

23 September 2025

Central Coast and Hawkesbury River Recreational Fishing Guide

A guide to fishing the NSW Central Coast and Hawkesbury River including details of local fishing closures.

Fishing is a fun, outdoor activity for the whole family. Fishing rules help ensure healthy and sustainable fisheries for future generations.

The Central Coast's waterways provide excellent beach, rock, and boat fishing opportunities. This guide provides essential information on fishing, including any closures and restrictions, which apply within the Central Coast district, extending from Munmorah State Recreation Park in the north, to the southern bank of the Hawkesbury River.

DPI fisheries officers routinely patrol waterways, boat ramps and foreshores to advise anglers about responsible fishing practices and to ensure compliance with NSW fishing regulations.

Information on bag and size limits and legal fishing gear can be obtained at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries or by visiting your local DPI fisheries office.

To report suspected illegal fishing activity, call the Fishers Watch phone line on 1800 043 536 (free call) or report on-line at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/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.

You can pay the NSW recreational fishing fee at www.onegov.nsw.gov.au or by calling 1300 369 365 or at many outlets throughout NSW, such as 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 go to www.dpi.nsw.gov.au 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.

RECREATIONAL FISHING CLOSURES

A number of fishing closures exist in the Central 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.

General fishing closures

All NSW waters. During the period May to August (inclusive) each year Australian Bass and Estuary Perch can only be taken by catch and release fishing in any NSW waters except impoundments and the waters of rivers above impoundments.

Total Fishing Closures

All methods of fishing are prohibited in the following waters.

EX HMAS Adelaide Wreck (Figure 1). The whole of the waters bound within the following co-ordinates: (a) 33 27.887'S, 151 27.301'E (b) 33 27.767'S, 151 27.374'E (c) 33 27.852'S, 151 27.574'E (d) 33 27.973'S, 151 27.502'E

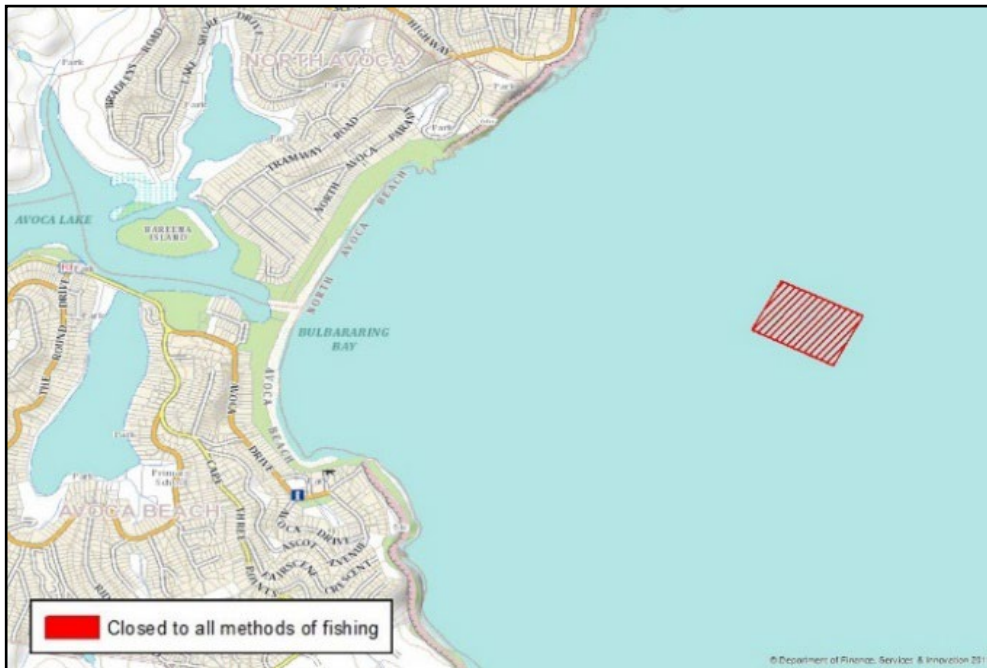


Figure 1: EX HMAS Adelaide Wreck

Bouddi National Park (Marine Extension) (Figure 2). The whole of the waters of that part of the South Pacific Ocean adjacent to Bouddi National Park is closed to all methods of fishing.

