



# Recreational Spearfishing Guide

Fisheries Compliance Unit  
January 2024

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.

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

Commonly targeted species for spearfishing in NSW include yellowtail kingfish, mulloway, various tuna species, snapper, luderick, yellowfin bream and spanish and spotted mackerel, with a wide variety of other species on offer. This guide will give readers much of the information they need to get started, including the details of local fishing rules.

NSW DPI Fisheries Officers routinely patrol waterways, boat ramps and foreshores advising anglers about responsible fishing practices and ensuring compliance with NSW fishing regulations.

Information on bag and size limits and legal fishing gear can be obtained at [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/recreational](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/recreational) or by contacting your local DPI fisheries office.

To report suspected illegal fishing activity, call the Fishers Watch phone line on **1800 043 536** (free call) or on-line at [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/compliance/report-illegal-activity](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/compliance/report-illegal-activity). All calls will be treated as confidential and you can remain anonymous.

## RECREATIONAL FISHING FEE

When fishing in NSW waters, 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, hand lining, 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:

- building artificial reefs to create new fishing locations;
- fish aggregating devices (FADs) to enhance fishing for dolphinfish and even 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;
- marine stocking of prawns in estuaries;
- angler education and advisory programs such as the Fishcare Volunteer program, fishing workshops, Get Hooked...it's fun to fish primary schools education and fishing guides.

Much more information is available at [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries).

You can pay the NSW recreational fishing fee at <https://onegov.nsw.gov.au> or by calling 1300 369 365 or at many outlets throughout NSW, such as

most fishing tackle stores, caravan parks, local shops, service stations and many Kmart stores.

Some exemptions apply to paying the fishing fee, including people under the age of 18, holders of pensioner concession cards and Aboriginal people. For further information on exemptions visit [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/recreational/recreational-fishing-fee/exemptions](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/recreational/recreational-fishing-fee/exemptions) or call (02) 4424 7499.

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.

## Going Spearfishing?

Our coastline boasts some excellent spearfishing waters catering for a range of skill levels, including headlands, rocky and coral reefs, FADs (Fish Aggregating Devices), offshore islands, shipwrecks and open pelagic offshore waters.

Before you head out, familiarise yourself with this Guide. You can also visit the Underwater Skindivers and Fishermans Association ([www.usfa.org.au](http://www.usfa.org.au)) or Australian Underwater Federation ([www.auf.com.au](http://www.auf.com.au)) websites for some useful tips to make the most of your spearfishing experience.

DPI supports responsible spearfishing in NSW at all times. To assist in promoting safe spearfishing practices, here are some tips when out and about:

- Never hyperventilate. Shallow water blackout is a real danger.
- Never spearfish alone and always inform others of your fishing plans.
- Always dive with a buddy in sight of you at all times and practice the “one diver up, one diver down” rule.
- Never point your speargun at anyone (including yourself) for any reason.
- Avoid carrying spearguns through crowded areas.
- Always handle your speargun as if it is loaded.
- Never load your speargun while out of the water. Always load and unload your speargun while in the water.
- Avoid propeller strike. To alert other vessels in the vicinity that there are divers on the surface ensure your safety vessel clearly displays the international diver-down flag “A” and that all

divers in the water are towing a highly visible float with a safety flag attached.

- Be considerate of other water users.
- Avoid spearfishing in popular swimming locations.
- A person who is under the age of 14 must not acquire, use or possess a spear gun.
- It is an offence to supply a speargun to a person under the age of 14.

## Spearfishing and diving

Spearfishers and divers *are permitted* to use:

- Spear gun, Hand-spear and Bow & Arrow - tidal waters only.
- a snorkel when taking fish;
- SCUBA for scallops and sea urchins only; and
- bare/gloved hand only when taking lobsters.

Spearfishers and divers *are not permitted* to use:

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

## Bowfishing

- On 3-September-2021 amendments were made to the Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2019 to permit the use of bowfishing equipment to take carp in inland waters under certain circumstances and prohibit bowfishing in coastal and estuarine waters. For more information go to <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/fisheries-consultation/bowfishing-reform>

## SPEARFISHING CLOSURES

- Spearfishing is prohibited in freshwater as well as many entrances, coastal lagoons and other tidal waters.
- All NSW ocean beaches, excluding the last 20m at each end of the beach.

**Note:** Additional spearfishing closures may apply to Marine Protected Areas. For further information visit [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/marine-protected-areas](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/marine-protected-areas).

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

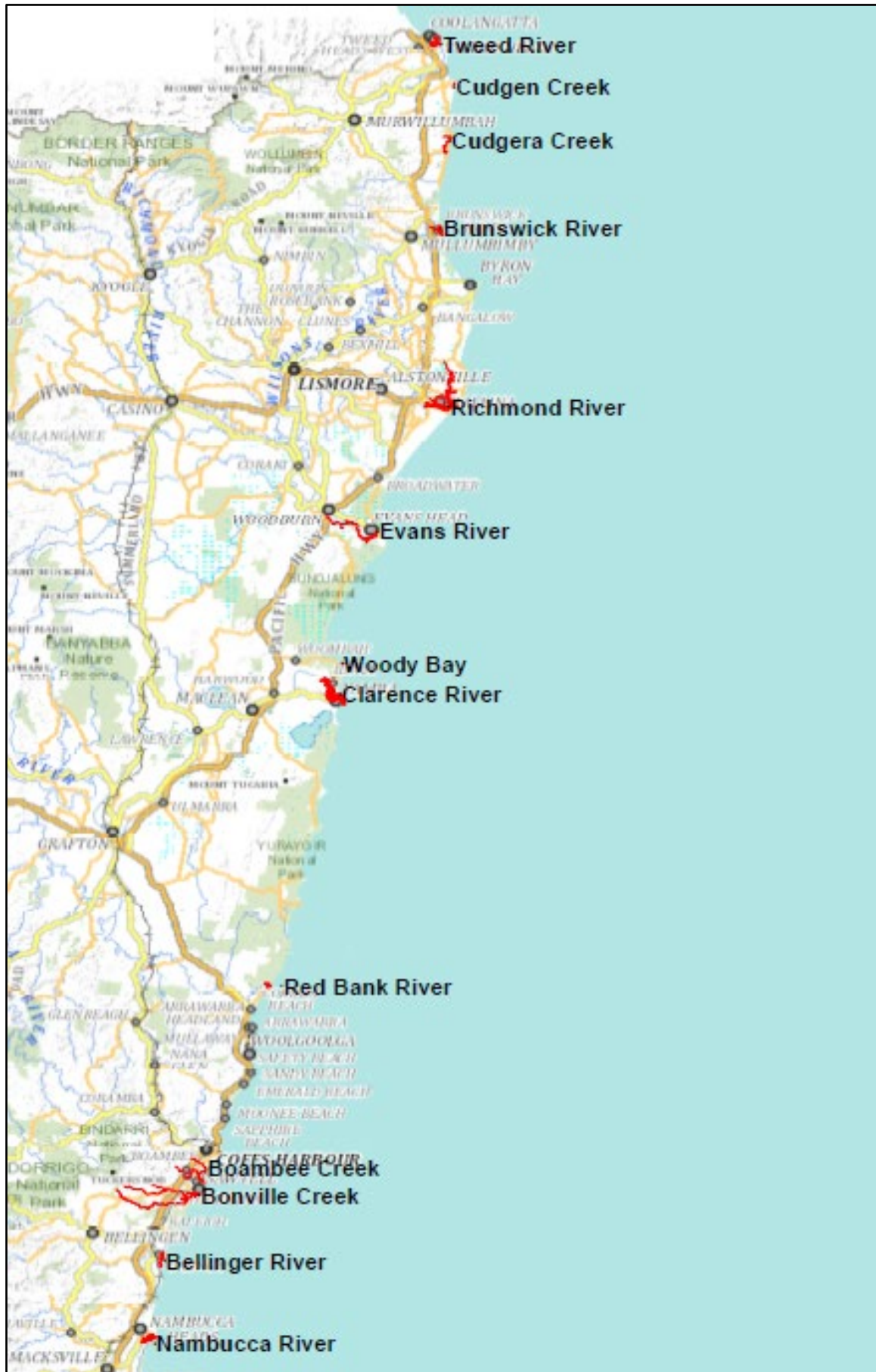
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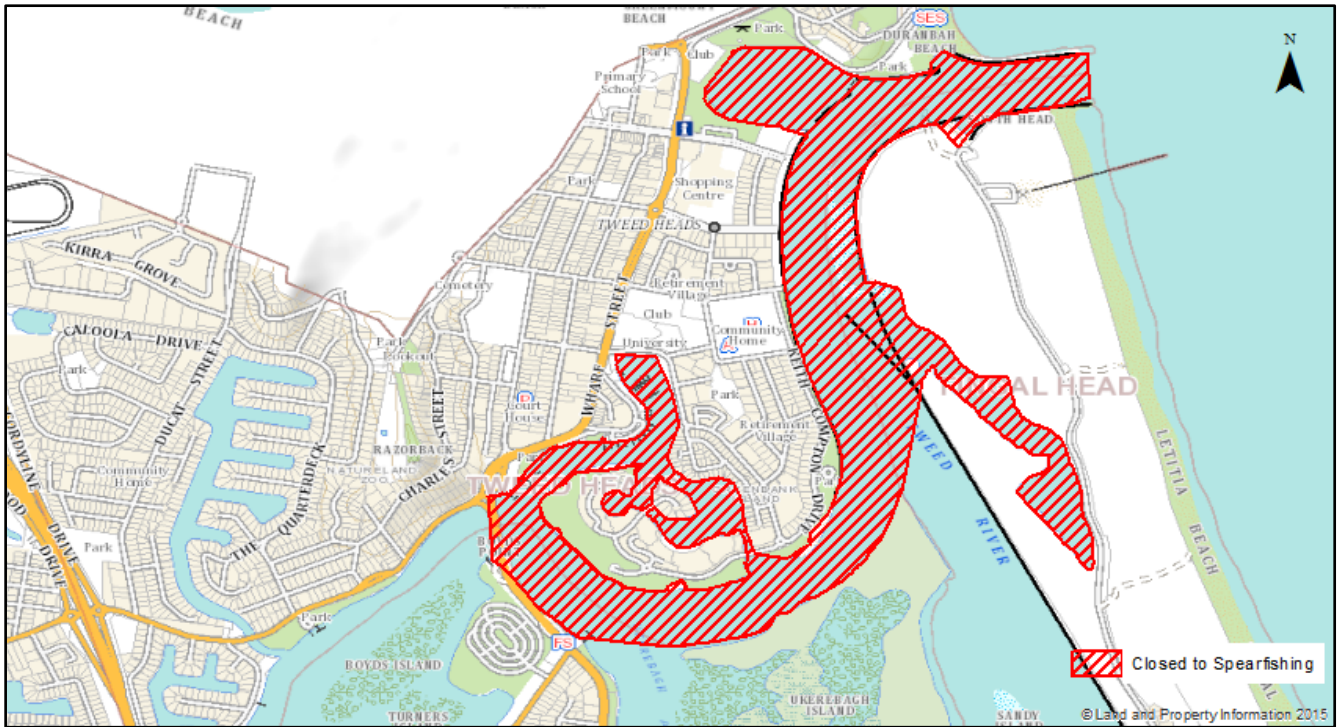
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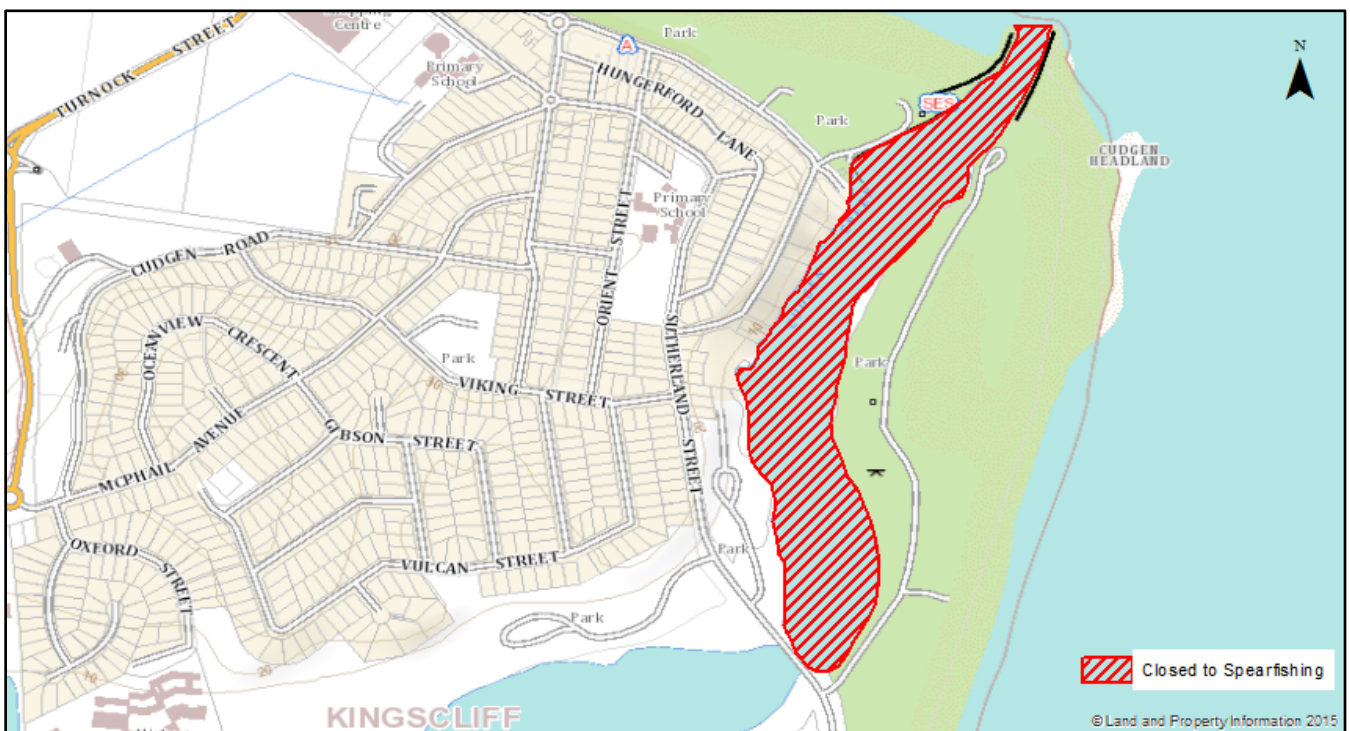
## 1. Far North Coast Spearfishing Closures



