

RECREATIONAL FISHING

User guidelines - offshore artificial reefs

June 2015

Artificial reefs are widely used around the world to enhance fishing opportunities. The NSW DPI offshore artificial reefs are installed to improve offshore recreational fishing opportunities by creating new fish habitat and providing additional fishing locations. The project is constructed using funds from the [NSW Recreational Fishing Trust](#) and the reefs are designed and located for the benefit of recreational fishers. These reefs have been shown to provide high quality habitat for a diverse range of fish species and have proved very popular with recreational fishers around NSW.

There are currently 2 offshore artificial reefs deployed in NSW waters they are:

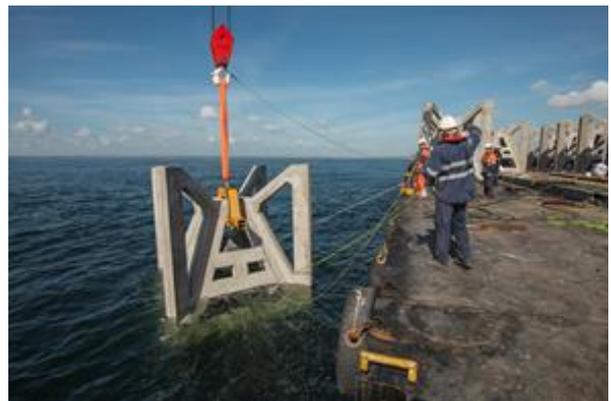
- **Shoalhaven** offshore artificial reef (deployed January 2015) and is made from 20 individual concrete modules, divided across 5 reef groups.
- The **Sydney** offshore artificial reef is a single module (deployed in October 2011) is located east of 'The Gap' (South Head; entrance to Port Jackson). The reef is constructed from steel with dimensions – 12 m (W) x 15 m (L) x 12 m (H)

For a detailed map of each reef location, please visit www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au

Responsible fishing

NSW DPI promotes responsible fishing practices at all times. Whilst fishing the artificial reef, recreational fishers are encouraged to:

- only catch sufficient fish for your immediate needs. Release all others using best practice catch and release techniques. Remember all fish, including scavengers, are important to the ecosystem
- dispatch all retained fish and invertebrates swiftly and humanely. It is recommended that you do not hold the fish in keeper nets before they are dispatched. To avoid wastage always chill your catch immediately with ice
- dispose of all litter and fish waste responsibly
- reduce wildlife injuries by attending your lines
- consider other users and act responsibly in their presence
- be safe when you fish and do not take any undue risks.



Location	Latitude	Longitude	Distance from nearest access point	Depth (m)
Sydney (2011)	33°50.797'S	151°17.988'E	1.2km	38
Shoalhaven (2014)	34°50.969'S	150°47.719'E	4.3km	33m

Recreational fishing reef code of conduct

NSW DPI encourages all fishers to adhere to the recreational fishing reef code of conduct:

- Respect other recreational fishing reef users at all times.
- Courtesy should be given to fishers who are already using the recreational fishing reef.
- Recreational fishing reef users should take turns fishing in the vicinity of the unit and accommodate new arrivals.
- Spearfishers should be aware of other reef users and should not enter the water if other boats are in close proximity to the reef. Likewise, anglers should wait until spearfishers have completed their drift past the reef before deploying lines.
- Spearfishers should always tow a float displaying the 'Divers Flag A'.
- A safety boat, with the operator acting as a lookout, should accompany spearfishers at all times.
- All fishers should keep boats, lines and lures a safe distance from spearfishers and other boats at all times.
- Limit your catch – do not catch your limit! Take only what you need.
- It is an offence to interfere with commercial fishing equipment, including floats and lines. There are significant penalties for interfering with commercial fishing gear including fines of up to \$5500.

Illegal fishing

If you suspect illegal fishing activity contact your local NSW DPI fisheries office or phone Fishers Watch on free call **1800 043 536** or report online at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/compliance/report-illegal-activity. Please record the following information before reporting:

- date
- time
- type of activity
- location of activity
- number of people
- boat and/or vehicle registration
- your name and contact details to substantiate the report and provide you with follow up information. When information is given in good

faith, all identifying details will be treated as confidential.

