



15 February 2021

Dear stakeholder

**Notification to commercial fishing operators – condition 17 of Exploration Licence 9040:**

As per condition 17 of Exploration Licence 9040 (EL9040), I am notifying you of offshore exploration activities to be carried out in early March in the Stockton Bight area.

**Sand erosion is a significant issue for Stockton Beach**

As you may be aware the Stockton Beach coastal area (Stockton Beach) is subject to significant sand erosion, shoreline recession, coastal and tidal inundation and slope instability. These factors are significantly impacting beach amenity and are putting public and private assets at risk.

The NSW Government established the Stockton Erosion Taskforce in 2020, chaired by the NSW Deputy Premier, John Barilaro MP, to work with local stakeholders and the community to address these issues. The government has also committed \$1 million in funding to tackle the problem.

Through an assessment of management options carried out by City of Newcastle Council, sand renourishment has been identified as necessary to address these issues and help protect the area.

Subsequent studies conducted by the Department of Regional NSW's (the Department) Geological Survey of NSW (Geological Survey) conclude the sands of the Newcastle inner shelf sand sheet on the floor of Stockton Bight appear suitable for beach renourishment, however the extent, thickness and continuity of the sand sheet is unclear and further exploration is required.

**Exploration activities to be undertaken**

To determine the suitability of the sands in this area for beach renourishment, an application was lodged for an Offshore Exploration Licence over the area on 30 November 2020.

On 9 February 2021, an Offshore Exploration Licence was granted (EL9040) permitting the exploration activities to be carried out in Stockton Bight.

The main exploration activities will include:

- mapping the different types of sand on the seafloor using multi-beam echo sounding, magnetometer technology and sub-bottom profiling
- collecting samples of sediment from the seafloor
- collecting shallow sediment core samples (to approximately six metres deep).

**Exploration activities will take place from early March to mid-April 2021**

A survey vessel is set to begin exploration work in early March across the licence area extending from outside of the surf zone of Stockton Beach to the limit of State Waters (three nautical miles from the coast). A map of the exploration area is attached to this letter.

Six weeks of exploration activities are planned, with no activities allowed between 15 April and 30 November 2021 under the licence conditions. The licence conditions only permit exploration activities and no dredging is allowed.



The survey vessel will be fitted with a Class A Automatic Identification System (AIS) allowing vessels with a compatible system to see its location and will have appropriate day shapes in place.

The exploration activities will only occur during daylight hours and the vessel will avoid interaction with other vessels wherever possible.

### **Next steps and more information**

Results from this exploration work will be provided to City of Newcastle Council, at no cost, to inform next steps regarding the potential renourishment of the Stockton Beach coastal area.

For more information on the exploration project visit: [resourcesandgeoscience.nsw.gov.au/stockton](https://resourcesandgeoscience.nsw.gov.au/stockton)

Alternatively email [stockton.sand@regional.nsw.gov.au](mailto:stockton.sand@regional.nsw.gov.au) with your details and the topic you wish to discuss, and a representative from the Department will contact you directly.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Ruming

A/Executive Director

Geological Survey of NSW

Department of Regional NSW

# Stockton offshore sands exploration project – EL9040

## MAP OF EXPLORATION AREA