### 1.1 Tweed River



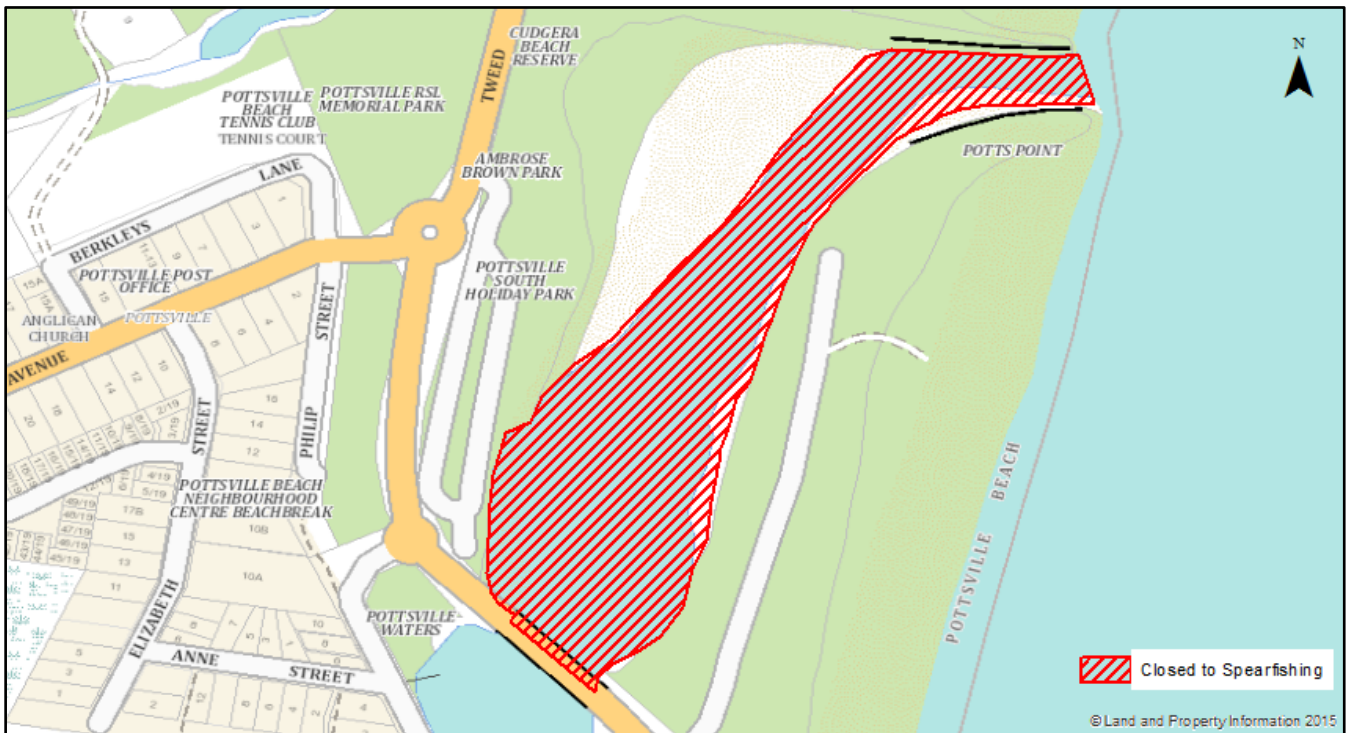
### 1.2 Cudgen Creek



### 1.3 Cudgera Creek



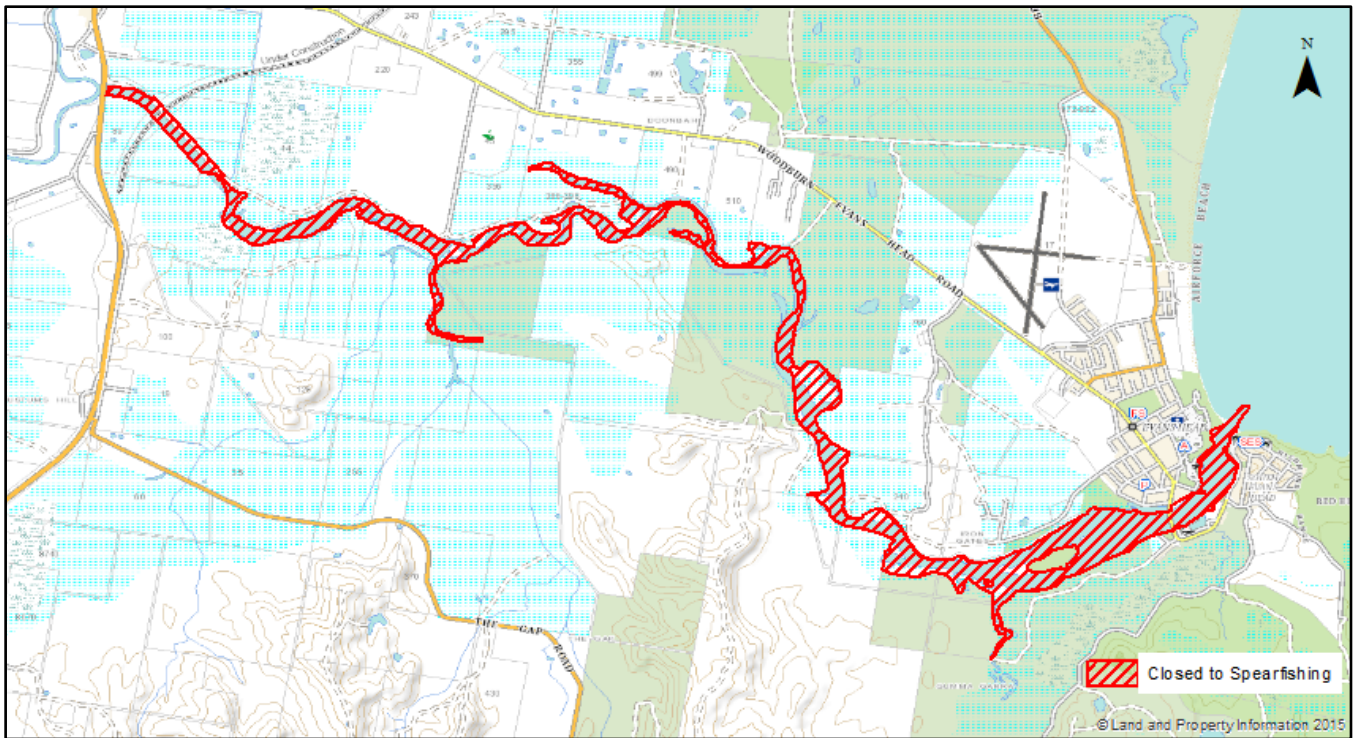
### 1.4 Mooball Creek



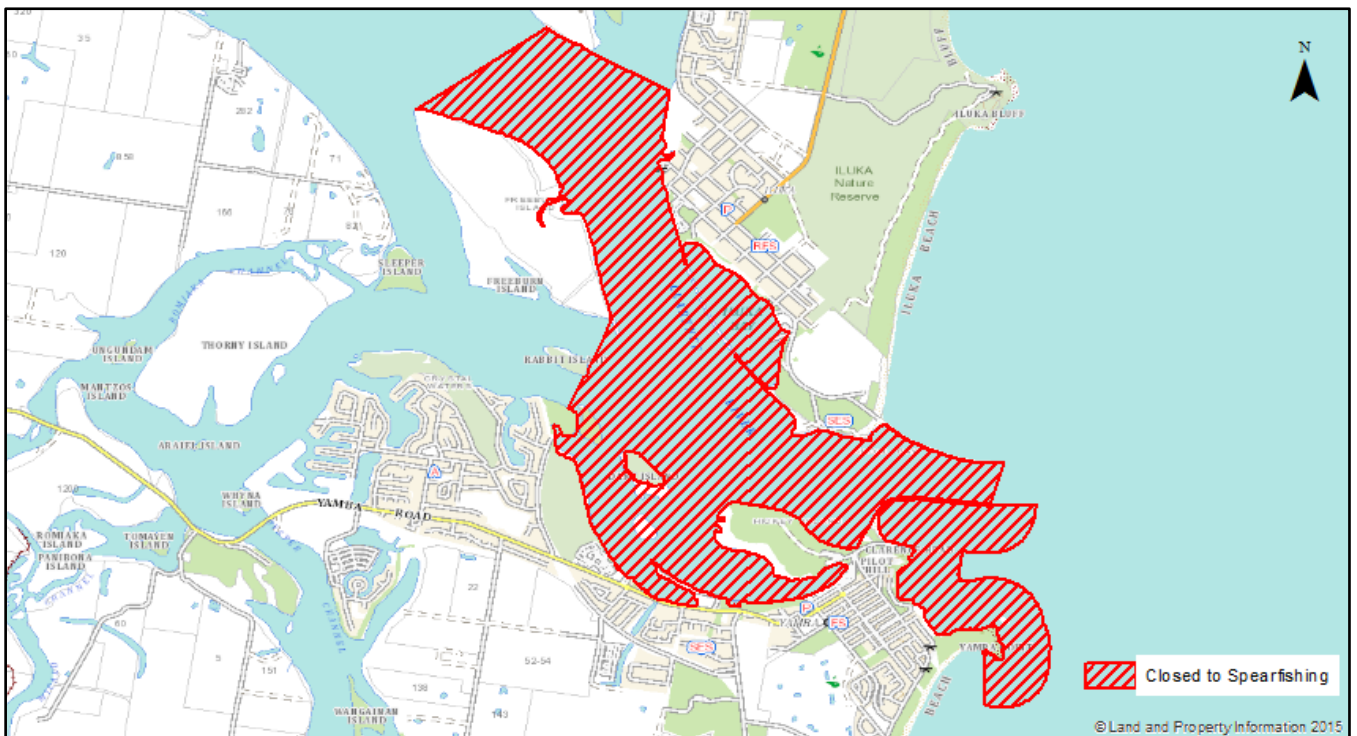




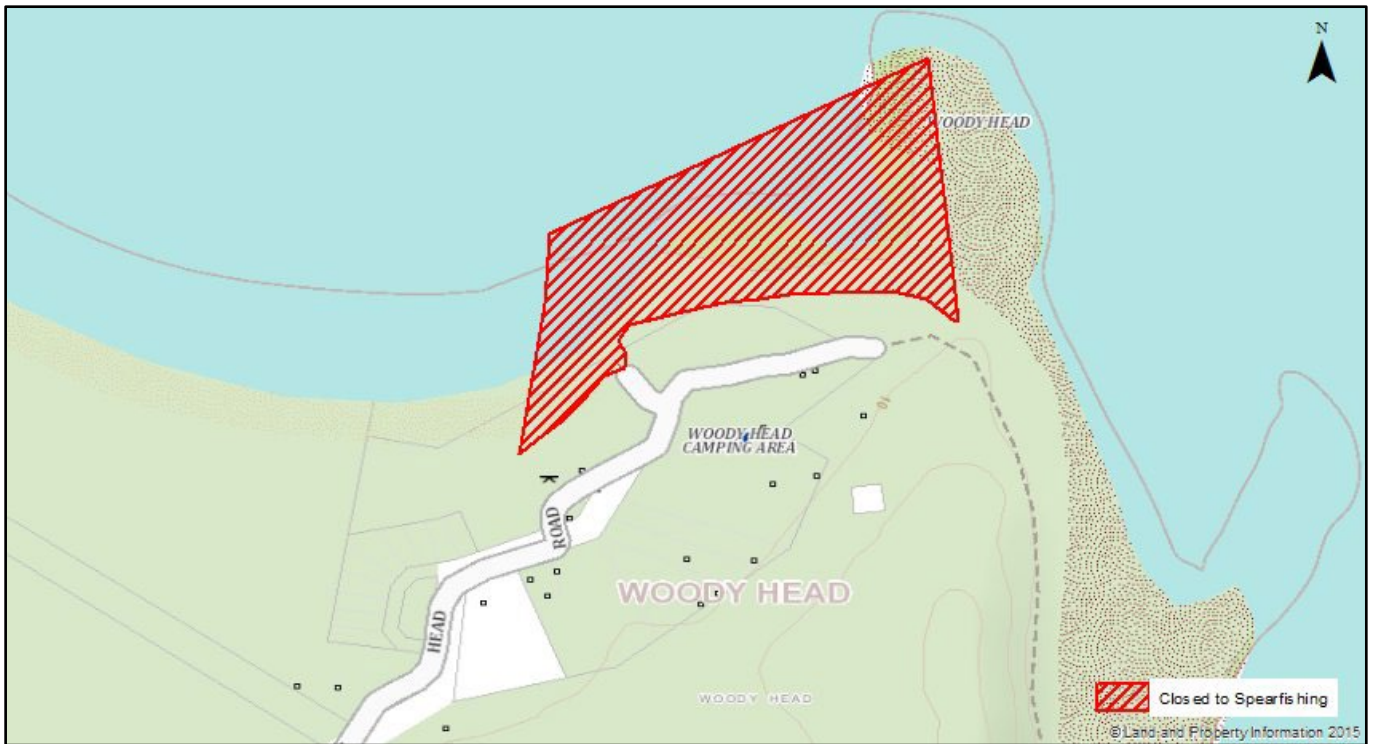
### 1.7 Evans River



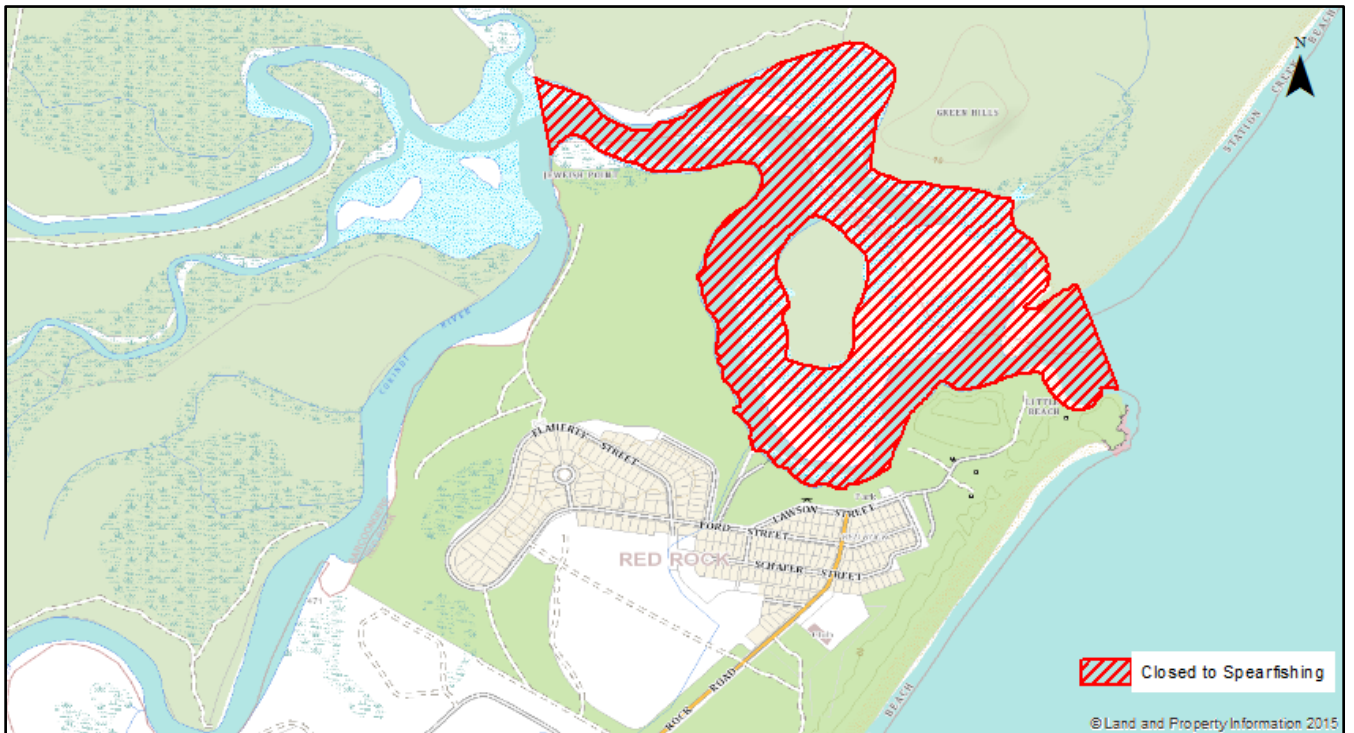
### 1.8 Clarence River



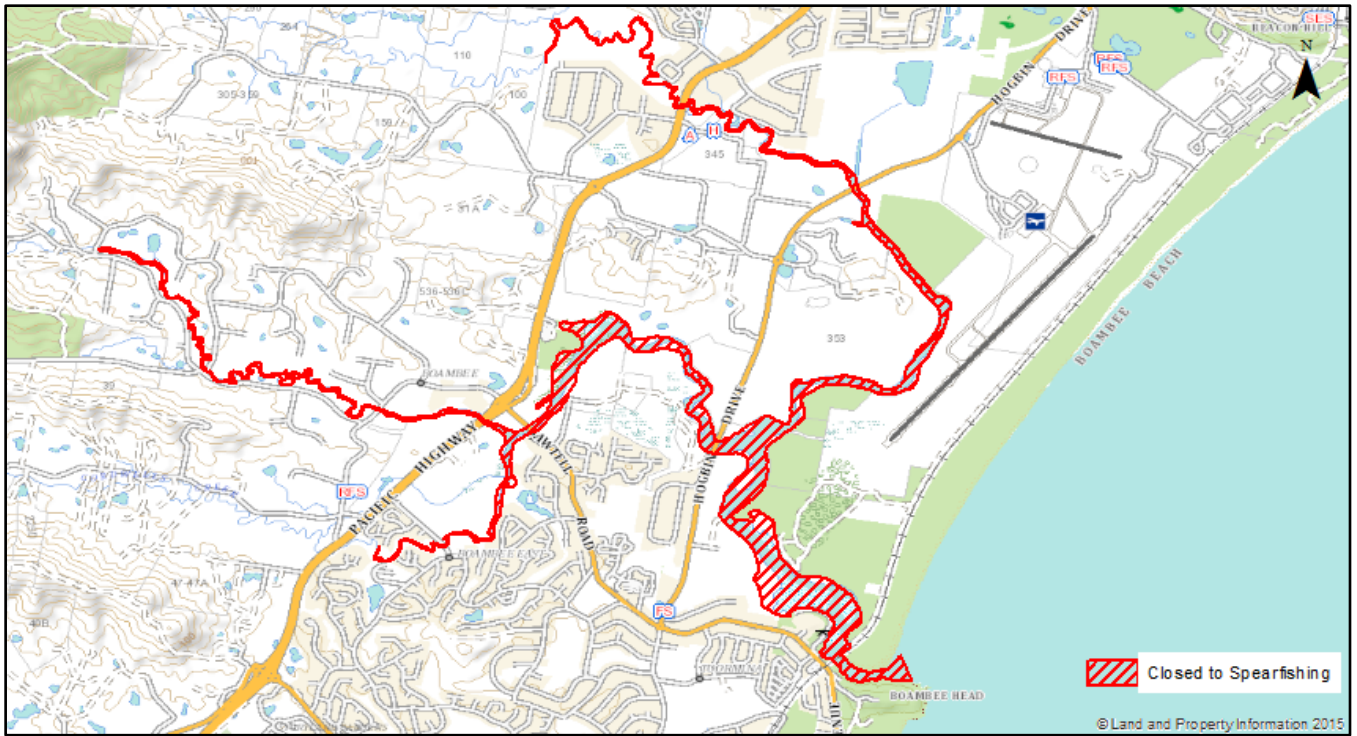
### 1.9 Woody Bay



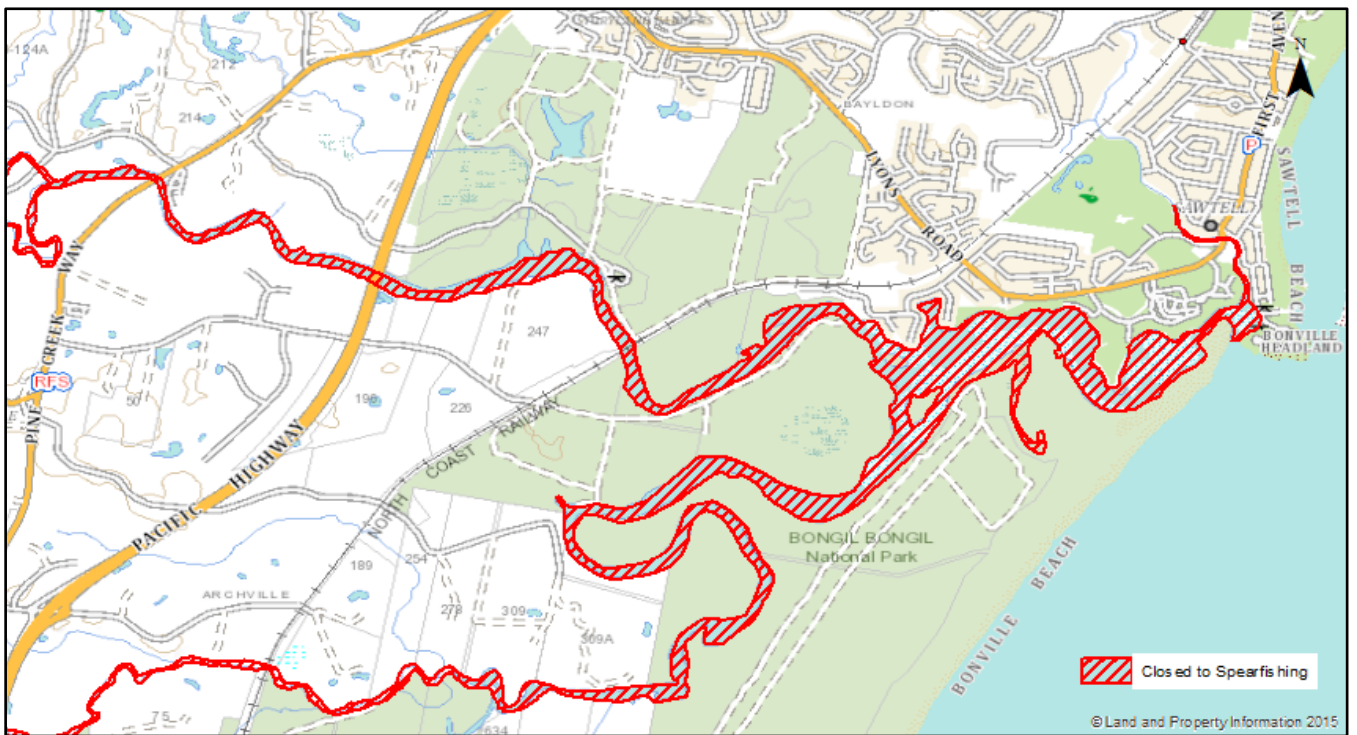
