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Far South Coast recreational fishing guide

Recreational Fisheries Management, Cronulla

Our State's fisheries are a community-owned resource. We all have a responsibility to protect and safeguard this natural asset for present and future generations.

Fishing regulations are in place to protect and conserve our fish stocks and aquatic habitats to ensure that fishing activities remain sustainable.

The Far South Coast of New South Wales is one of the most scenic stretches of coastline to be found anywhere in Australia. The area is an unspoilt and popular destination for fishers and divers. It stretches from Bermagui in the north to the NSW/Victoria border in the south and is often referred to as the Sapphire Coast.

A host of varied fishing activities can be undertaken on the Far South Coast including prawning, recreational trapping, hand gathering and underwater fishing. This guide will give readers much of the information they need to get started, including the details of local fishing rules.

The Far South Coast also provides excellent freshwater fishing close to the coast, including notified trout waters – check the freshwater fishing guide for more details.

Fisheries officers from Industry & Investment NSW (I&I NSW) routinely patrol waterways, boat ramps and foreshores to advise anglers about responsible fishing practices and to ensure compliance with NSW fishing regulations.

Fishcare volunteers can also be found at boat ramps and on the water in dedicated Fishcare vessels, advising anglers about responsible fishing practices and distributing saltwater fishing guides and sticky rulers.

Information on bag and size limits, fishing closures and legal fishing gear can be obtained from the I&I

NSW website www.industry.nsw.gov.au/fisheries, or by visiting your local I&I NSW fisheries office.

To report illegal fishing activity, call your local fisheries office or the Fishers Watch phone line on 1800 043 536. All calls will be treated as confidential and you can remain anonymous.

RECREATIONAL FISHING FEE

When fishing in NSW, in both freshwater and saltwater, you are required by law to pay the NSW recreational fishing fee and carry a receipt showing the payment of the fee. This applies when spear fishing, handlining, hand gathering, trapping, bait collecting and prawn netting or when in possession of fishing gear in, on or adjacent to waters.

All money raised by the NSW recreational fishing fee is spent on improving recreational fishing in NSW. Projects include:

- the installation of fish aggregating devices (FADs) to enhance fishing opportunities for dolphinfish, tuna and marlin;
- creation of recreational fishing havens;
- angler facilities such as fish cleaning tables and fishing platforms;
- stocking of freshwater fish in dams and rivers;
- essential research on popular recreational fish species;
- restoring important fish habitat;
- research stocking of mulloway and prawns in estuaries;
- angler education and advisory programs such as the fishcare volunteer program, fishing workshops, get hooked...its fun to fish, and fishing guides;
- building artificial reefs in Lake Macquarie, Botany Bay, St Georges Basin, Lake Conjola and Lake Merimbula;

- investigating the building of artificial reefs in offshore areas.

You can pay the NSW recreational fishing fee at any of the hundreds of agents throughout NSW, such as over the counter at most fishing tackle shops. You can also pay the fee at some caravan parks, local shops and service stations, many Kmart stores, online at www.licence.nsw.gov.au or by calling 1300 369 365.

If you pay for a 1-year or 3-year period online, over the phone, or at a Touch agent, or if you renew your licence using your renewal letter, you will receive a plastic receipt in the post. You must be able to produce evidence of payment, such as your receipt number, if requested by an authorised officer (until you receive your receipt in the post). If you pay for a 3-day or 1-month period, no receipt will be posted.

Some exemptions apply to paying the fishing fee, including people under the age of 18 and holders of pensioner concession cards. For further information on exemptions visit the I&I NSW website or call (02) 9527 8957.

You may not need to pay the NSW recreational fishing fee if you are fishing on a charter boat, hire boat or under the supervision of a fishing guide. Please check with the charter/hire boat operator, or guide, before you go fishing. If they do not hold a recreational fishing fee exemption certificate you will need to pay the NSW recreational fishing fee.

RECREATIONAL FISHING CLOSURES

A number of fishing closures exist in the Far South Coast area. These exist for a variety of reasons, from public health and safety to preserving unique aquatic environments. The majority of these closures are signposted and penalties apply for not complying with fisheries rules and regulations.

Recreational netting and trapping

Wapengo Lake (Figure 1). The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a net, other than a dip or scoop net (prawns), or a landing net: the whole of the waters of Wapengo Lake, its creeks, tributaries and inlets, from a line drawn across the entrance to the Lake at its confluence with the ocean, upstream to a line drawn from the north-eastern (foreshore) corner of Oyster Farm No. 57/112, to the south-eastern (foreshore) corner of Oyster Farm No. 69/332.

Bega River. The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a net (other than a landing net): the whole of the waters of the Bega River, its creek, tributaries, inlets and lagoons including Jellat Jellat Creek and the Brogo River upstream to its source from a line drawn easterly

across the Bega River from the southernmost point of the entrance to Jellat Jellat Creek.