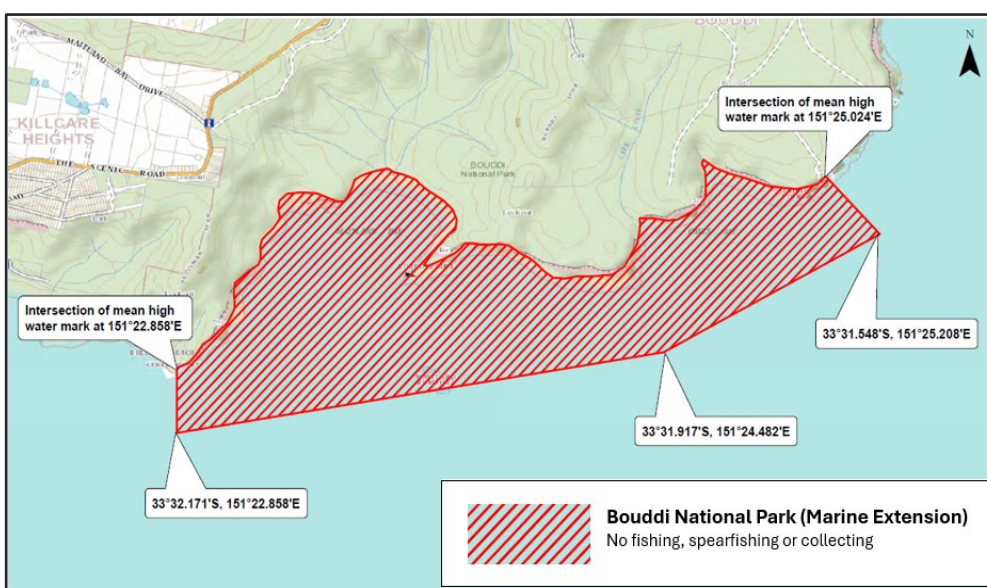


Figure 2: Bouddi National Park Marine Extension

General fishing closures

All NSW waters. During the period May to August (inclusive) each year Australian Bass and Estuary Perch can only be taken by catch and release fishing in any NSW waters except impoundments and the waters of rivers above impoundments.

Recreational netting and trapping

Lake Munmorah (Budgewoi Creek) (Figure 3). The whole of the waters of Budgewoi Creek and its tributaries, upstream from the traffic road bridge to the pedestrian bridge at the entrance to Lake Munmorah are closed to any method involving the use of a net other than a dip or scoop net (prawns) or a landing net.



Figure 3: Lake Munmorah (Budgewoi Creek)

Brisbane Water and a portion of Broken Bay (Figure 4). The area enclosed by a line from Little Box Head to Green Point, is permanently closed to the use of all nets and traps (except the dip or scoop net, lobster trap, landing net and bait trap).

Brisbane Water and a portion of Broken Bay (Figure 4). The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a lobster trap; The whole of the waters of that part of Brisbane waters/Broken Bay north of a line drawn westerly from the western extremity of Little Box Head and the northernmost point of Mount Ettalong.