### 1.10 Red Bank River



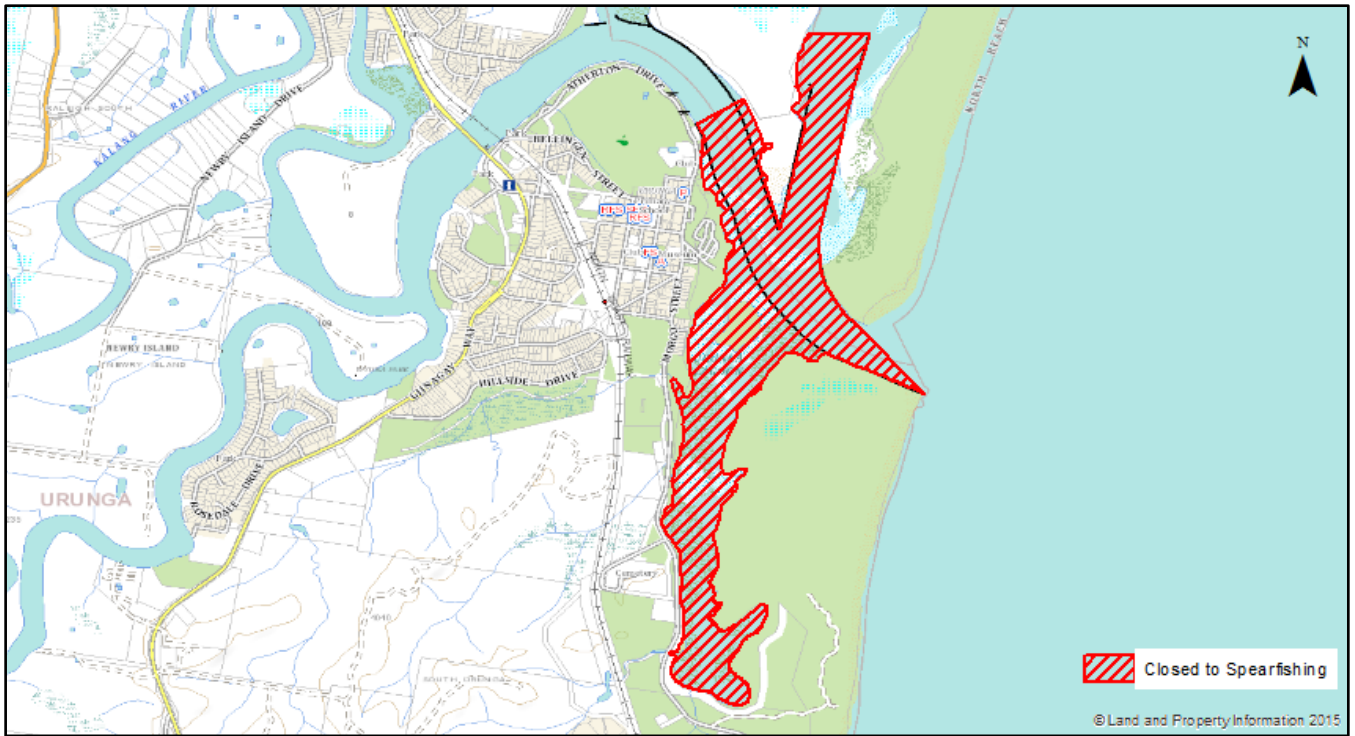
### 1.11 Boambee Creek



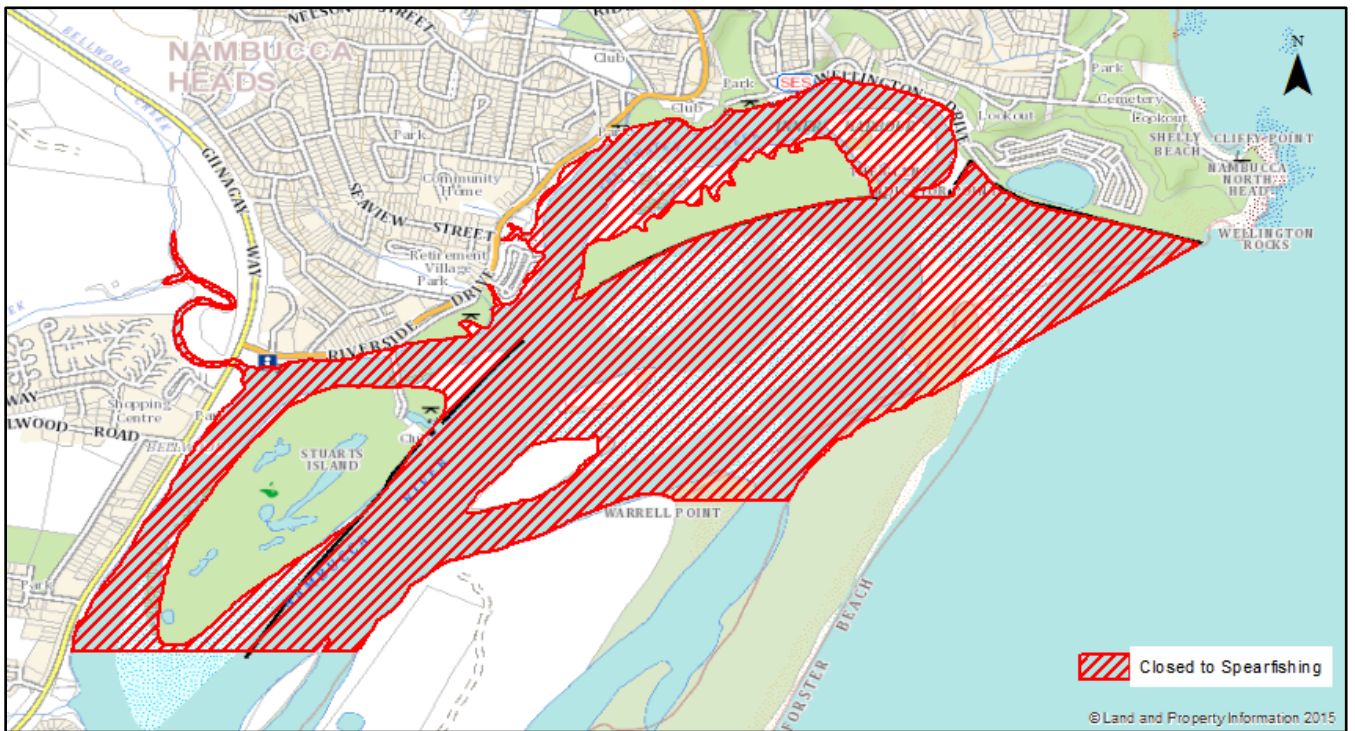
### 1.12 Bonville Creek



### 1.13 Bellinger River



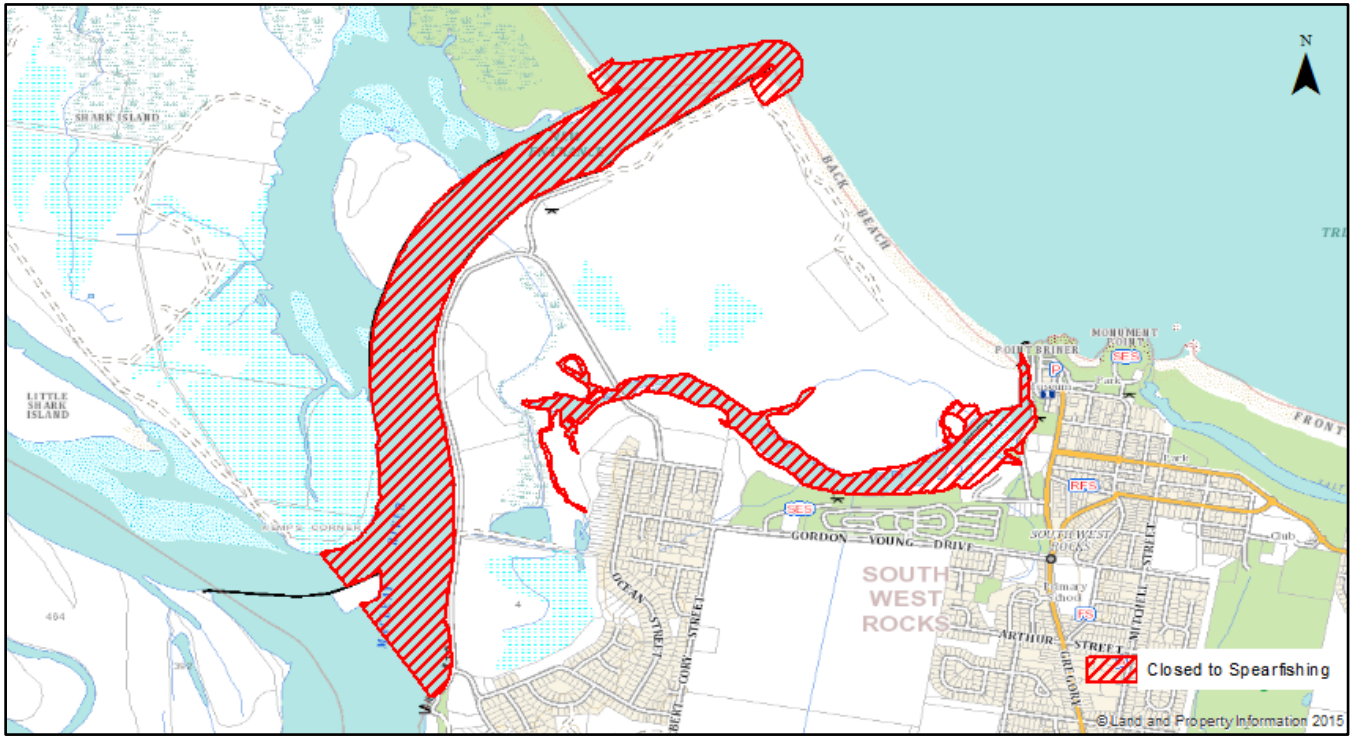
### 1.14 Nambucca River



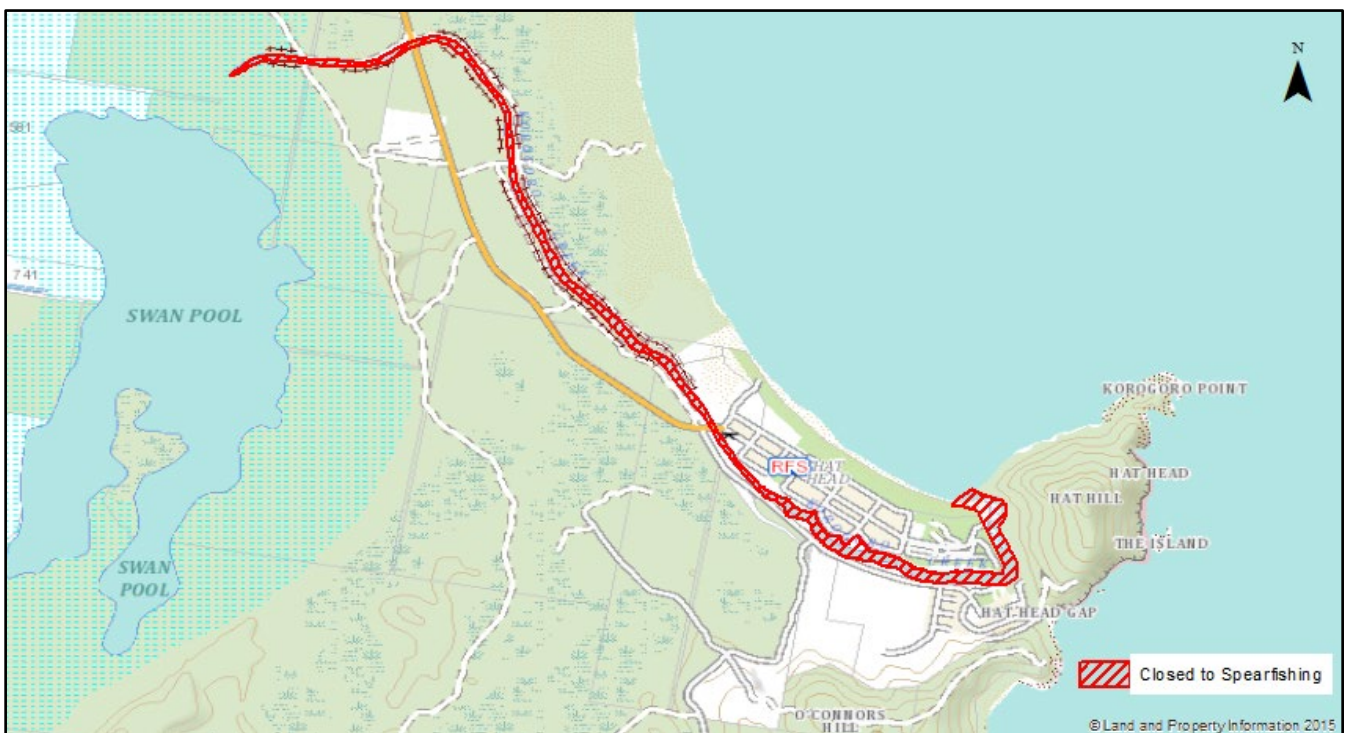
## 2. North Coast Spearfishing Closures



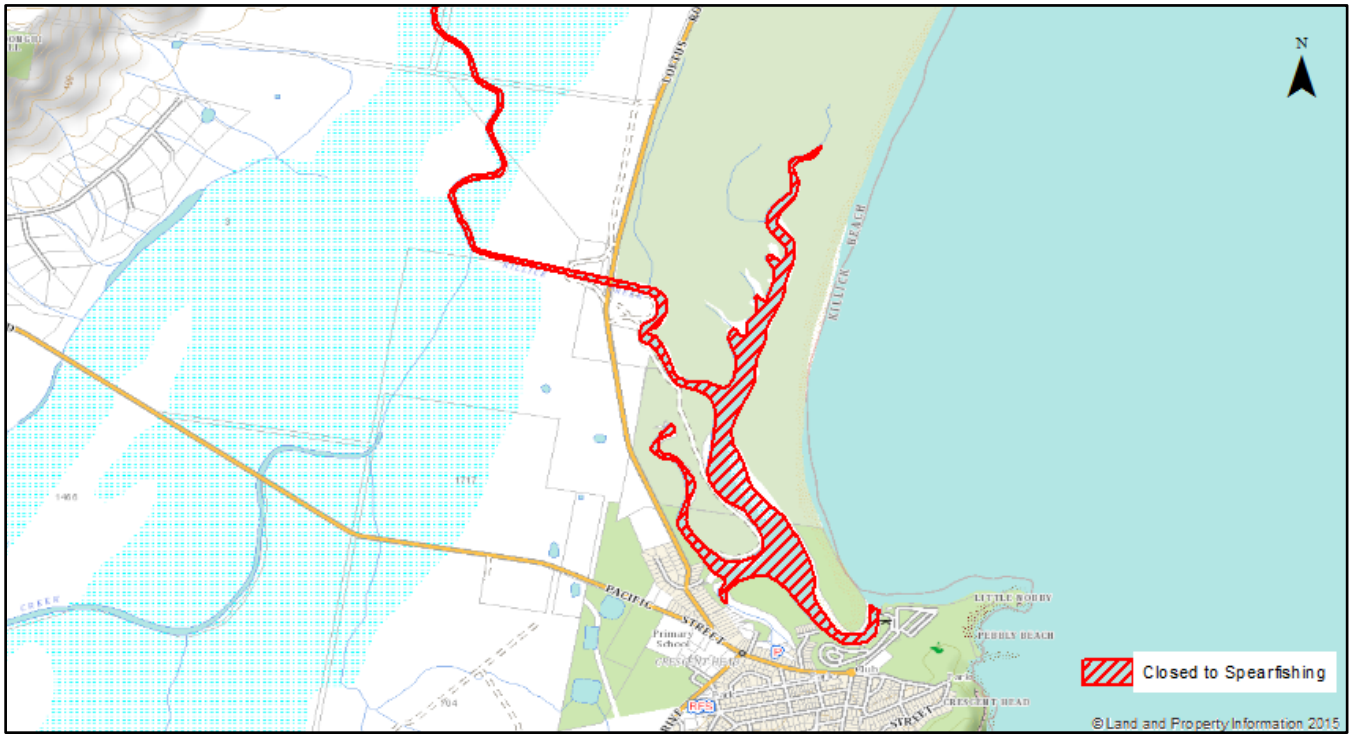
