



NSW Ocean Trap and Line Fishery **Fishers Code of Practice**

The NSW Ocean Trap and Line Fishery is subject to the provisions of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* (the Act), *Fisheries Management (Ocean Trap and Line Share Management Plan) Regulation 2006*, *Fisheries Management (Supporting Plan) Regulation 2006*, and *Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2010*. Fishers are also required to comply with a range of other Local, State and Commonwealth statutory requirements. For further details refer to *NSW Ocean Trap and Line Fishery Management Strategy (OTLFMS)*.

In addition to these regulations and conditions, many commercial fishers have expressed their commitment to take on greater responsibility and accountabilities for sustainable fisheries management.

The *Ocean Trap and Line Code of Practice* summarises the broad principles under which fishers should operate. The code of practice applies to fishers taking fish by use of any trap or line methods in all waters of the NSW Ocean Trap and Line Fishery (see the *OTLFMS* for further details).

Please note that the term “fish” refers to all organisms that may be taken, or interacted with, by ocean trap and line fishes, including both target key species, secondary species and protected species.

As a person participating in the NSW Ocean Trap and Line Fishery I will:

1. Ensure my actions do not bring the industry into disrepute.
2. Responsibly dispose of any litter or derelict fishing gear, either generated or collected in fishing operations.
3. Conduct fishing operations, and maintain fishing boats and vehicles, in a manner that minimises emissions and water pollution.
4. Obtain all permissions required by the local Council, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) or private land owners for accessing fishing grounds, use only authorised access points (if designated), and comply with any agreements relating to the use of keys, gates and closures.
5. Work with local Councils to signpost entry, exit and points used to access fishing grounds.
6. Observe all size limits for permitted species as set out in the regulations.
7. Limit the number of traps, rods, hooks and lines used to the maximum number stipulated in the regulations.
8. Ensure that true and accurate records of fish landed for sale are maintained and submitted in accordance with the Act.
9. Ensure that all permitted fish landed for sale are marketed in an authorised manner.
10. Conduct fishing operations in areas, at times, and in a manner, that minimises levels of bycatch.
11. Use equipment (such as escape panels on fish traps and circle hooks) or methods that minimise mortality, stress and levels of bycatch, and minimise the opportunity for predation by birds.
12. Ensure best practice handling of bycatch (particularly with the removal of undersize spanner crabs from dillies to reduce the number of flippers or legs damaged during the removal process) and to achieve a premium quality product for the retained catch.

13. Adhere to dogfish (deepwater shark) trip limits and safely engage in best handling techniques to release incidentally caught species; including de-hooking and releasing the shark in the water in the first instance, or, if the shark must be landed, avoid lifting by the tail to prevent damage to the spine and bring the fish in horizontally whilst supporting the abdomen or use a large landing net if it can not be reached. As time is a vital factor to increase post release survival, I will ensure appropriate de-hooking gear is on hand, so that the hook may be carefully removed and the species gently returned to the water.
14. Ensure the release of wobbegong sharks that are caught in fish traps and are below the specified minimum size limit.
15. Promote slow lifting rates for traps to reduce pressure trauma and therefore maximise the likelihood of survival of bycatch.
16. Use the shortest rope possible for the head gear to avoid entanglement by marine life or marine craft.
17. Discourage the unnecessary deployment of unattended gear for the purpose of 'holding ground'.
18. Engage in good post-harvest practices which will ensure the best return in dollars per kilogram for product of the fishery.
19. Use any implements necessary to ensure crew safety when sorting catch (such as large tongs), but not an implement (such as a spike or club) that could pierce, beat or otherwise injure any fish or animal taken in the catch.
20. Be familiar with the list of, and methods of identifying, protected species and threatened species, populations and ecological communities that might be encountered during fishing operations. For example, grey nurse sharks.
21. Conduct fishing operations in areas, at times, and in a manner that minimises the potential for any interaction with protected species or threatened species, populations and ecological communities. For example, the cleaning of lines and floats to avoid interactions of turtles with trap ropes, the exclusive use of circle hooks for all unattended line fishing methods, and the prohibition of the use of wire trace on bottom setlines within 3nm.
22. Return any captured individual of a protected species or a threatened species, population or ecological community to the water with the least possible harm.
23. Report specific details of any interaction with, or sighting of, individuals of marine protected species or threatened species, populations and ecological communities or any interactions with threatened or protected sea birds on the 'NSW Commercial Fisheries Threatened and/or Protected Species Interaction Reporting Form'.
24. Suspend the fishing operation if a marine mammal or turtle is captured, and allow the release of the animal with the least possible harm.
25. Notify the department if major fish mortality events or disease outbreaks are sighted.
26. Deploy and retrieve gear in accordance with regulations.
27. Report the loss and recovery of any traps or other fishing gear.
28. Be familiar and comply with any legislation or closures.
29. Ensure fishing operations are conducted with an acceptable level of safety for fishers and the public.

30. Comply with instructions of the NSW Food Authority regarding the handling of fish and effective icing and storage to maximise the quality of product and minimise food safety hazards.
31. Be licensed by the NSW Food Authority, and have in place a Food Safety Plan to minimise food safety hazards associated with the harvest of all fish for human consumption.
32. Seek voluntary agreements with other resource users with regard to priority of setting or casting lines.
33. Recognise and abide by the priority rights among commercial fishers as set out in regulations or any other guideline approved by the *Ocean Trap and Line Management Advisory Committee (OTLMAC)*.
34. Be courteous to other waterway users when exercising priority rights.
35. If necessary, produce my fishing license or authority to fish when required.
36. Do not allow unauthorised persons to assist in fishing operations.
37. Do not set traps or lines within 100m or other agreed distance of flagged bathing areas or so as to surround persons swimming or engaged in other water activities.
38. Minimise noise associated with fishing operations, especially between 10pm and 5am in the vicinity of residential areas.
39. Respect the public amenity of boat ramps by avoiding cleaning fish and gear in their vicinity and ensuring that access for other users is not duly restricted.
40. Encourage the responsible use of fishing gear around other commercial and recreational fishers and other user groups (e.g. scuba divers, whale watchers and swimmers).
41. Be aware of any changes to the *NSW Ocean Trap and Line Fishery Code of Practice* and regulations applicable to the fishery, and keep a current copy and applicable regional supplements in my vehicle or boat.
42. Be aware of Indigenous culture in my area of operations, and respect the customs of the local Indigenous people.
43. Be pro-active, cooperate and assist with investigations relating to:
 - Identification and mapping of significant habitat and areas of environmental sensitivity
 - Gear modification for bycatch reduction
 - Sustaining fish stocks
 - Minimising interactions with threatened and protected species
 - Efficiency of fishing gear and operations
 - Any other relevant research programs
44. Inform the relevant authority of any pollution incident or significant environmental impact.
45. Comply with the by-laws and regulations of relevant local Councils, NPWS, NSW Food Authority and NSW Maritime, and any codes for fishers prepared by these organisations that are supported by the OTLMAC.
46. Be courteous and cooperative with any public official or member of the community. **END.**