



MARINE PARKS AUTHORITY

Operational Plan for the Lord Howe Island Marine Park

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 3

2. CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY AND MAINTENANCE OF ECOLOGICAL PROCESSES 3

3. MANAGEMENT FOR ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE USE 4

4. MANAGEMENT FOR CULTURE AND HERITAGE..... 5

5. OTHER MANAGEMENT ISSUES..... 5

6. RESEARCH, MONITORING AND SURVEY 6

7. COMMUNITY EDUCATION & INVOLVEMENT..... 6

8. COMPLIANCE 7

9. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS WITH OTHER AGENCIES 7

10. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS 7

1. INTRODUCTION

The *Marine Parks Act 1997*, requires the preparation of a zoning plan and an operational plan for each marine park.

The zoning plan, which is a separate document, details the activities permitted in each zone and the location of each zone, and should be considered in conjunction with this plan.

This operational plan outlines the scheme of operations that the Marine Parks Authority intends to undertake or permit, in providing for conservation and sustainable use of Lord Howe Island Marine Park to attain the objects of the *Marine Parks Act 1997*.

The policies, strategies and actions proposed in this plan are intended to assist the Marine Parks Authority in two principal areas:

1. Outline long term goals for management and application of resources to particular management issues, and:
2. The determination of applications for activities that require the consent of the Authority.

Some of the management actions proposed in this Operational Plan involve the development of specific documents that will detail how particular activities are to be conducted, monitored, and promoted. These documents will be developed over the life of this plan.

In developing this plan, the Marine Parks Authority took into account strategies developed by other agencies, in particular the *Lord Howe Island Environmental Plan 1986*, which covers all of the State waters surrounding Lord Howe Island, and the *Lord Howe Island Marine Park (Commonwealth waters) Management Plan 2002* which manages Commonwealth waters to 12 nautical miles offshore, surrounding the State marine park.

The Marine Parks Authority and the Lord Howe Island Board have adopted a memorandum of understanding which is designed to coordinate the activities of the two agencies toward integrated and cooperative management of the marine park and adjacent areas.

2. CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY AND MAINTENANCE OF ECOLOGICAL PROCESSES

The marine environment in Lord Howe Island Marine Park is very distinct from that of the coast and continental shelf of NSW. It supports a large number of species not found elsewhere in NSW and is characterised by a variety of unique habitats. These include the only barrier coral reef and lagoon system in NSW, basalt cliff rocky shores, sub-tidal coral and algal reefs, sandy beaches, subtidal soft substrates, foraminifer meadows, seamount slopes and the open ocean. The ecological processes throughout the marine park are interconnected with both resident and migratory marine species relying on specific habitats for breeding, feeding and protection. The zoning plan for the Lord Howe Island Marine Park protects representative areas of these habitats in sanctuary and habitat protection zones in order to ensure their conservation.

Many of these habitats are poorly studied, with much to be learned about their biodiversity and ecological function. The management actions listed in the table below are designed to acquire a better understanding of these habitats, particularly regarding their resilience and vulnerability to impact. Concomitant with this refinement of understanding, a number of management actions are planned to ameliorate known impacts and protect ecological processes that are known to be vulnerable.

Actions
Contribute to and coordinate research and monitoring of biodiversity and ecosystem function (see section 6 for details.)
Identify threats to endemic species populations and develop and implement management measures where appropriate
Compile accurate information on, and assess the impacts of existing uses and provide advice or implement regulatory measures as appropriate.
Provide advice on proposed developments or activities that have the potential to impact on the Lord Howe Island Marine Park.
Maintain a close working relationship with the Lord Howe Island Board and NSW Waterways Authority regarding matters affecting the marine park, including the development of integrated approaches to minimising land-based impacts.
Install and maintain moorings where appropriate to prevent anchor damage.
Together with the Lord Howe Island Board develop and promote a mooring and anchoring code of conduct for all vessels.
Contribute to local community and government programs to reduce pollution within the Lord Howe Island Marine Park.