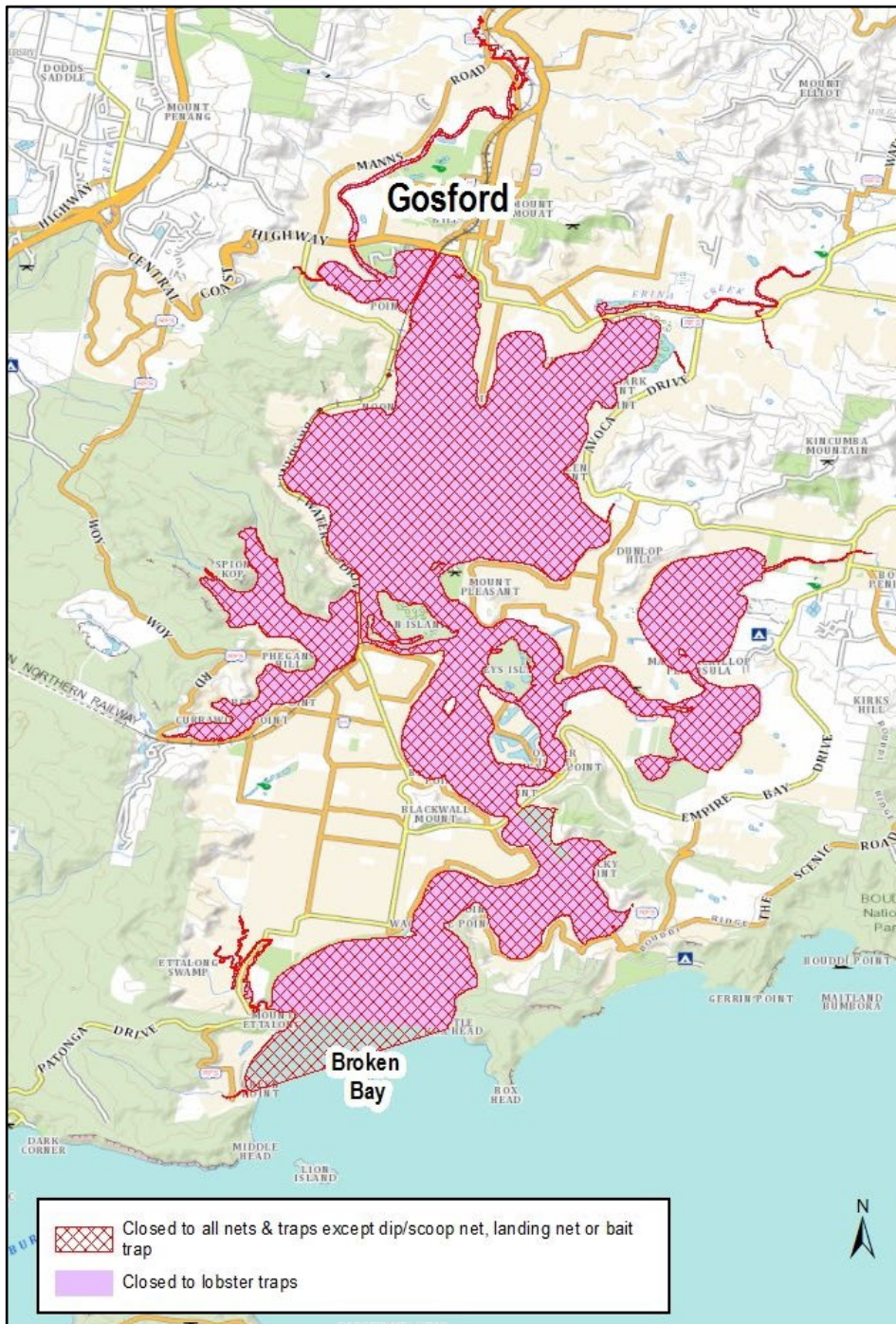


Figure 4: Patonga Creek and Mooney Mooney Creek

Cowan Creek and Jerusalem Bay (Figure 5). All waters of Cowan Creek, its creeks, tributaries and inlets (including Jerusalem Bay), upstream to its source from a line drawn generally north from Cowan Point, to the eastern extremity of the headland on the opposite side of the creek are closed to nets of every description, except the landing net.