## 2.1 South West Rocks Creek



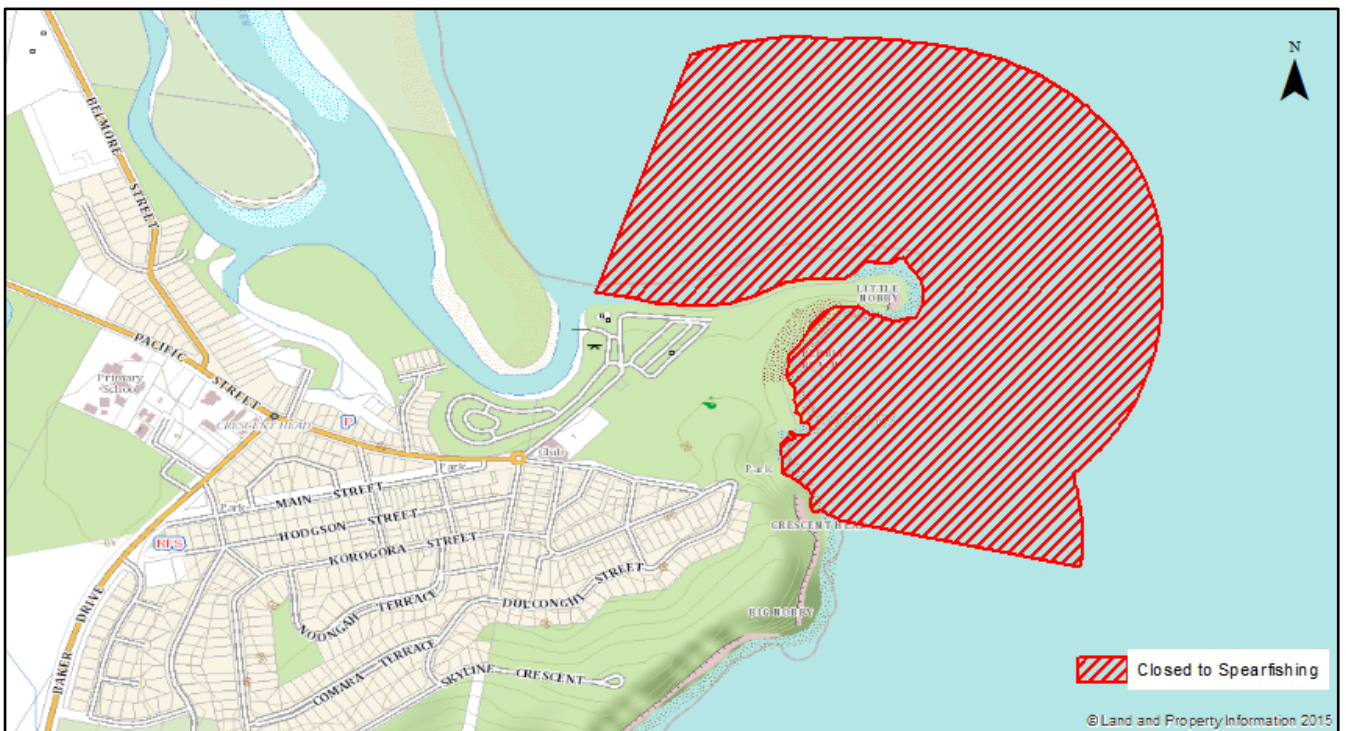
## 2.2 Korogoro Creek



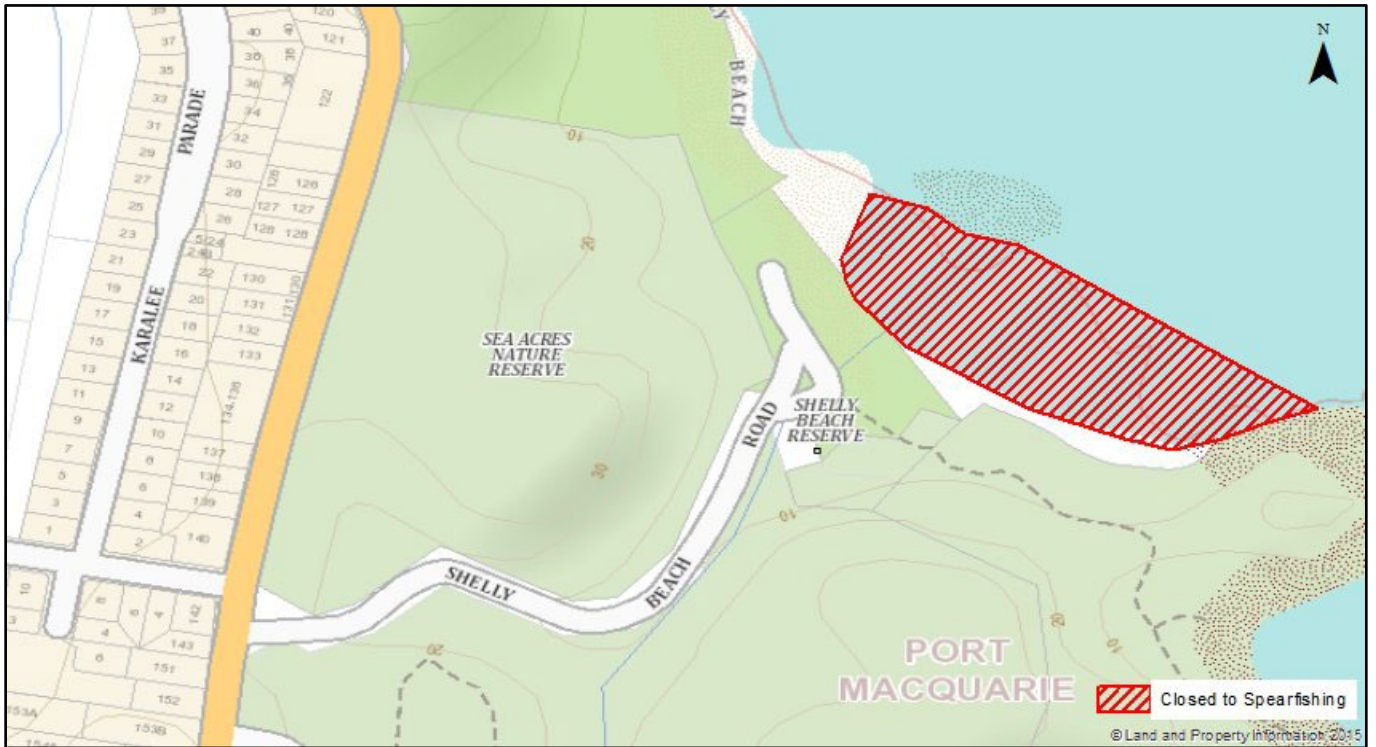
### 2.3 Killick Creek



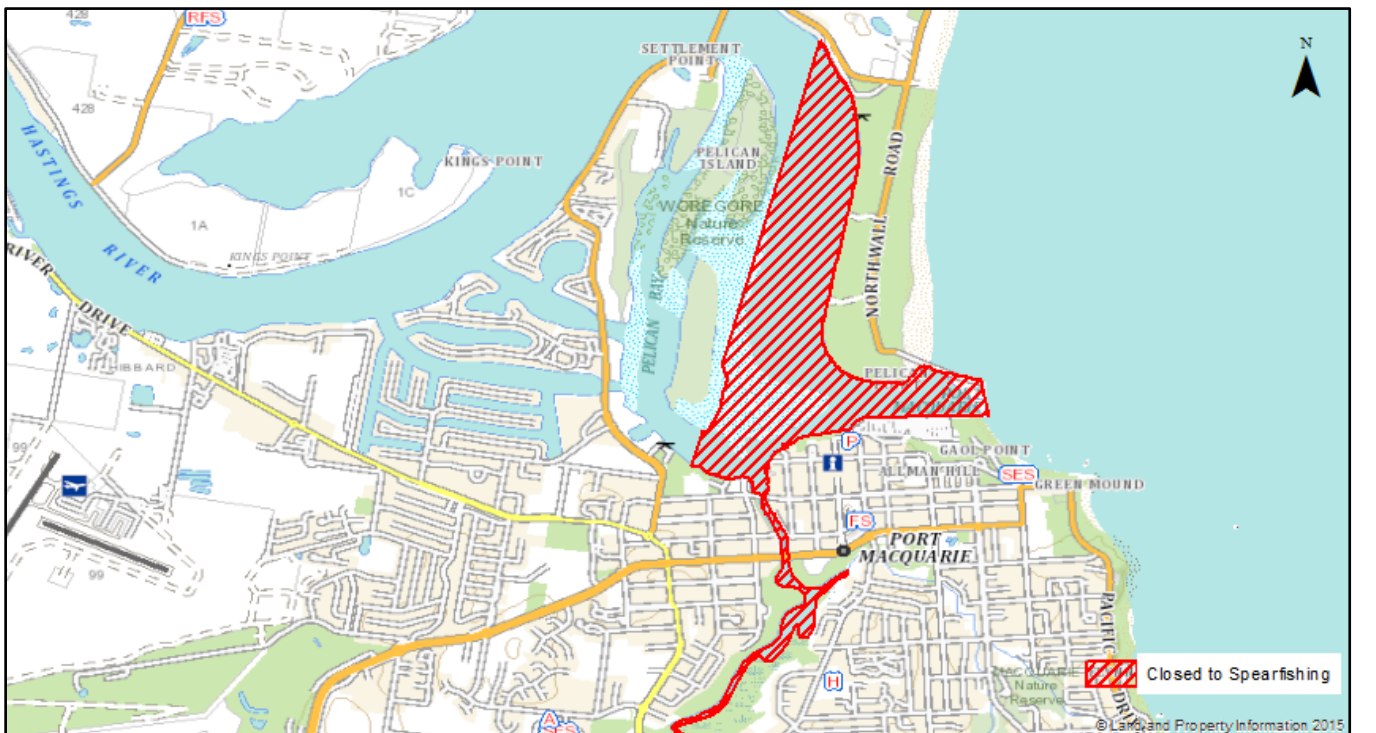
### 2.4 Crescent Head



## 2.5 Shelly Beach Lagoon

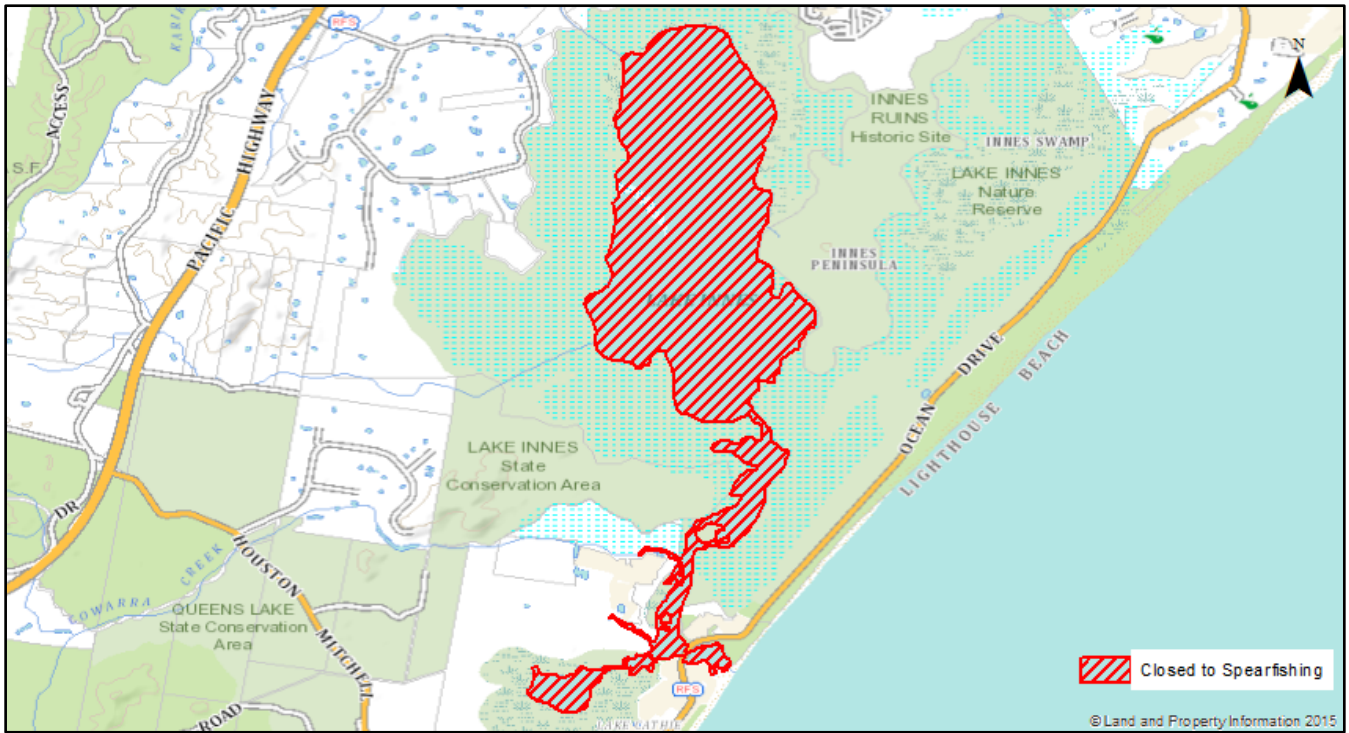


## 2.6 Hastings River – Entrance

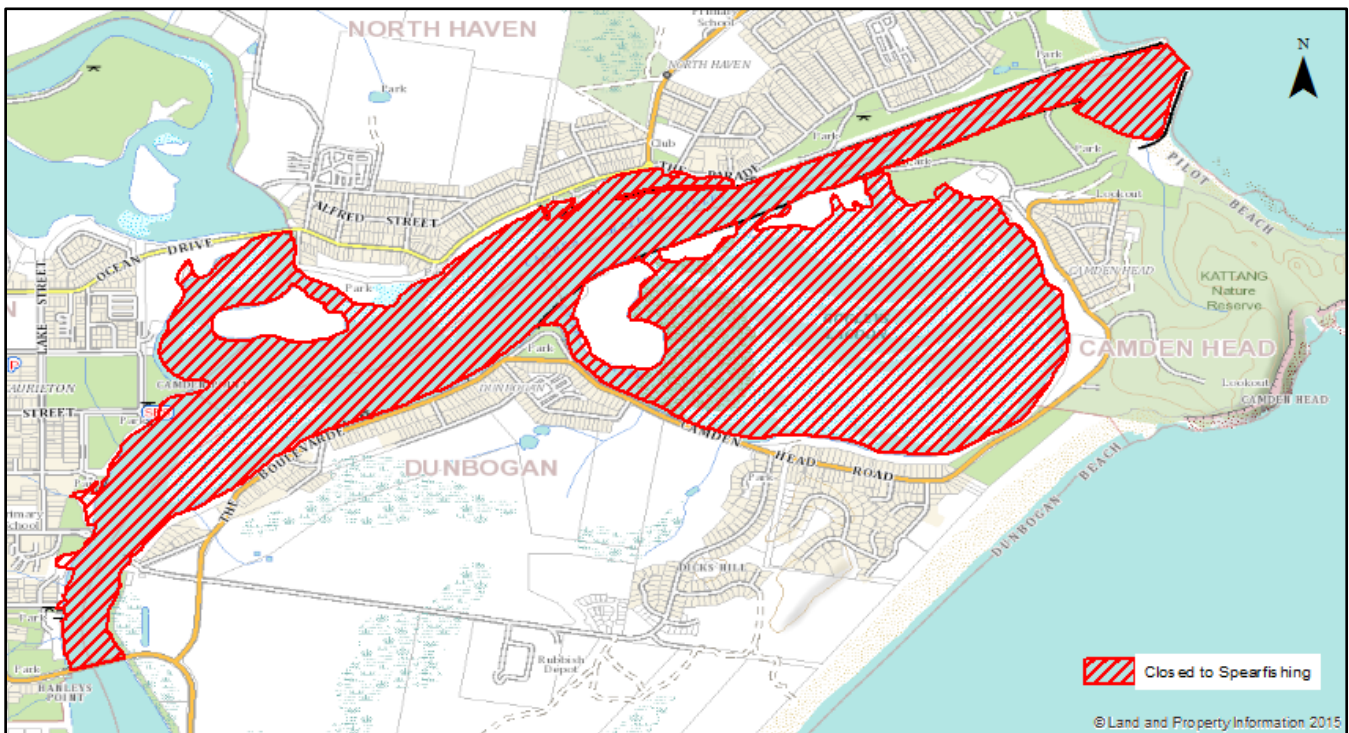




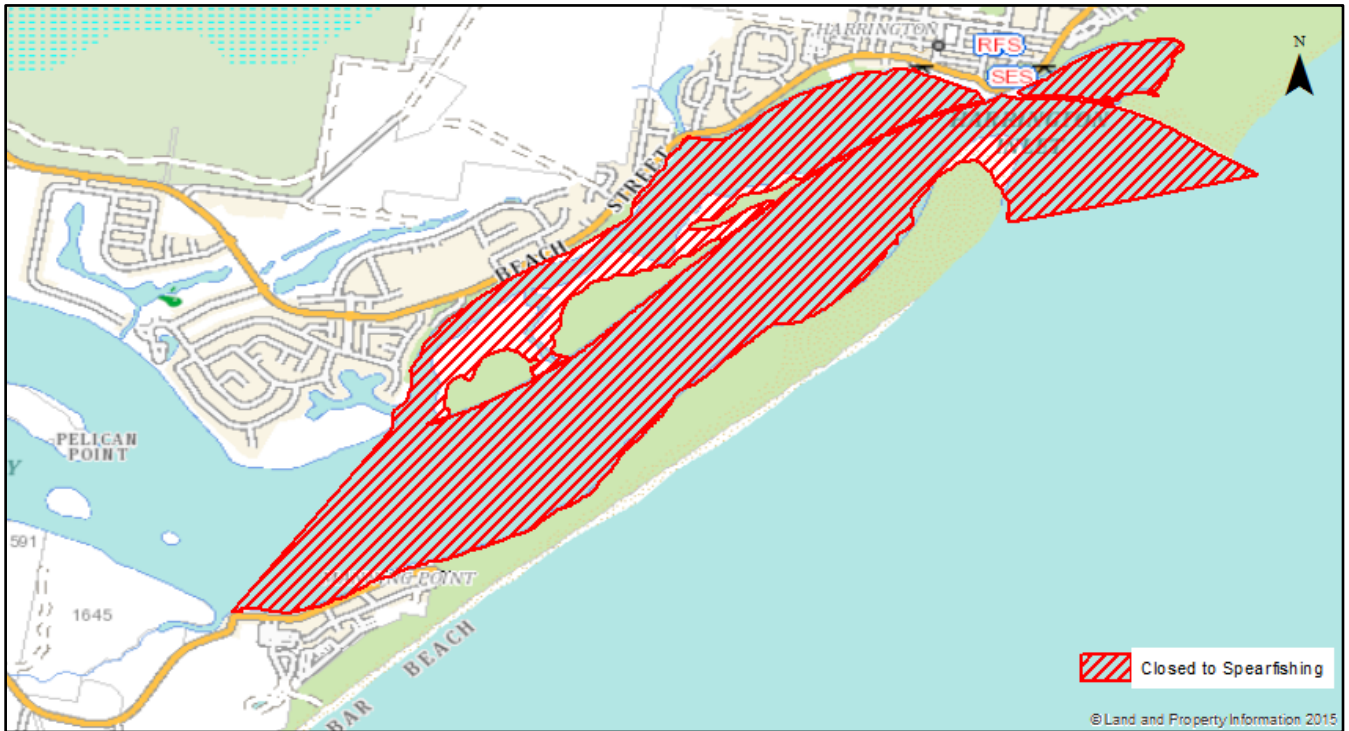
## 2.7 Hastings River – Creeks and Lakes



