



Recreational Fishing Alliance Of NSW Inc Marine Parks Policy

Executive Summary

The Recreational Fishing Alliance of NSW (RFA of NSW) promotes sustainable fishing practices and supports the conservation of fish stocks through fair and equitable access for all, along with sustainable use of the publicly owned resource.

It acknowledges the aims of the Marine Park Act 1997, to conserve marine biological diversity and marine habitats, as well as providing for ecologically sustainable use of fish (including commercial and recreational fishing) and marine vegetation in marine parks.

The Alliance believes that Government and independent surveys must be completed identifying all marine habitats, prior to any proposed park being declared in an area. This then needs to be support with thorough research, establishing a baseline for each particular habitat required for protection, as well as social and economic studies to monitor the impacts and possible compensation associated with the 'shift of effort' from the implementation of proposed zones.

The RFA of NSW does not support the current percentage process, with an average of 20% of total park area 'locked up' using sanctuary zones, taking away the majority of safe and accessible fish habitat from fishers without full support and reason from research.

However it does support protecting areas representative of critical habitats using sanctuary zones, providing it is being used to protect specific ecological communities, critical habitat or specific species, and is not being used as a de-facto fisheries management tools by the Marine Parks Authority or Government

The RFA believes that once qualified research that has identified a need for additional regeneration of marine biological diversity and marine habitats, then the process maybe be accomplished using a variety of methods, modeled to accommodate all park users, such as;

- Rotating sanctuary zones when regeneration is complete.
- Seasonal closures for spawning or migration of species
- Localised recovery plans for specific species
- Stock enhancement through breeding programs
- Habitat enhancement through artificial reefs
- Stock enhancement and recruitment through fish aggregating devices
- Multi use sanctuary zones

Marine Parks Policy Statement:

The global impetus for Marine Parks has centered on the debate of commercial and recreational overfishing and maintaining biodiversity as the motive for creating marine parks, however as stated in the Marine Parks Act, marine parks are also to provide ecologically sustainable use of fish and provide public enjoyment of marine parks. Marine protected areas, or no-take zones are seemingly one of the main reasons that marine parks are established, however the Governments position that paper parks and percentage based no- take zones are effective management tools for providing ecologically sustainable use of fish is inconsistent and unproven within Australia.

The Alliance is concerned that no-take zones are being used as de-facto Fisheries Management tools.

It also believes that their needs to be rigorous scientific evidence that supports a need to lock out recreational anglers and should only be considered when;

- Populations have limited recruitment within the no take zone
- There are recreational and commercial impacts to key habitats
- There are seasonal aggregations that warrant protection within specific areas. (e.g., nursery or spawning grounds)

The rationale for setting aside certain percentages of marine parks as no-take zones or marine protected areas by governments as ways of maintaining fish stocks, protecting unique areas and serving as control sites for fisheries management has to be documented, as do the advantages and disadvantages. It is irresponsible to proceed without such an analysis and it demonstrates contempt for stakeholders by not making such information available.

The Alliance believes the current processes for selecting marine protected areas within Marine Parks is flawed and has outlined the inadequacies of the current process. These inadequacies include:

- Lack of consultation. The Act provides for wide community consultation, yet this observed in the breach as much at the practice. In practice Marine Park Committees have not been selected when 'paper' marine parks are announced and 'percentage' based marine protected target areas are declared.
- There are no detailed reports on the effectiveness on existing marine parks and marine protected areas prior and after implementation. How do we know they work?
- There is a lack of socio-economic research into the impact of Marine Parks and marine protected areas that already exist within NSW
- Marine Parks are created by regulation and are not precluded by Parliamentary scrutiny.
- Historically easily accessible areas are the first to be closed, creating quasi-no take zones by closing roads and access tracks and making anglers walk or travel farther.
- The lack of a rigorous Regulatory Impact Statement and supporting documents that allows for stakeholders to review the comments from the initial consultation process.
- The unsubstantiated assertion that recreational fishing and spearfishing are major contributors to declining fish stocks. There are no recreational fish species under threat or stocks in danger of collapse.
- The lack of direct representation to the management committees
- The failure to rebuild and nurture marine areas and habitats that have been degraded.
- The failure to recognise the significance of other influencing factors that impact on fish stocks and habitat degradation.

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- The misleading assessment that marine protected areas will benefit and protect migratory fish stocks, pelagic fish, including sharks, marlin and tuna and even whales.
 - The selection of pristine areas as no takes zones, rather than focusing on rebuilding of degraded habitats.

Because of the failures detailed above, the Recreational Fishing Alliance of NSW proposes an alternative model that includes wide community consultation and input from stakeholders during the planning stages and draft zoning plans of Marine Parks and marine protected areas:

- Access for all. The Act allows for ecologically sustainable use of fish and provide public enjoyment of marine parks. Fisheries management of the recreational sector is constantly being reviewed, and with no impacts on sedentary or inactive recreational fish species and with no recreational species under threat of collapse, the ecologically use of fish within marine parks should be allowed to continue. The targeting of pelagic and migratory fish stocks is sustainable under the current regulations. Critical Habitat Zones are already in operation and Habitat Protection Zones are used extensively within marine parks.
- Wider community consultation. Socio economic impacts of marine parks and marine protected areas and the displacement of effort are consequences that need to be thoroughly investigated through wider community consultation. Percentage based quotas that the government references do not construe wider community consultation. Extensive, consequential community consultation should be required to occur prior to draft zoning plans being determined. This historical reliance of limited, selective consultation has seen popular, easily accessible and pristine areas locked up and the effects on local communities adverse. Local knowledge and expertise must be drawn upon when determining no take zones and evaluating socio-economic impacts.
- Rotating no-takes zones. The Legislation is rigid in terms of no-takes zones, a far greater benefit would be gained from no-takes zones that would be rotated, allowing for the recovery of certain degraded areas. These no take, regeneration zones could also exceed the prescribed 20% paper model that the Government has announced. The rotating zones would utilise artificial reef systems and FAD to regenerate the area. The rotating no-take zones would rely on additional, relevant research to determine the degree of rejuvenation before rotating and targeting another area to rebuild.
- Multi-use no-take zones. Current Habitat Zones for Grey Nurse Sharks see multi use zones utilised to effectively manage the interaction anglers have with the GNS. Regulation bans the use of wire and bait at anchor within the CHZ, but allows trolling, lure fishing, fishing off the rocks and a myriad of other activities, including spearfishing. There are also multiple use areas within the Freshwater regulations, with Blue Ribbon catch and release rivers, Fly or Lure only sections and several different bag limit regulations for the same species. The same principles need to be applied to any sanctuary within a marine park.
- Stock and habitat enhancement
- Providing safe and accessible access fish habitat
- Localised recovery plans
- ‘Shift of effort’ from the proposed sanctuary zones