Sandy Beach Creek and Bournda Lagoon. The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a net, other than a dip or scoop net (prawns), or a landing net: the whole of the waters of Sandy Beach Creek and Bournda Lagoon, together with all their inlets, creeks and tributaries.



Figure 1. Wapengo Lake

Merimbula Lake. The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a hoop or lift net: the whole of the waters of Merimbula Lake and its creeks and tributaries, upstream to its source from the ocean.

Towamba River. The following waters are closed to nets of every description except the dip or scoop net and the landing net: the whole of the waters of Towamba River and its tributaries upstream of its confluence with the South Pacific Ocean in Twofold Bay.

Wonboyn River (Figure 2). The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a hoop or lift net: the whole of the waters of Wonboyn River, including Broadwater, together with all its tributaries upward to its source from its confluence with the waters of the South Pacific Ocean.

Nadgee River. The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a net or trap, other than (a) a dip or scoop net (prawns), (b) a landing net, or (c) a bait trap: the whole of the waters of Nadgee River, Nadgee Lake, Merrica River and Little Creek, including all their creeks and tributaries from their confluence with the South Pacific Ocean upstream to their source.



Figure 2. Wonboyn River

Shellfish closures

Merimbula Lake. The following waters are closed to the taking of shellfish by all methods, except the taking of oysters by oyster farmers from their leases: the whole of the waters of Merimbula Lake downstream from the causeway traffic bridge (Arthur Keyne Drive) to its confluence with the Pacific Ocean.

Caulerpa taxifolia closures

Wallagoot Lake (Figure 3). The following waters are closed to nets of every description other than a landing net: all waters between and to the south west of the line between point A (149.931, -36.790) to point B (149.936,-36.793). Latitude and longitude coordinates are in GDA94 datum.



Figure 3. Wallagoot Lake

GENERAL RECREATIONAL FISHING RULES

- Leave all commercial fishing gear in place and do not disturb commercial fishers going about their lawful business. Penalties up to \$5,500 can apply.
- You cannot use any chemical or explosive devices to take or assist to take fish.
- It is illegal for recreational fishers to sell their catch.
- You must not alter the length of fish by filleting and/or removing the head until you are well away from the water. This rule does not apply at areas normally used for cleaning fish, such as boat ramp cleaning tables, if the fish are for immediate consumption or immediate use as bait, or for fish that do not have a legal length. You may clean fish by gilling and gutting only.
- It is an offence to interfere with any oyster lease. Please ensure that your vessel, your vessel's wash or your tackle does not interfere with any part of an oyster lease, including the oysters.
- Abalone gut is prohibited for use as bait in NSW waters to prevent the spread of abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG).
- There is a state-wide closure on the taking of pipis from ocean beaches. The taking of pipis is prohibited except for their immediate use as bait. Pipis cannot be taken further than 50 m from the high water mark.

Spearfishing and diving

Spearfishing in NSW is a popular form of recreational fishing and has been recognised for its selective fishing practices. Spearfishers and divers harvesting fish and/or invertebrates in NSW are required to pay the NSW recreational fishing fee and the same rules and regulations regarding bag and size limits apply.

Spearfishers and divers *are permitted to use:*

- a snorkel when taking fish;
- SCUBA and hookah apparatus for scallops and sea urchins only; and
- bare/gloved hand only when taking lobsters.

Spearfishers and divers *are not permitted to use:*

- a light with a spear/spear-gun;
- a spear/spear-gun to take blue, brown or red groper or any protected fish;
- powerheads and/or explosive devices.

Spearfishing is prohibited in freshwater as well as many entrances, coastal lagoons and other tidal waters.

The following areas covered by this guide are closed to spearfishing.

- All NSW ocean beaches, excluding the last 20 m at each end of the beach.
- Areas closed to all fishing (red areas in maps).
- **Sandy Beach Creek.** The following waters are closed to spearfishing: the whole of the waters of Sandy Beach Creek and Bournda Lagoon, together with all their inlets, creeks and tributaries.
- **Wonboyn River** (Figure 3). The following waters are closed to spearfishing: the whole of the entrance waters of Wonboyn River downwards to their confluence with the South Pacific Ocean from a line drawn in a southerly direction from the north western most foreshore corner of Oyster Farm No 71/305 to the westernmost foreshore corner of Oyster Farm No 74/1.

Artificial reefs

I&I NSW is constructing artificial reefs in estuaries to create new fish habitat and in turn improve recreational fishing opportunities. The reefs are being monitored before and after deployment to determine their effectiveness.

Artificial reefs within the far south coast district are located in Merimbula Lake at the following coordinates.

Merimbula Lake Lat (S)	Long (E)
Corner 1 36° 53.908'	149° 53.139'
Corner 2 36° 53.918'	149° 53.175'
Corner 3 36° 53.942'	149° 53.105'
Corner 4 36° 53.948'	149° 53.139'

For more information on artificial reefs please contact the program coordinator at NSW DPI on (02) 9527 8411.

Recreational fishing havens

In 2002, 30 locations along the NSW coast were set aside for recreational fishing following a buyout of commercial fishing entitlements. These areas provide quality recreational fishing opportunities and are very popular with anglers.