Spearfishing safety recommendations

Spearfishing is permitted on the offshore recreational fishing reef. However, it is recommended that only experienced spearfishers with adequate supervision should attempt to fish the reef. The location of the reef means that there are a number of safety issues that should be considered if you intend to dive. Spearfishers should follow these safety recommendations:

- Never spearfish alone, always dive in pairs and practise the 'one diver up, one diver down' rule.
- Never hyperventilate! Shallow water blackout is a real danger - the reef is situated in 30 metres of water, with the top of the tower section only extending to within 26 metres of the surface.
- Ensure each diver in the water (and the accompanying safety boat) displays the diver down 'A' flag with divers to tow a float with flag attached.
- To avoid entrapment, never attempt to dive inside the any of the concrete modular structures.
- Respect other reef fishers. Refer to the artificial reef code of conduct

Fishing regulations

Fish and invertebrates caught on the artificial reef are subject to the same fishing regulations that apply to other areas. Fishers should ensure they are aware of fishing regulations before they go fishing (visit www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au or contact your local fisheries office).

Scuba diving

The artificial reef is not designed as a SCUBA diving site. Due to safety concerns, NSW DPI does not recommend SCUBA diving on the reef.

Responsible disposal of waste fishing gear and litter

Fishers should note that it is an offence to pollute any waters in NSW. Domestic waste and incorrectly discarded fishing gear can have serious consequences for marine life. Ingesting litter or entanglement in line can cause death or serious injury. To reduce the possibility of injury, anglers should consider using environmentally friendly fishing tackle such as lead-alternative sinkers, biodegradable line, and non-stainless hooks where

possible. Garbage and waste fishing gear should be stored on board and disposed of responsibly once you are back on shore.

Barotrauma

When fishing in waters 10m or deeper, consider the effects of "barotrauma" on fish. If symptoms are mild try to release the fish quickly without treatment. If symptoms are more advanced and likely to seriously affect buoyancy, then try assisted release using a release weight (view video). If no release weight is available, vent the fish.



Releasing fish

To maximise a fish's survival when releasing fish, it is important to follow a few simple rules:

Use methods and rigs that increase the frequency of mouth hooked fish (rather than deep hooked), for example:

1. Target fish using artificial lures
2. Choose non-offset circle hooks when using bait
3. If the fish is hooked deeply, cut the line as close as possible to the fish's mouth rather than removing the hook
4. Minimise the length of time the fish is out of the water
5. Use fish-friendly landing nets with soft knotless mesh

6. Use barbless hooks or hooks with reduced barbs to make hook removal easier and minimise hook damage
7. Use wet hands or wet gloves when handling fish to minimise damage to its skin
8. A smooth, wet surface or vinyl covered foam is the most suitable surface to place fish on in order to remove hooks
9. Do not hold fish by the gills or the eyes.
10. Take care to revive fish upon release if they appear exhausted.

For further information on proper releasing technique, visit

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/recreational/saltwater/catch-and-release

Threatened and protected species

Threatened or protected species may in time reside periodically in the vicinity of the reef, however unlikely. In the case of incidental capture of any threatened or endangered animal, anglers should endeavour to return them to the water as quickly as possible and with minimal harm.

There are a number of protected species that may potentially be encountered on the reef. Notable species include critically endangered and vulnerable species including:

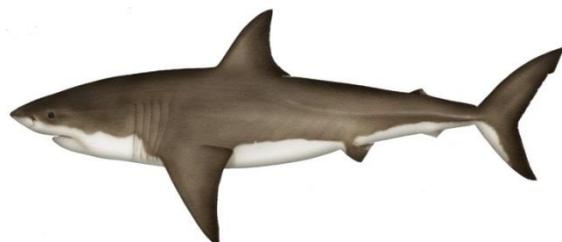
Grey nurse Shark *Carcharias taurus*



Black Rockcod *Epinephelus daemeli*



White Shark *Carcharodon carcharias*



Other threatened or vulnerable species

- Ballina Angelfish *Haetodontoplus ballinae*
- Blue Drummer *Girella cyanea*
- Eastern Blue Devil Fish *Paraplesiops bleekeri*
- Elegant Wrasse *Anampses elegans*
- Goldspotted Rockcod (Estuary Cod) *Epinephelus coioides*
- Queensland Groper *Epinephelus lanceolatus*
- Sandtiger Shark (Herbsts Nurse) *Odontaspis ferax*
- Southern Bluefin Tuna *Thunnus maccoyii*
- Syngnathiformes – Seahorses, Seadragons, Pipefish, Pipehorses and Seamoths
- Weedy Seadragon