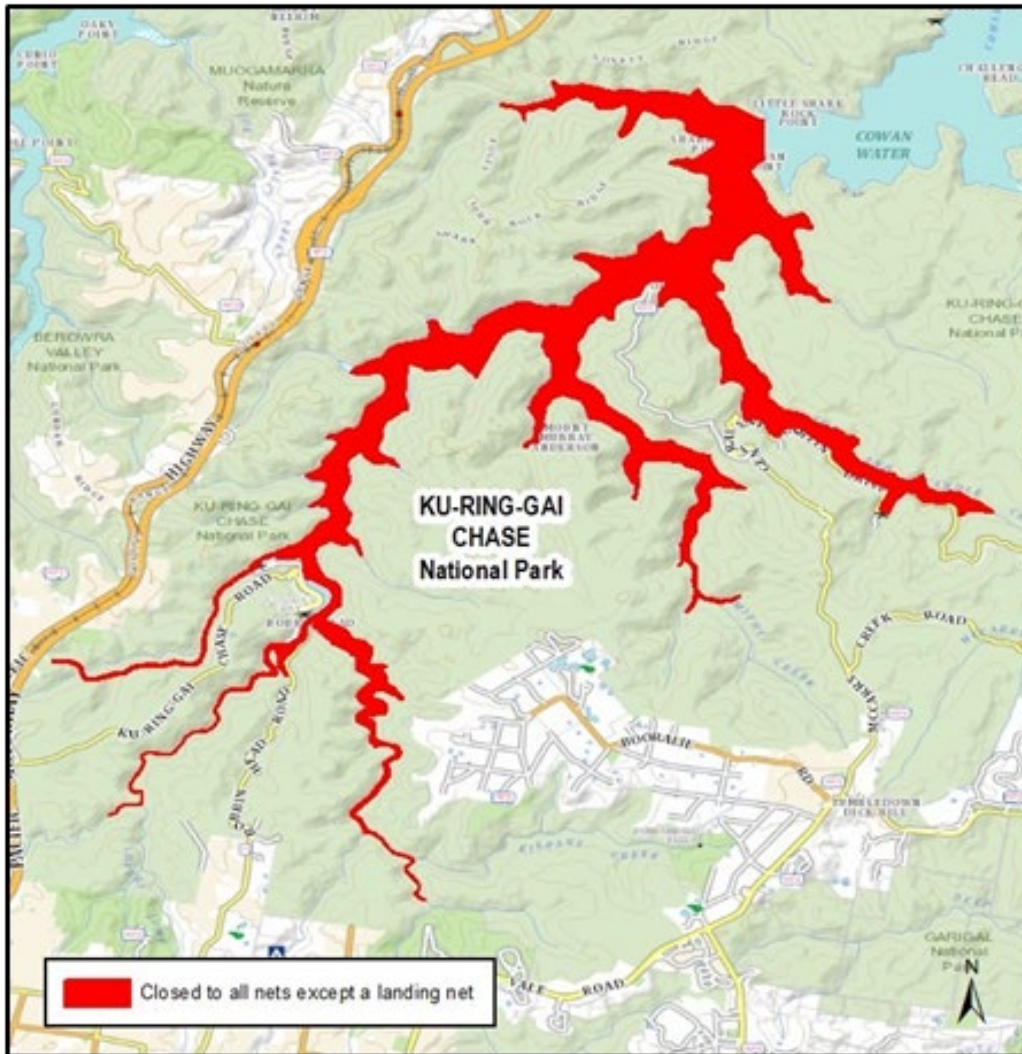


Figure 5: Cowan Creek and Jerusalem Bay

Patonga Creek (Figure 6). The whole of the waters of Patonga Creek and its tributaries, upstream from its confluence with Hawkesbury River, being a line drawn north easterly from the western foreshore at a point 151°15.91 'E, 33°33.13 'S to the southernmost extremity of the reserve on the opposite foreshore. Closed to nets of every description, except the landing net. Applies from 12pm Friday to 6pm Sunday in each week. These waters are also closed to any method involving a hand-hauled prawn net, all year.