3. MANAGEMENT FOR ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE USE

The *Marine Parks Act 1997* provides for the ecologically sustainable use of fish and marine vegetation and opportunities for public appreciation and enjoyment in marine parks.

The principles of ecologically sustainable use are outlined in the *Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991* and are applicable to NSW marine parks. They include:

- The use of the precautionary principle, that if there are threats of serious environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.
- That the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment are maintained for future generations; and
- To conserve biological diversity and ecological integrity.

A wide range of socially and economically important activities are conducted in the Lord Howe Island Marine Park. These include recreational and commercial fishing, scuba diving, boating and beach activities. In order to ensure the continued ecological sustainability of these activities, the following management actions are proposed:

Actions
Together with NSW Fisheries, enforce bag and size limits under the <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> .
Compile accurate records of commercial and recreational charter fish catches.
Through permit conditions, restrict commercial operations to the extent required to prevent operational conflict, crowding and diminished visitor experience.
Restrict the location of moorings to avoid extensive scouring of sea-floor habitats and reduced aesthetic amenity.
Work with NSW Waterways Authority to improve navigation aids to reduce the risk of vessel groundings on the coral reef and in the lagoon.
Work with NSW Waterways Authority to control the conditions of access for trading vessels to the Lord Howe Island Lagoon.
In conjunction with NSW Fisheries and the charter operators assess the operations of charter fishing activities within the marine park, and implement specific management

arrangements were appropriate.
Liaise with Lord Howe Island Board and Waterways Authority concerning requests for approval to conduct activities / events in or adjacent to the marine park, including the use of beaches by clubs and commercial operators.
Enforce pollution and littering laws on beaches and waterways.
In consultation with the Lord Howe Island Board, investigate the potential for appropriate fish cleaning facilities.
Regulate the conduct, location, quality and quantity of fish feeding through specific permit conditions.
Assist the Lord Howe Island Board in the review of the impact of domestic animals in foreshore areas.
In conjunction with commercial operators and recreational divers, develop and implement a scuba diving and guided snorkelling code of conduct.

4. MANAGEMENT FOR CULTURE AND HERITAGE

There appears to be no record of pre-European Aboriginal occupation of the Lord Howe Island area. The area contains evidence of a number of historic shipwrecks and other areas and items of heritage significance. The following actions are proposed for their management:

Actions
In accordance with the NSW Heritage Act 1997, maintain a section 170 register of sites and objects.
In consultation with the NSW Heritage Office, assess status of shipwrecks in LHIMP and develop management arrangements.
Undertake appropriate heritage management activities under the NSW Heritage Act and the Commonwealth Historic Shipwrecks Act.

5. OTHER MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Other management issues not detailed elsewhere in this plan include marine pollution, invasive pest species, and development within and in the locality of the marine park. The following actions are proposed to deal with these issues.

Actions
Together with the Police Service, Lord Howe Island Board and Waterways Authority develop an integrated Incident Control Strategy for response to severe pollution and other marine incidents, consistent with other relevant existing plans.
Provide input into pollution amelioration strategies and activities including the establishment of waste reception facilities.
Develop community education and interpretation material on identification and reporting of pest species.
Develop assessment guidelines and criteria for environmental impact assessment of all developments within the marine park, with reference to other agencies in accordance with procedural and legislative requirements and management agreements, to ensure the requirements of the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> are met.
Undertake appropriate environmental assessment for all developments within the marine park.
Work with the Lord Howe Island Board, Planning NSW, the Environment Protection Authority and Environment Australia to ensure arrangements for environmental impact assessment of activities within and in the locality of the marine park are effective and are rigorously applied.

OPERATIONAL PLAN - LORD HOWE ISLAND MARINE PARK

In conjunction with vessel owners and the Lord Howe Island Board, investigate appropriate vessel maintenance strategies to reduce pollution.
Investigate and promote Lord Howe Island Marine Park being identified as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area for shipping through the Marine Environment Protection Committee of the International Maritime Organisation.
Liaise with Australian Customs, charter boat operators, Lord Howe Island Board and the Waterways Authority concerning operational requirements for inspection of vessel hulls for invasive fouling organisms.
Conduct a risk assessment of invasive species in the locality of the marine park utilising existing national monitoring programs and strategies.

