conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological processes, provide for ecologically sustainable use of fish and marine vegetation in marine parks</b>    |   |
| 11  | Establish the current level of knowledge of social and economic benefits and impacts of the zoning plan.  |
| 12  | Provide for ecologically sustainable use of fish and marine vegetation.   |
| <b>Marine Parks Act object: Where consistent with the conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological processes provide opportunities for public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of marine parks</b> |   |
| 13  | Include protective zoning for areas of cultural and historical significance.  |
| 14  | Provide suitable access to alternative areas for activities that have been excluded from an area due to protective zoning.  |



Photo: H. Malcolm

## What happens after the review is finalised?

The Ministers will determine whether the existing zoning plan should continue, or if it should be changed. If the zoning plan is to be changed, further community consultation will take place after the review is finalised. A new draft zoning plan will be prepared in consultation with the Solitary Islands Marine Park Advisory Committee, and placed on public exhibition for three months.

## Solitary Islands Marine Reserve (Commonwealth Waters) review

The Solitary Islands Marine Reserve (Commonwealth Waters) Management Plan that sets out the management objectives for the Commonwealth Reserve came into effect in April 2001. The management plan is currently under review to assess its effectiveness in achieving its objectives and goals. The Commonwealth and NSW will conduct a joint community consultation process for both their reviews. An information package on the Solitary Islands Marine Reserve Management Plan review can be found at [www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mpa/solitary/index.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mpa/solitary/index.html).

All cover photos taken by D. Harasti.

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