Mooney Mooney Creek (Figure 6). The whole of the waters of Mooney Mooney Creek, its creeks, tributaries and inlets, upstream to its source from the Pacific Highway Bridge are closed to nets of every description, except the landing net. Applies from 6 pm Friday to 6 pm Sunday in each week, or from 6 pm Friday to 6 pm Monday where Monday is a Public Holiday.



Figure 6: Patonga Creek and Mooney Mooney Creek

Tuggerah Lakes (Figure 7). The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a hoop or lift net, a hand-hauled prawn net, a push or scissors net (prawns), a crab trap, or a lobster trap: the whole of the waters of that part of the entrance to Tuggerah Lake from the confluence of Tuggerah Lake and the South Pacific Ocean bounded by a line commencing on the high water mark at a point 201 m south-westerly from the north-western corner of portion 39 in the parish of Wallarah, then north-westerly to 33°19.410 ' S, 151°30.293 ' E (NSW Maritime Navigation Aid Number 096), then north-westerly to 33°19.344 ' S, 151°30.112 ' E (NSW Maritime Navigation Aid Number 095), then northerly to 33°19.143 ' S, 151°29.959 ' E (NSW Maritime Navigation Aid Number 094), then northerly to 33°18.934 ' S, 151°29.875 ' E (NSW Maritime Navigation Aid Number 093), then south- westerly to 33°19.225 ' S, 151°29.589 ' E (NSW Maritime Navigation Aid Number 092), then south-westerly to 33°19.636 ' S, 151°29.134 ' E (NSW Maritime Navigation Aid Number 091), then south-westerly to 33°20.055 ' S, 151°28.708 ' E (NSW Maritime Navigation Aid Number 090), then easterly to 33°20.138 ' S, 151°29.122 ' E (NSW Maritime Navigation Aid Number 089), then south-easterly to 33°20.220 ' S, 151°29.235 ' E (NSW Maritime Navigation Aid Number 088), then south-easterly to 33°20.364 ' S, 151°29.300 ' E (NSW Maritime Navigation Aid Number 087), then south-easterly to a point on the high water mark of the eastern shore of that lake 805 m southerly from the northern extremity of Picnic Point.