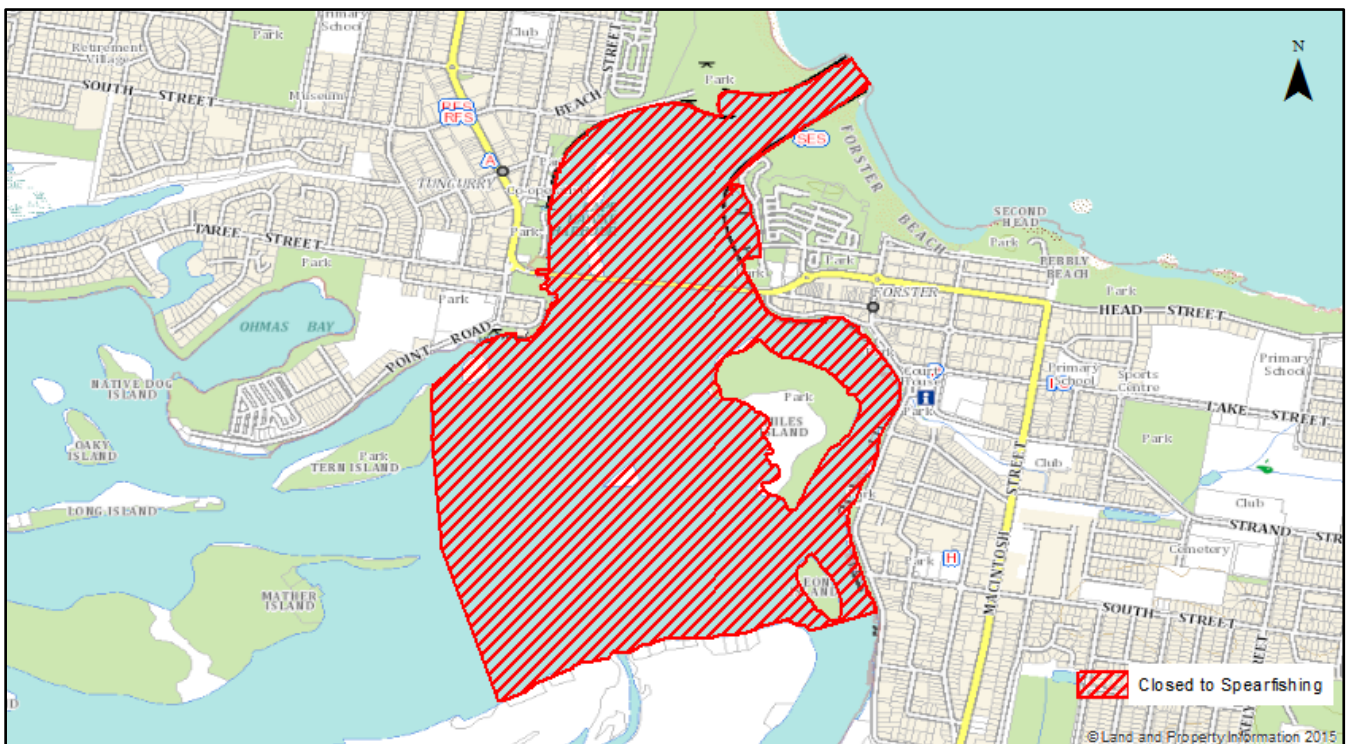
## 2.8 Camden Haven Inlet



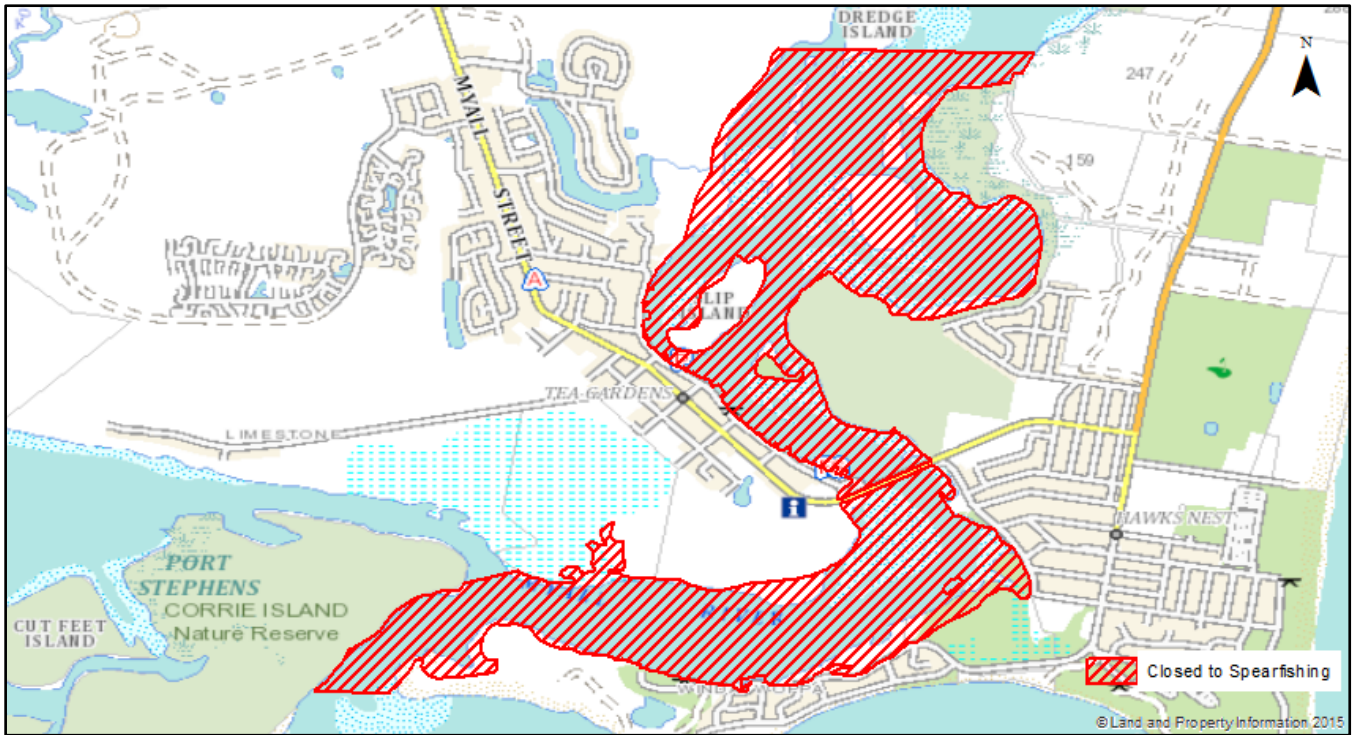
## 2.9 Manning River



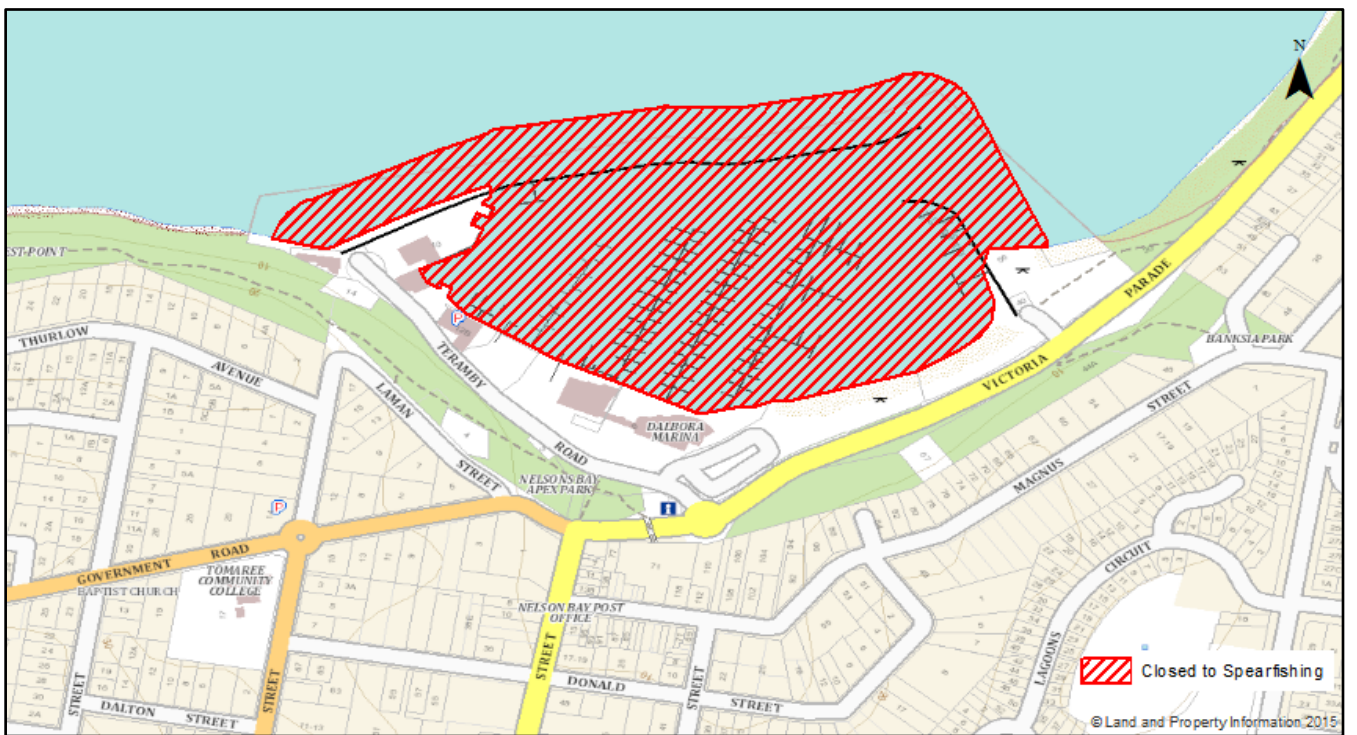
## 2.10 Wallis Lake



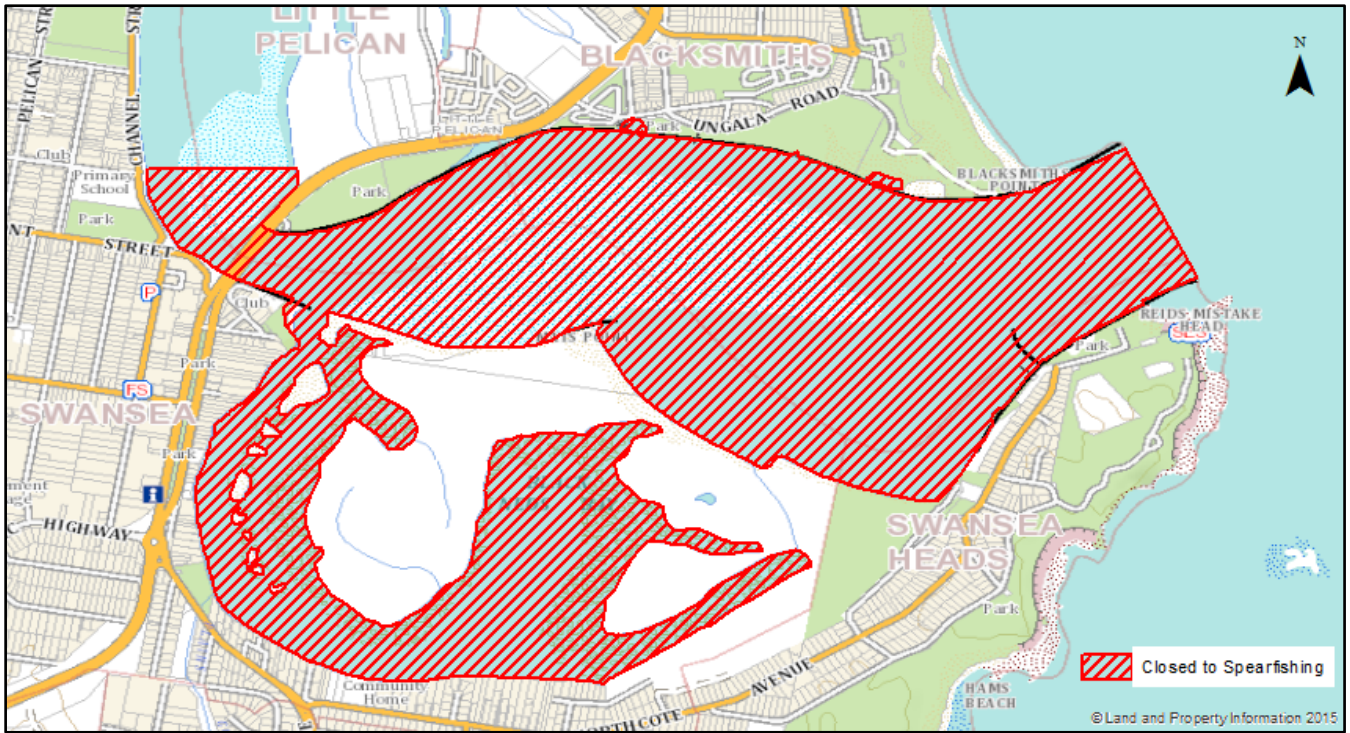
### 2.11 Myall River



### 2.12 Nelson Bay Boat Harbour



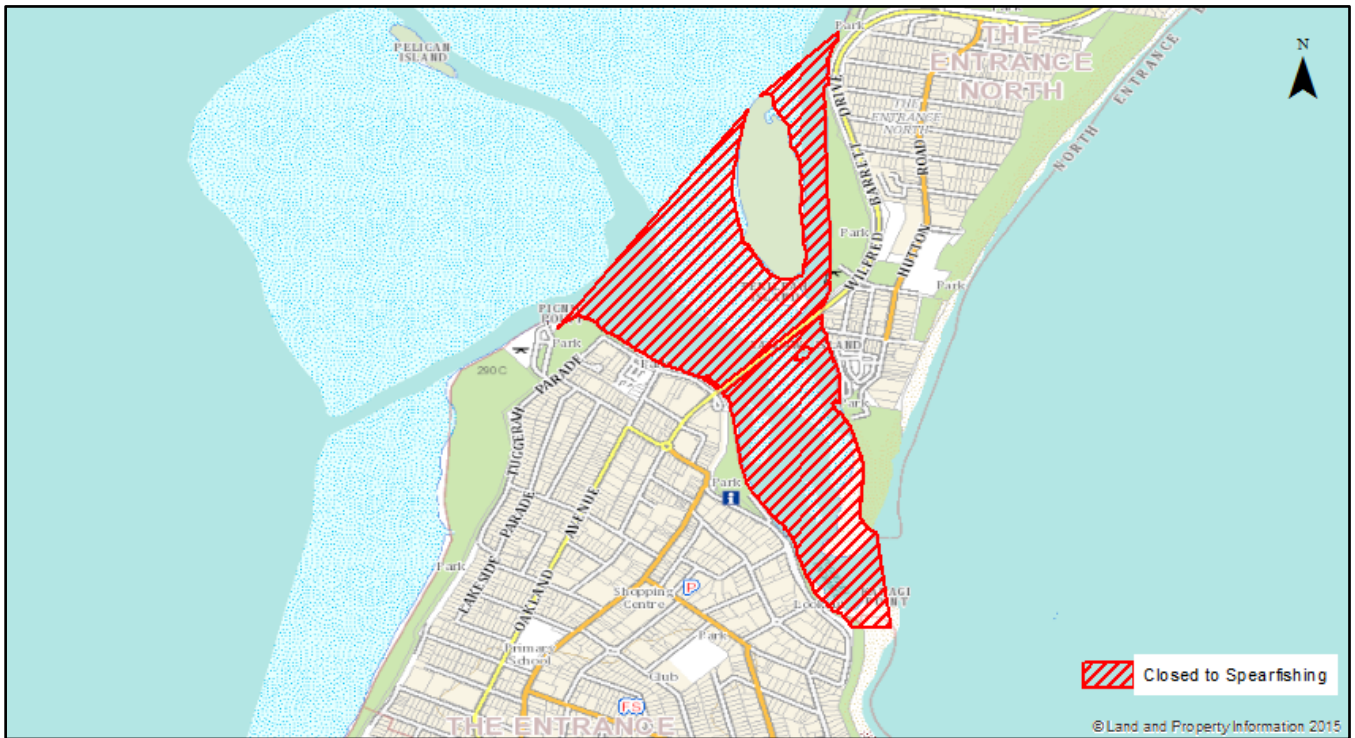
### 2.13 Lake Macquarie



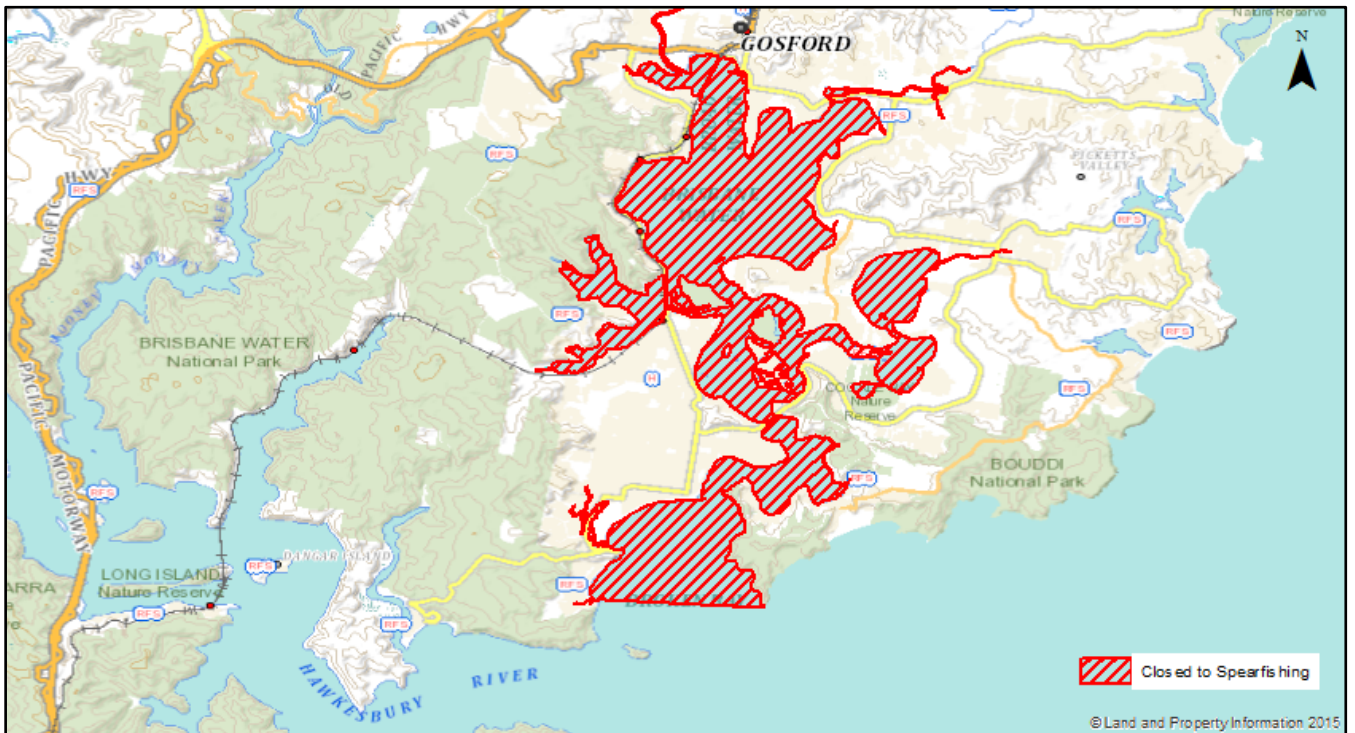
### 3. Central Coast and Sydney Region Spearfishing Closures