Recreational fishing havens within the far South Coast district are Nelson Lake (Nelson Lagoon), Bega River, Back Lake (Back Lagoon), Pambula River, Yowaka River, Nullica River, Towamba River (also known as Kiah River), Wonboyn Lake, River and Wonboyn Beach (to 500 metres from mean high water level)

Note: The recreational fishing haven waters also include all bays, tributaries, creeks, canals and artificial lakes within that area. For information on

the precise boundaries of these closures, contact your local Fisheries Office.

Fish aggregating devices – FADs

I&I NSW deploy a series of fish aggregating devices (FADs) each year along the NSW coast between the months of September and June. The FADs are funded by the Recreational Fishing Trust and are installed to provide improve fishing for recreational fishers.

FADS in the Far South Coast district are located offshore – for exact GPS locations please check the website www.industry.nsw.gov.au/fisheries. For more information or to report a lost or damaged FAD please phone (02) 9527 8411 or email: fisheries.FADs@industry.nsw.gov.au.

Fishing safely

Fishing is fun, but remember to take care and exercise caution. Rock fishing can be particularly dangerous due to the unpredictable nature of the ocean. Remember the following basic safety tips.

- Observe first, fish later. Always check weather and water conditions before you start fishing. Make sure you are aware of local weather, swell and tidal conditions before going fishing. Listen to weather forecasts or call the weather information line on 1900 937 107. Be aware that conditions may change dramatically in a short period of time.
- Never rock fish alone and always inform others of your fishing plans. Let friends or family know where you are going and when you will be back.
- Care for your own safety and never take undue risks when fishing, even when fighting struggling fish. Never enter the water to retrieve lost tackle or snagged fish. If the location looks dangerous, don't fish there.
- Wear a lifejacket or buoyancy vest when boat fishing or when fishing in hazardous locations such as rock platforms or those located near areas of fast moving water. Always wear appropriate non-slip shoes. Cleats, sandals and sandshoes with non-slip soles suit different surfaces. Carry ropes and torches as an additional precaution.
- If someone falls into the water, do not jump in after them, instead look for an angel ring, life buoy or something that floats and throw it to the person in the water. Alert emergency services by dialling 112 from a mobile phone or 000 from a landline.

- When rock and boat fishing, wear light clothing. Light clothing such as shorts and a spray jacket will let you swim easily if you are washed in or fall overboard. Jumpers may be heavy and difficult to take off.
- When rock fishing, plan an escape route in case you are washed in. Don't ever turn your back on the sea; if the waves, weather or swell threaten your fishing spot then leave immediately. Stay calm if you are washed in, swim away from the rocks and look for a safe place to come ashore or stay afloat and wait for help to arrive. Ask for advice from locals who know the area – they can advise you of good fishing locations.
- For more information go to www.safefishing.com.au
- Use wet hands or gloves to handle fish before release.
- If you are going to take photos of your fish before release, support your fish properly.

Recreational harvest of shellfish

Shellfish are filter feeders and they sometimes accumulate harmful substances from the water during feeding. Shellfish collected by recreational fishers should never be eaten raw. This is because recreationally harvested shellfish are not subject to the same strict food safety controls as commercially harvested shellfish. Consequently the NSW Food Authority recommends eating only shellfish harvested under a recognised program. For more information check the I&I NSW Recreational Fishing Guide or see www.industry.nsw.gov.au/fisheries or phone 1300 552 406.

Responsible fishing

- Observe all bag and size limits as well as any other restrictions for the area you are fishing.
- Carefully release all undersize or unwanted fish and take only what is sufficient for your immediate needs.
- Take home any rubbish from the fishing spot, especially plastic bags, old line and fishing hooks.
- Take home any left over bait or fish discards and ensure you clean away any residue.
- Use environmentally friendly fishing tackle where possible.

Catch and release

Catch and release fishing has increased in popularity in recent years. Research has shown that most fish survive using current catch and release fishing techniques. The following improved fishing practices are suggested to maximise fish survival.

- If a fish is deeply hooked, do not try to remove the hook; cut the line as close to the mouth as possible and release the fish. It is likely to survive if handled carefully.
- Use artificial lures or non-offset circle hooks when using bait to reduce deep hooking of fish.
- Barbless hooks can be used to make hook removal easier and minimise hook damage.
- Minimise the length of time the fish is out of the water. Ideally, unhook the fish while it is still in the water. Needle-nosed pliers or unhooking devices can greatly reduce the time spent unhooking a fish.
- Use fish-friendly landing nets with soft, knotless mesh.
- Avoid dropping the fish on hard or hot surfaces and do not hold the fish by the gills or eyes.

Penalties

Penalties apply to persons who take or possess fish (including invertebrates and shells) taken in contravention of fishing closures, including aquatic reserves and intertidal protected areas.

Further information

For more information about fishing restrictions that apply to the far south coast's waterways and beaches, please contact the Far South coast fisheries office.

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