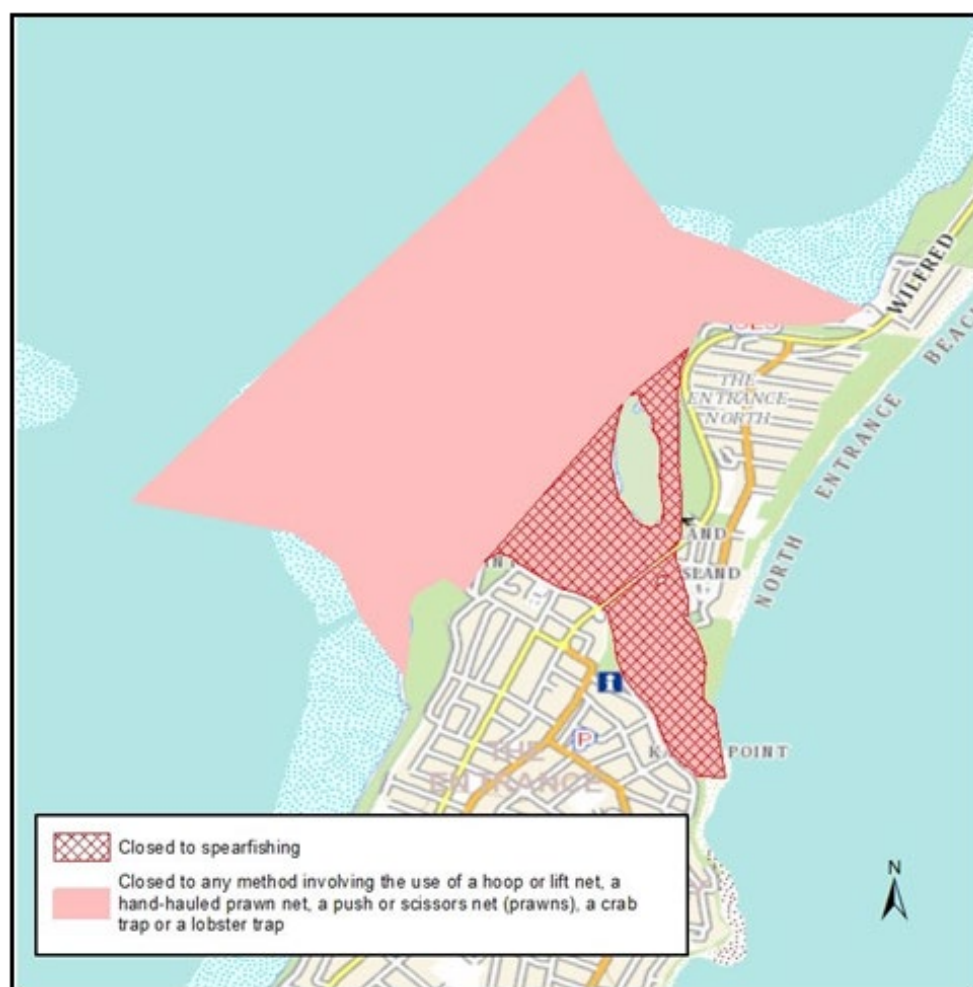


Figure 7: Tuggerah Lake

Wamberal Lagoon. The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a hoop or lift net, a hand-hauled prawn net, a push or scissors net (prawns), a crab trap, or a lobster trap: the whole of the waters of Wamberal Lagoon, together with its tributaries.

Terrigal Lagoon. The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a hoop or lift net, a hand-hauled prawn net, a push or scissors net (prawns), a crab trap, or a lobster trap: the whole of the waters of Terrigal Lagoon, together with its tributaries.

Avoca Lake. The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a hoop or lift net, a hand-hauled prawn net, a push or scissors net (prawns), a crab trap, or a lobster trap: the whole of the waters of Avoca Lake (including Bulbararing Lagoon), together with its tributaries.

Cockrone Lake. The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a hoop or lift net, a hand-hauled prawn net, a push or scissors net (prawns), a crab trap, or a lobster trap: the whole of the waters of Cockrone Lake, together with its tributaries.

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 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;
- 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 20m at each end of the beach.

Tuggerah Lake Entrance (Figure 7). The waters of Tuggerah Lake Entrance within the boundaries commencing at the north-west corner of lots A and B of Strata Plan No 4000 on Marine Parade; then by a line bearing 90° for a distance of 160 metres; then by a line bearing generally north-westerly to the south-east extremity of Karagi Point; then continuing generally northerly along mean highwater mark of the eastern shore of Tuggerah Lake to PWD Survey mark No 215 at Coogee Avenue; then continuing generally south-westerly to the most north-western point of Terilbah Island and to PWD Survey Mark No 217 on Picnic Point; then generally easterly and south-easterly along mean highwater mark of the southern shore of Tuggerah Lake to the point where the line bearing 90° from the point of commencement intersects the mean highwater mark.

Brisbane Water and a portion of Broken Bay (Figure 8). The whole of the waters of that part of Brisbane Water together with all its creeks, tributaries, inlets and bays north of a line drawn westerly from the southern extremity of Box or Hawk Head to the eastern extremity of Green Point.