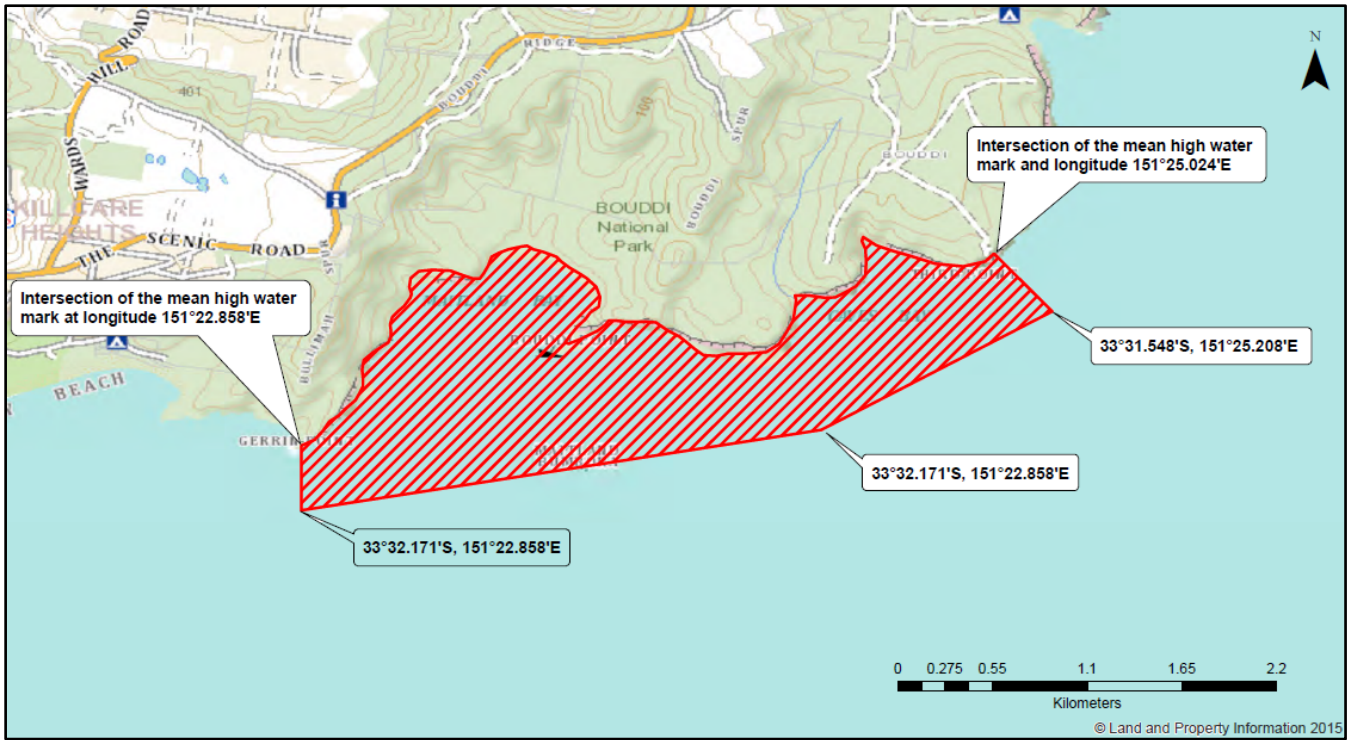
### 3.1 Tuggerah Lake Entrance



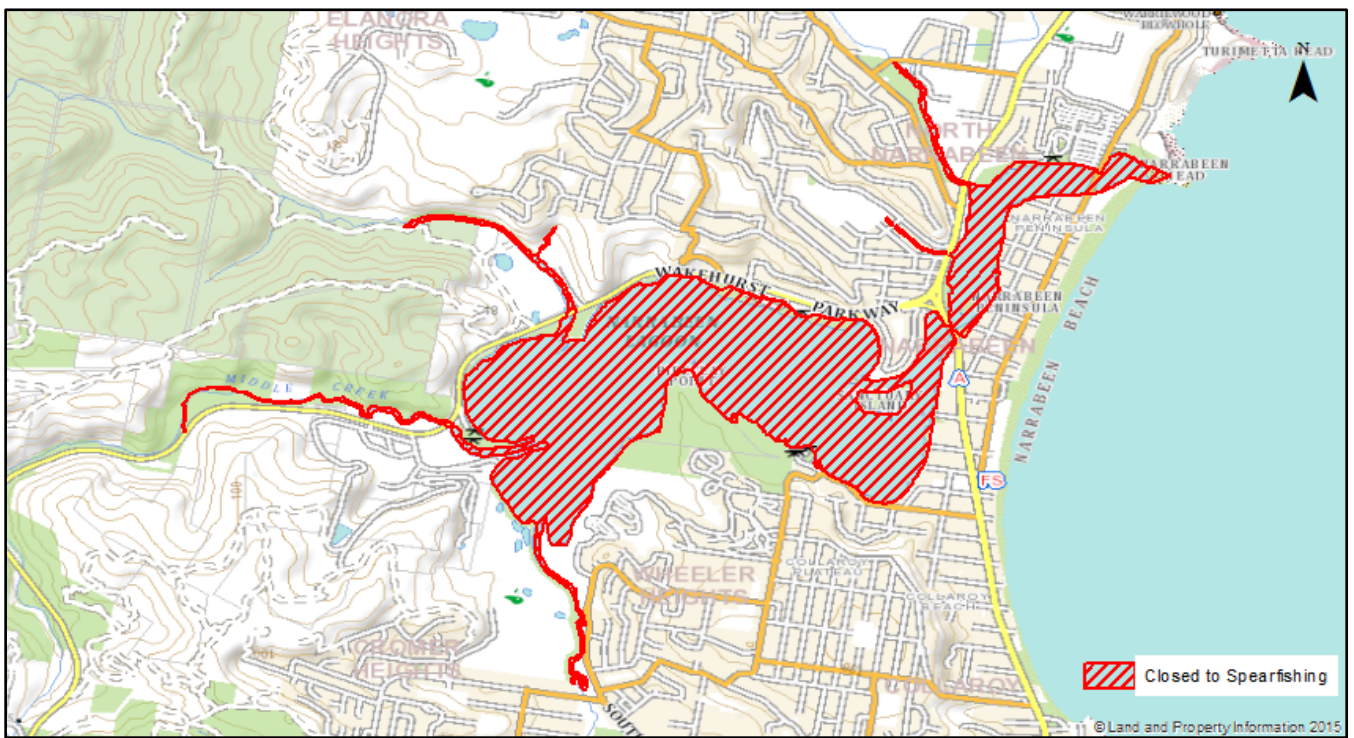
### 3.2 Brisbane Water



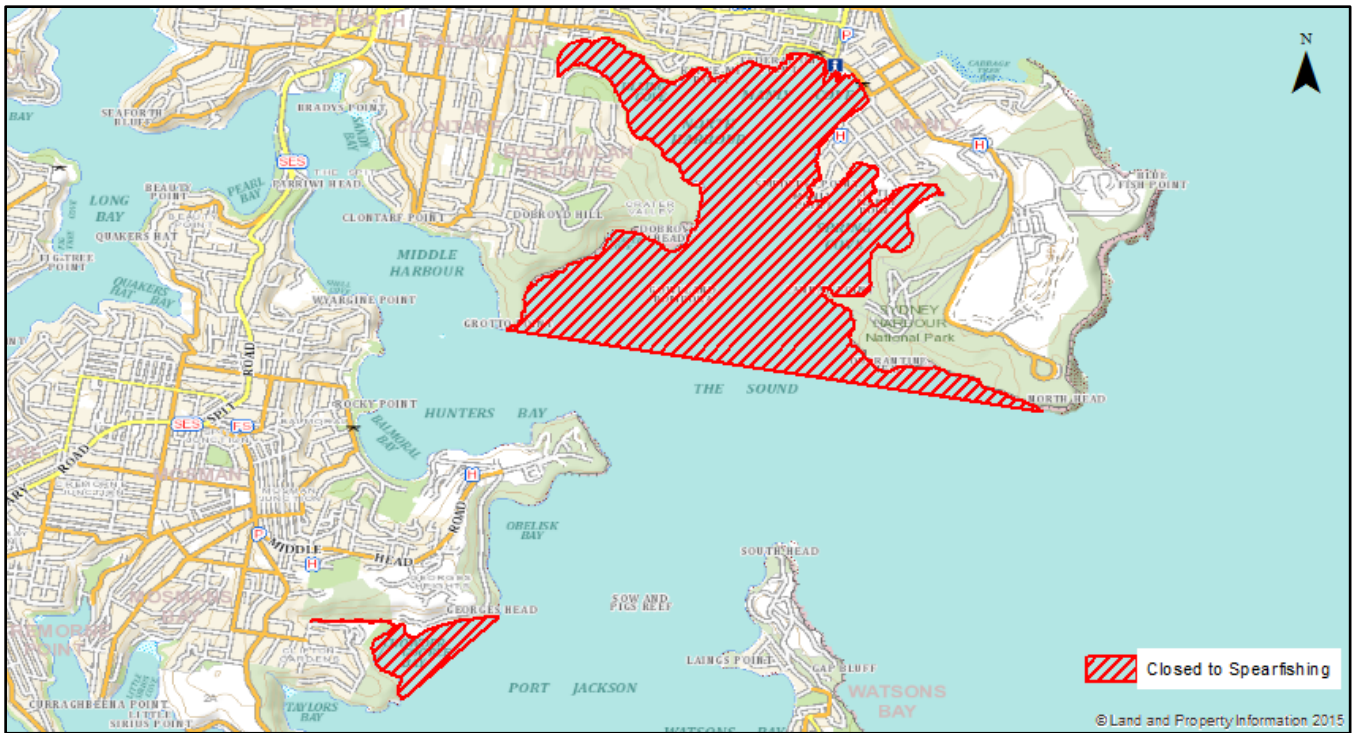
### 3.3 Bouddi National Park



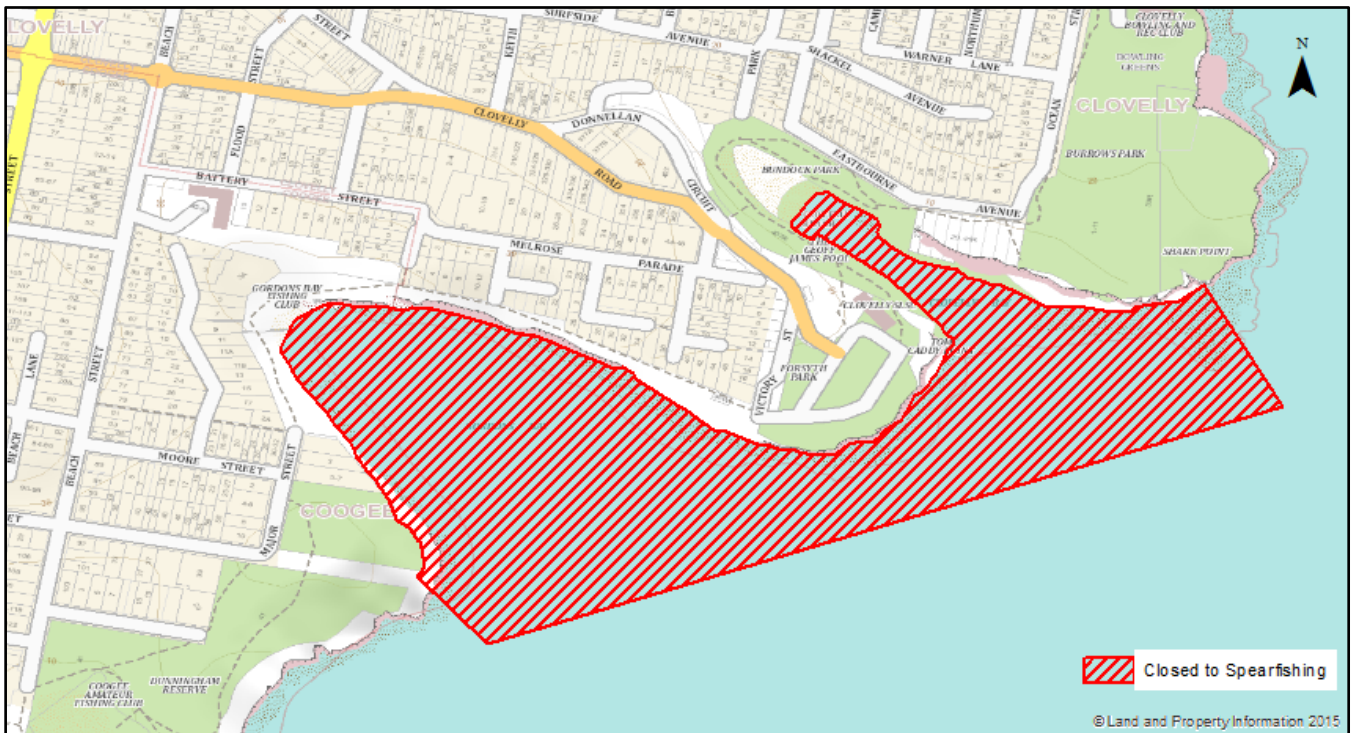
### 3.4 Narrabeen Lake



### 3.5 Port Jackson

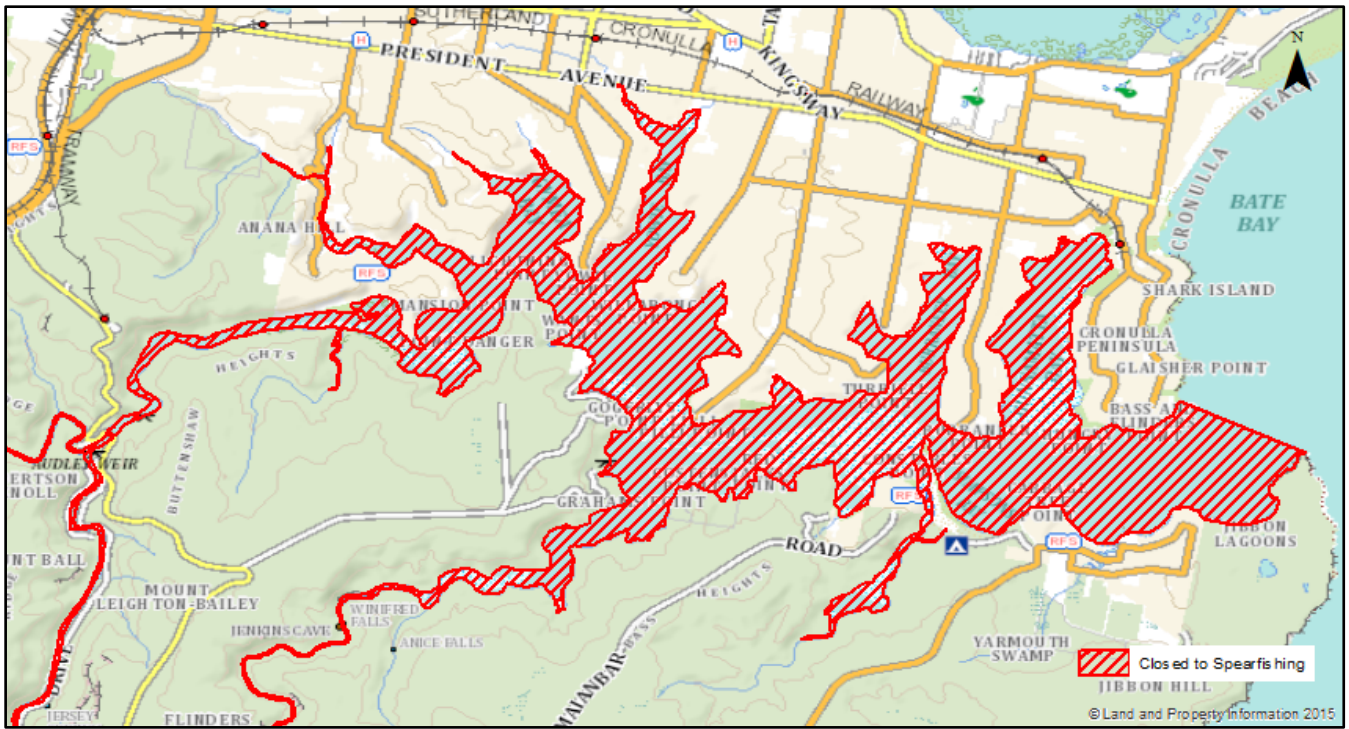


### 3.6 Clovelly Bay and Gordons Bay





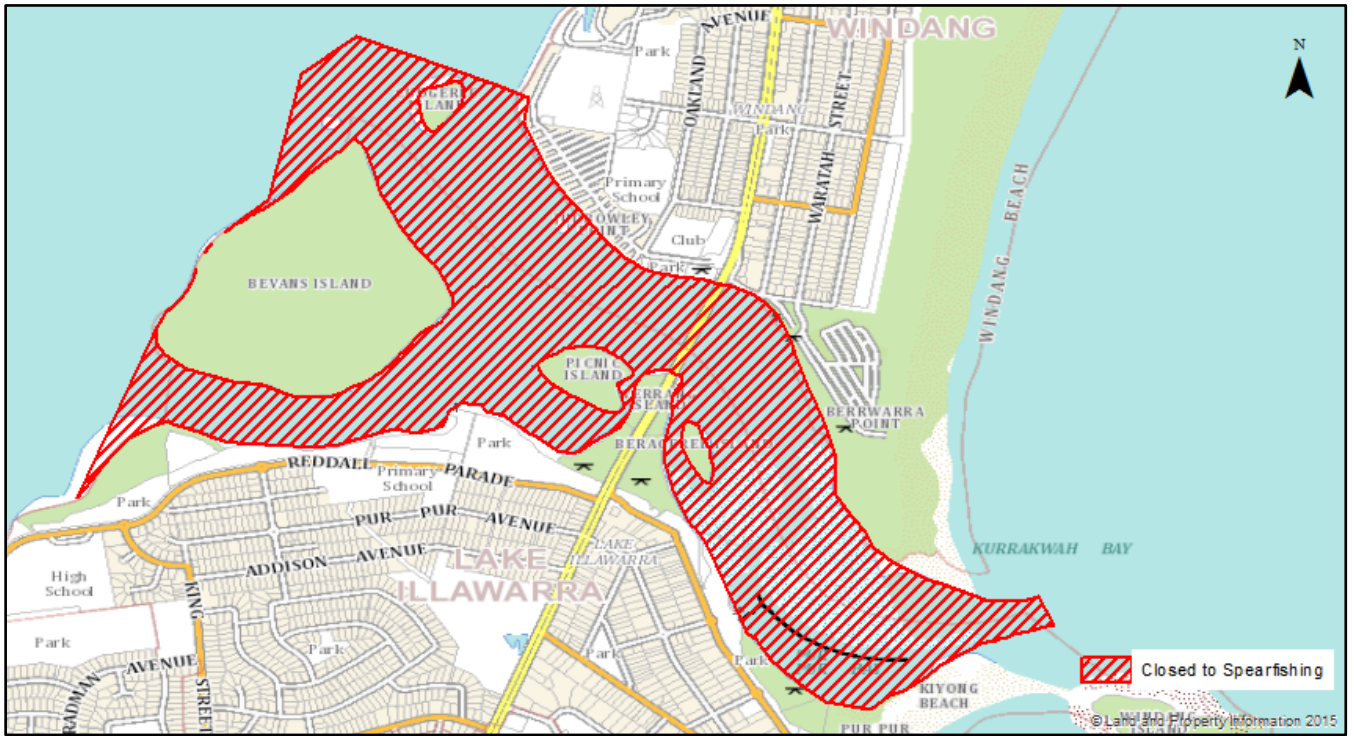
### 3.7 Port Hacking



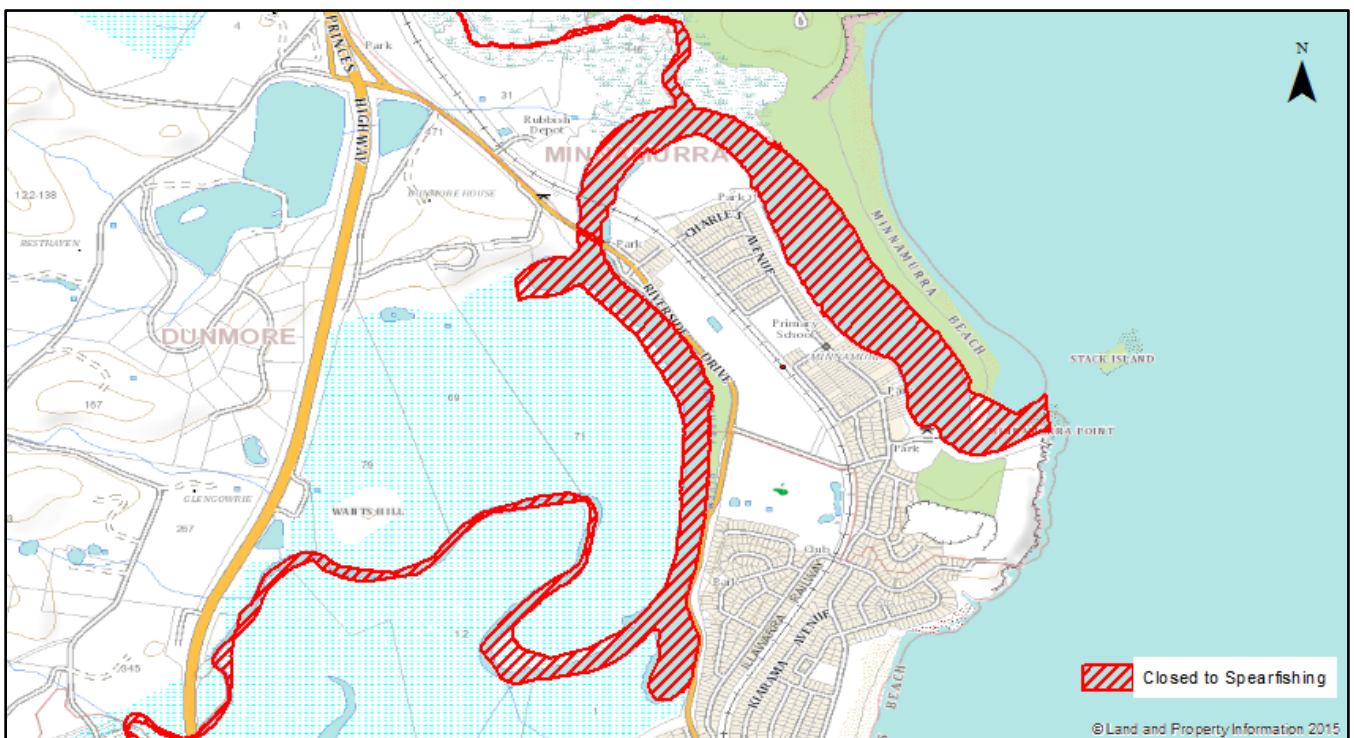
#### 4. South Coast Spearfishing Closures