6. RESEARCH, MONITORING AND SURVEY

The primary objective for research within the Lord Howe Island Marine Park is to ensure that management actions are effective in meeting the aims of the *NSW Marine Parks Act 1997*.

A research plan is being developed for the Lord Howe Island Marine Park. The primary focus during the first five years of management will be to survey biodiversity and assess the impacts of existing activities. The objectives of this plan are to:

- Provide baseline species inventory, and habitat maps in integrated electronic format that can be used to inform future zoning decisions and reduce redundancy in future research;
- Provide information for determining sustainability of activities and proposals;
- Detect environmental stresses for remedial action; and,
- Coordinate the efforts of visiting researchers.

The research, monitoring and survey actions outlined below are intended to guide the development of adaptive management within the marine park.

Actions
Undertake, in collaboration with others, baseline species inventory and habitat mapping.
Encourage and facilitate research that contributes to an understanding of ecological processes in the LHIMP, through the provision of material assistance.
In conjunction with NSW Fisheries and National Parks and Wildlife Service, assess research permit applications. Seek expert advice where required for applications that involve collection, capture, tagging or harm and apply appropriate environmental protection measures for manipulative research.
Encourage and facilitate inventory and description of historical heritage.
In conjunction with the Advisory Committee investigate the carrying capacity for charter fishing and other tourism sectors.

7. COMMUNITY EDUCATION & INVOLVEMENT

Improved understanding and awareness of the values and benefits of the marine park will enhance enjoyment and foster community support.

A primary focus of management activity will be the active involvement of Marine Parks Authority in interpretive activities and production of interpretive materials.

Actions
Develop appropriate interpretive and orientation information displays and distribution material to explain management arrangements and values.
Involve the local community in Marine Parks Authority research, monitoring and

OPERATIONAL PLAN - LORD HOWE ISLAND MARINE PARK

survey activities.
In consultation with the Lord Howe Island school, develop a marine studies program for the school.
Develop interpretive materials for assistance of tour operators.
Provide interpretation of research results to the local community.
Provide interpretive activities for "Sea-Week" and other relevant events.

8. COMPLIANCE

Surveillance and enforcement are required to ensure compliance with zone plans, permit conditions and regulations. Compliance will be an integral component of a broader educational approach to marine park management.

Actions
Provide clear and simple information material to the local community and visitors which explains the zoning locations and provisions.
Conduct regular patrols.
Maximise compliance effectiveness through inter-agency co-operation.
Implement cross-authorisation arrangements with NSW Fisheries, Environmental Protection Authority and Environment Australia.
In conjunction with Environment Australia, the Lord Howe Island Board and the Australian Customs Service, develop an air surveillance and remote sensing program.

9. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

The Marine Park Authority will work in consultation with a number of other agencies, under a variety of arrangements to facilitate park management. Actions proposed to maintain these arrangements are summarised in the following table:

Actions
Review and maintain the Memorandum of Understanding with the Lord Howe Island Board covering moorings management, resource sharing, incident control, domestic animal management and other matters relevant to the management of the marine park.
Review and maintain the Memorandum of Understanding and Annual Business Agreement with Environment Australia covering coordinated management of the Lord Howe Island Marine Park (NSW and Commonwealth waters)

10. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

To ensure effective review and reporting of management plans and strategies for the marine park, key outcomes of marine park management actions will be made available to the Lord Howe Island Marine Park Management Advisory Committee and to the general public.

Actions
Provide management program updates to the general public through local news sheets and internet.
Undertake a review of the zoning and operational plans commencing during the final year of these plans.
Review marine park management programs on an annual basis.
Provide update reports to the Lord Howe Island Marine Park Advisory Committee on key management programs within the LHIMP.