Please note, not just protected fish may be encountered around the reef. There are a number of additional groups of threatened species such as:

- Marine turtles
- Cectaceans – whales and dolphins)
- Pinnipeds – seals
- Dugongs
- Penguins and other seabirds - e.g. albatross, petrels, shearwaters

Threatened species should be avoided whilst boating by maintaining a safe speed and a good lookout at all times. The risk of hooking seabirds can be greatly reduced by trolling lures at least two metres below the surface. Boat skippers should pay particular attention to the guidelines for maintaining distance between boats and whales and dolphins in this guide.

Any entangled or injured animals should be reported to NSW DPI (02 6691 9673, fisheries.enhancement@dpi.nsw.gov.au) or the Office of Environment and Heritage (131 555), info@environment.nsw.gov.au) as soon as possible.

NSW DPI has set up a database to record sightings of protected and threatened species. You can contribute by reporting any sightings you've made of protected or threatened aquatic species. This information will help NSW DPI better understand and manage these species. If an incidental capture does occur, please report it by:

- phone 02 4916 3877 (recorded 24 hour service)
- email fisheries.threatenedspecies@dpi.nsw.gov.au
- download and complete the species sighting form from www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/species-protection/report-it. The form can be lodged by

email, fax 02 4982 1107 or post to Threatened Species Unit, Port Stephens Fisheries Centre, Locked Bag 1, Nelson Bay NSW 2315

Guidelines for boating in the vicinity of large marine mammals

While visiting the reef, it is possible that you may encounter large marine mammals either on site, on the way to, or whilst leaving the site. There are strict guidelines regarding how close vessels can approach the animals. Generally, the approach distance is 100 metres from a whale and 50 metres from a dolphin. However, when calves are in the pod, the approach distance for a vessel increases to 300 metres from a whale and 150 metres from a dolphin. Boats should not wait in front of the pod, nor approach the pod from the rear.

See the figures below or visit www.rms.nsw.gov.au for more information.

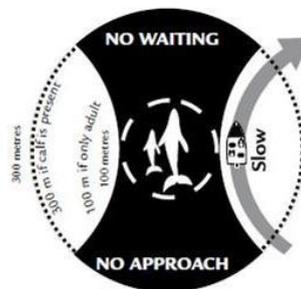


Figure 1: Approach distances for whales

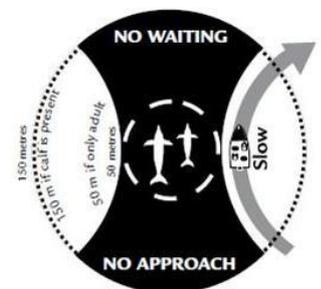


Figure 2: Approach distances for dolphins

Boating safety guidelines

NSW DPI encourages safe boating, and recommends skippers consider the following:

- Safe boating requires good preparation.
- Check the weather forecast, and that it is suitable for both your vessel and your capabilities www.bom.gov.au
- Prepare your vessel with the required safety equipment.
- Ensure your vessel and safety equipment are in good condition.
- Only carry the prescribed number of allowable passengers as stated on your hull plate. Reduce the number of passengers in less favourable conditions.
- Observe all channel markers and navigation buoys, lights and signals.
- Boating and alcohol don't mix. Save your celebrations until you're back on shore. For more safe boating information visit www.maritime.nsw.gov.au

If a dive flag is raised on a boat or towed behind a diver, you must slow down, keep well clear and keep a good lookout for divers, snorkelers or diving equipment.

The dive master on the vessel may give instructions as to where the divers under his control are located. If you are travelling at 10 knots or more, keep a minimum 60 metres from persons in the water.

More information

Email: fisheries.enhancement@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Acknowledgments

NSW Recreational Fishing Trust

Crown Lands NSW

Department of the Environment

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