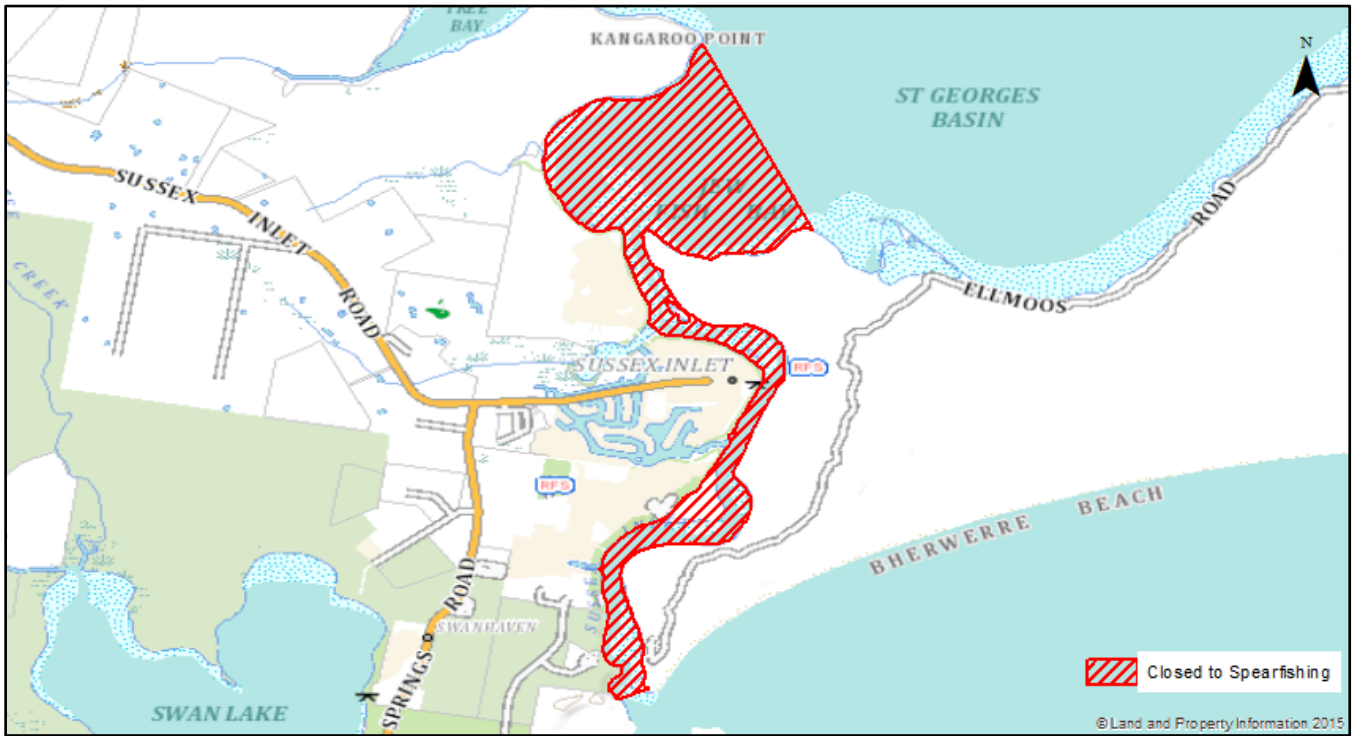
### 4.1 Lake Illawarra



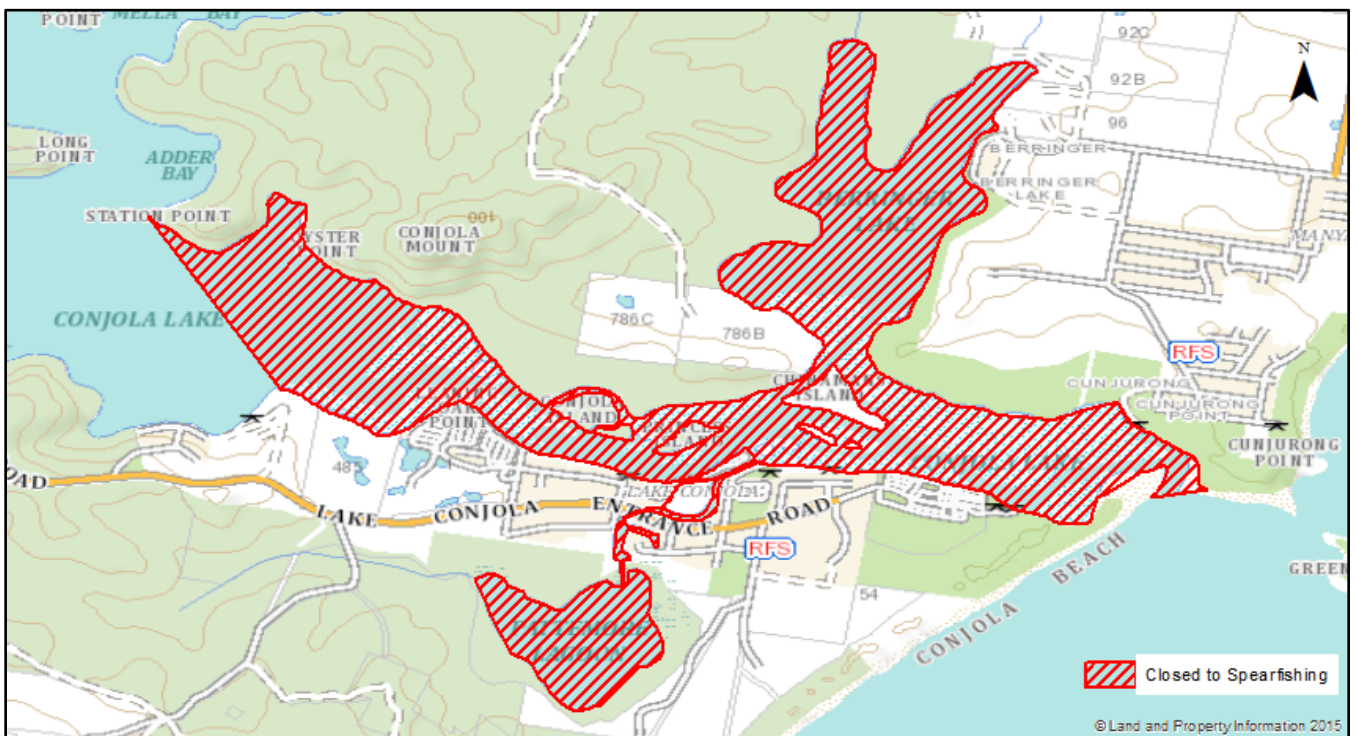
### 4.2 Minnamurra River



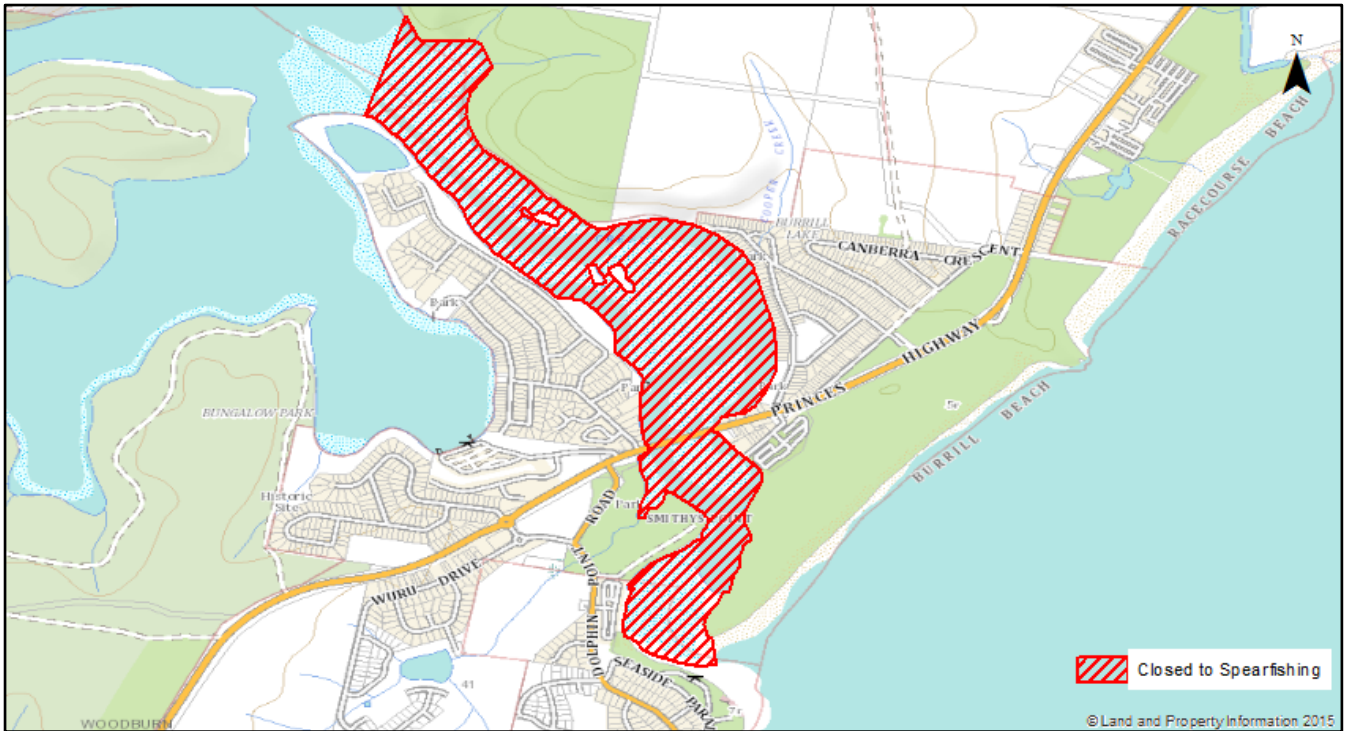
### 4.3 Sussex Haven



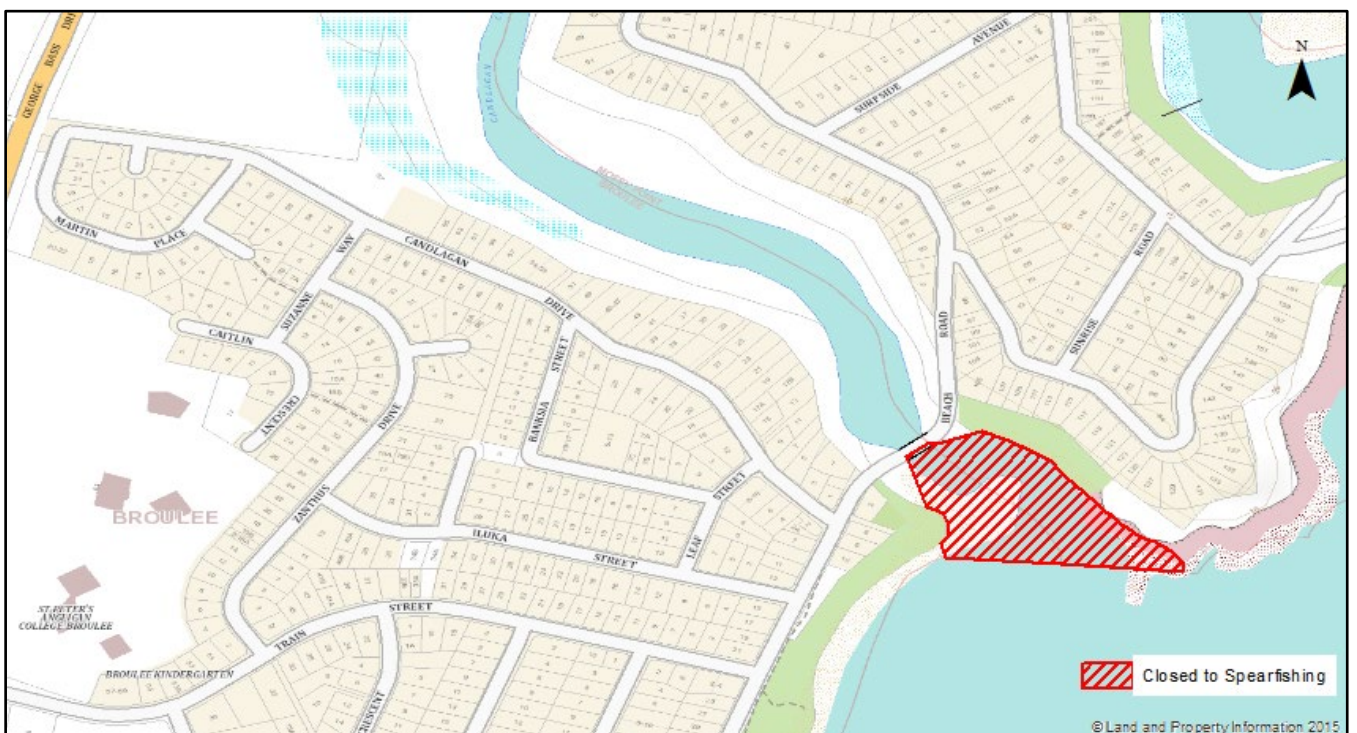
### 4.4 Conjola Lake



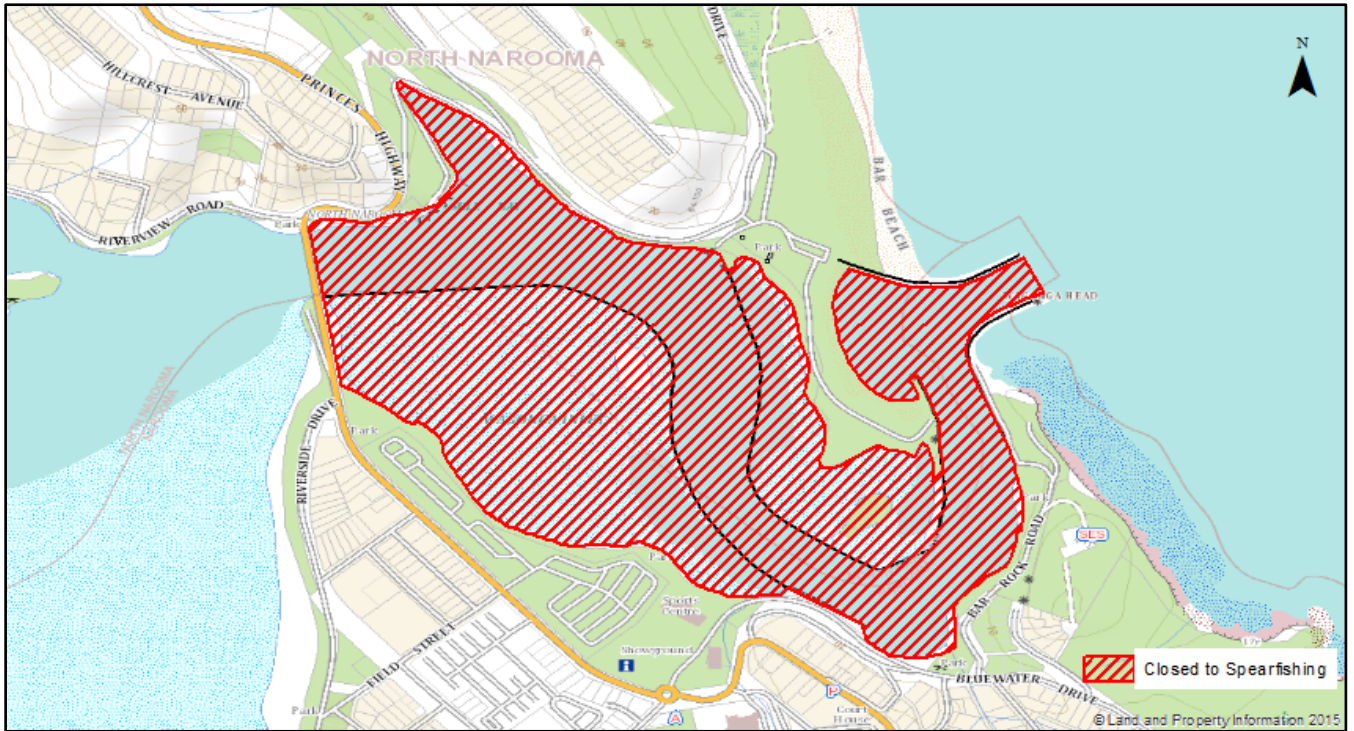
### 4.5 Burrill Lake



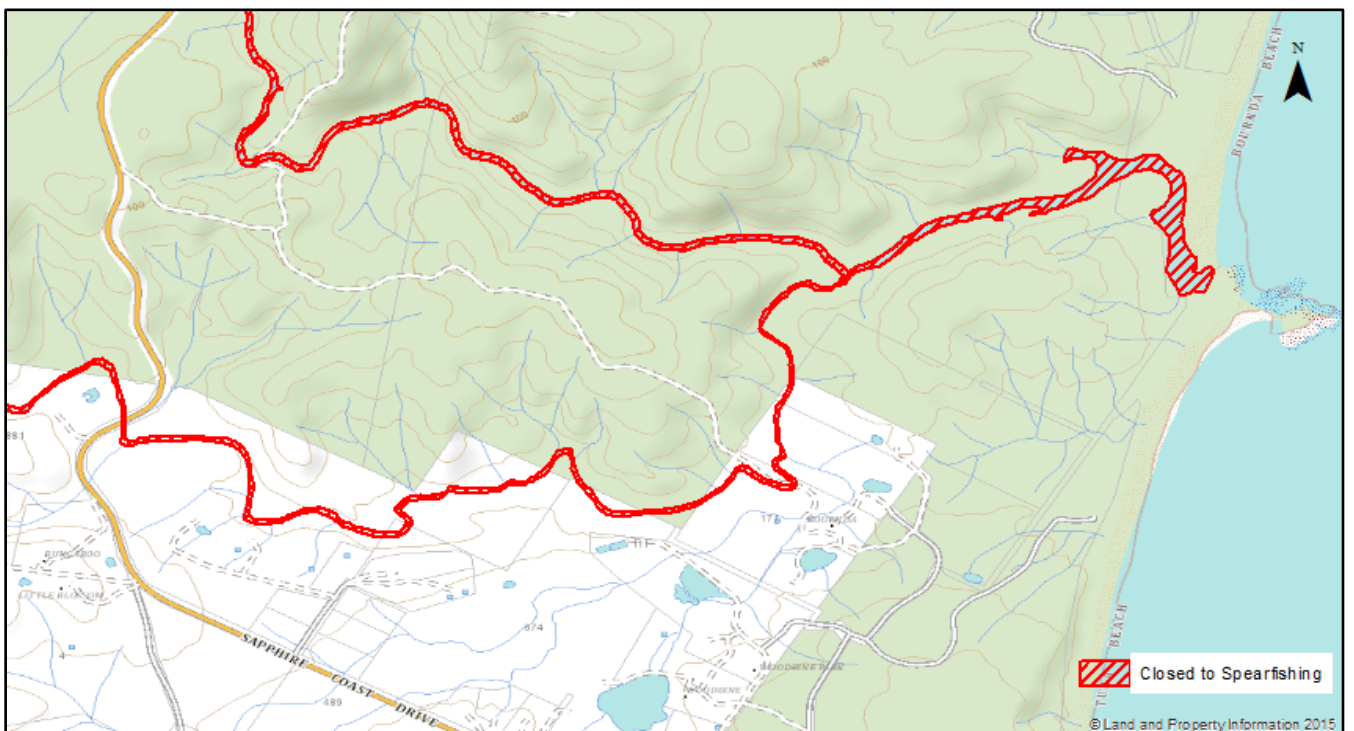
### 4.6 Candlagan Creek



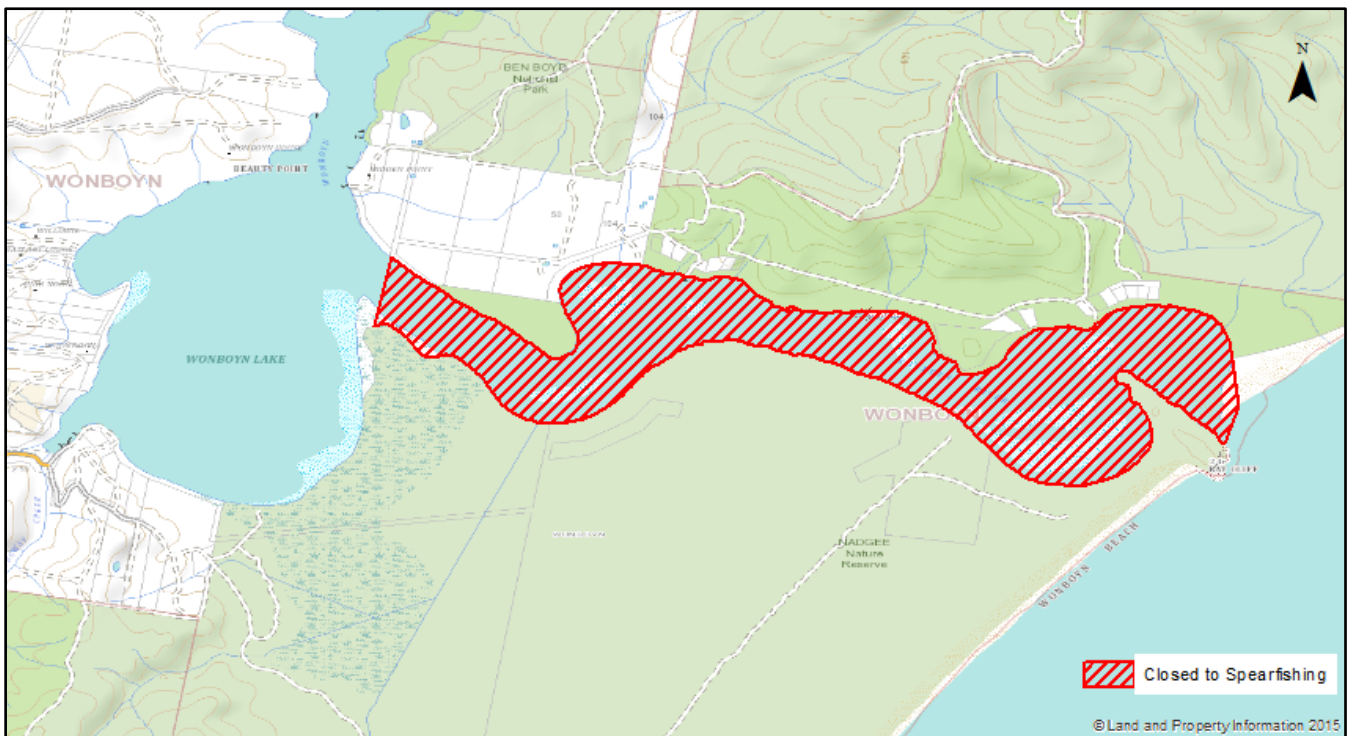
### 4.7 Wagonga River



### 4.8 Sandy Beach Creek



## 4.9 Wonboyn River



### GENERAL RECREATIONAL FISHING RULES

- It is illegal for recreational fishers to sell their catch.
- Leave all commercial fishing gear in place and do not disturb commercial fishers going about their lawful business.
- 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).
- Collecting pipis by recreational fishers for human consumption is prohibited in NSW. A maximum of 50 pipis is permitted to be collected for bait and not be removed more than 50m from the high tide mark. Pipis and cockles may contain toxins due to natural algal blooms. The blooms are not always visible.

- It is illegal to jag/foul hook fish other than through the mouth.

### 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. Follow these basic safety tips at all times when rock fishing:

- Always wear a life jacket
- Stay alert to the weather conditions
- Plan an escape route in case you are washed in
- Never turn your back on the ocean
- Wear appropriate non-slip footwear and light clothing
- Do not jump in if someone is washed in - wait for assistance
- Never fish alone

For more information go to [www.safefishing.com.au](http://www.safefishing.com.au)

### Responsible fishing

- Reduce wildlife injuries by attending your lines and avoid bird feeding areas.

- 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.
- If you retain your catch, dispatch all fish and invertebrates swiftly and humanely.
- Dispose of all litter and fish waste responsibly.
- Be considerate of others and keep noise to a minimum, especially in residential areas.
- Use environmentally friendly fishing tackle such as lead alternative sinkers, biodegradable line, and non-stainless hooks where possible.
- Act responsibly when you have reached your bag limit and you remain in the fishing grounds. Do not interfere with commercial fishing activities or commercial fishing gear.

### 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 DPI Recreational Fishing Guide or [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au) or phone 1300 552 406.

### Penalties

Penalties apply to persons who take or possess fish (including invertebrates, shells, etc.) 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 waterways and beaches visit [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing) or contact the local fisheries office.

Tweed District: (07) 5523 6900

Richmond District: (02) 6626 1200

Clarence District: (02) 6645 0500

Coffs District: (02) 6652 3977

Hastings District: (02) 5524 0600

Wallis District: (02) 6591 6300

Port Stephens District: (02) 4916 3934

Hunter District: (02) 4980 9202

Central Coast District: (02) 4328 8618

Sydney North District: (02) 8437 4903

Sydney South District: (02) 9529 6021

Illawarra District: (02) 4220 8499

Shoalhaven District: (02) 4428 3400

Batemans Bay District: (02) 4478 9100

Montague District: (02) 4476 0100

Far South Coast District: (02) 6496 8200

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