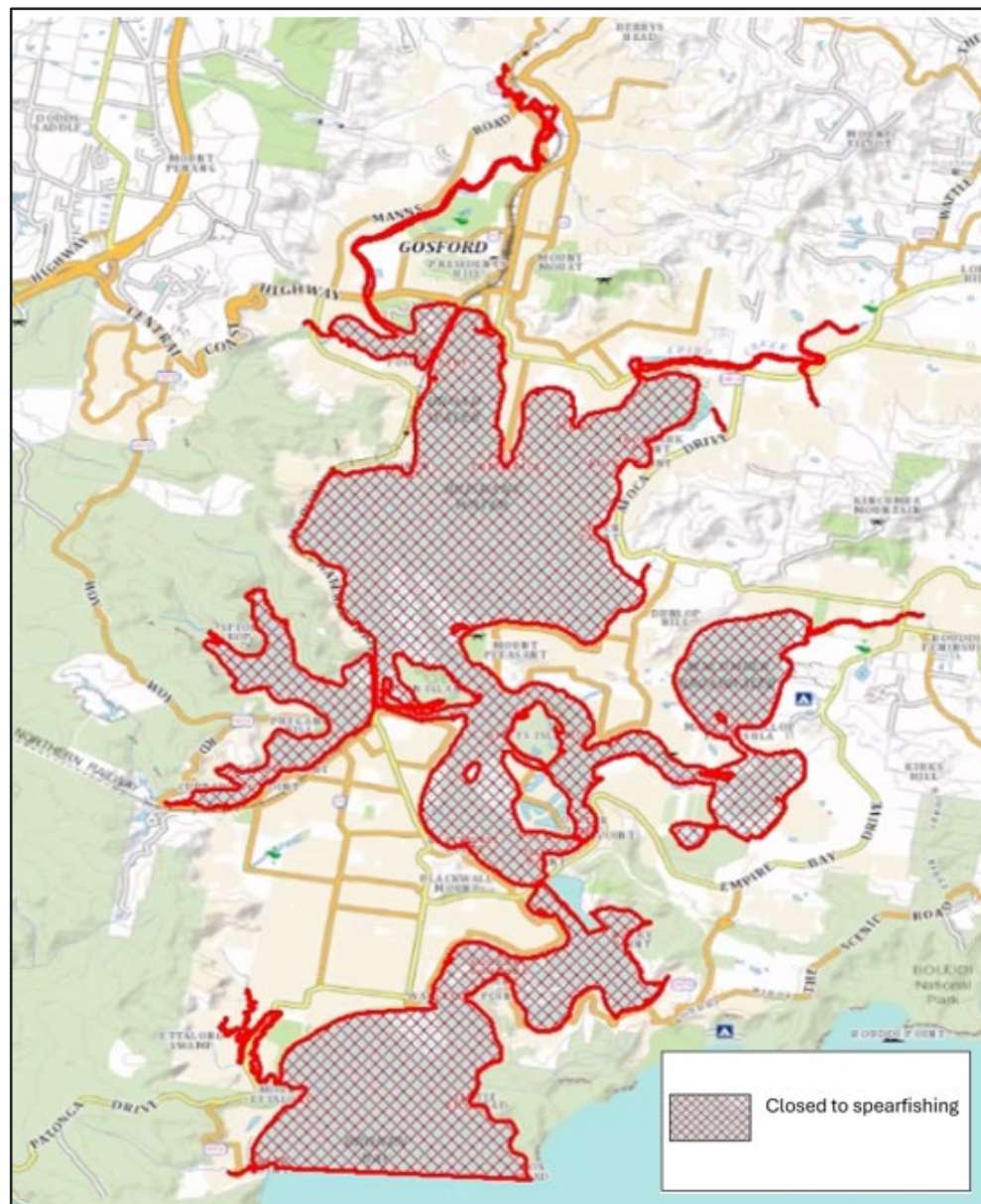


Figure 8: Brisbane Water – Broken Bay - Spearfishing

Bait digging and collection

Digging is prohibited on rock platforms, in seagrass beds, mangroves, saltmarsh areas or when targeting pipis.

Brisbane Water (Saratoga Area) (Figure 9). The following waters are closed to the taking of Shellfish by any method: The whole of the waters of Brisbane Water from mean high water mark at the Public Wharf, View Parade, Saratoga, then along the Saratoga foreshore to Veteran Hall Wharf, Saratoga, and extending 200 metres offshore.

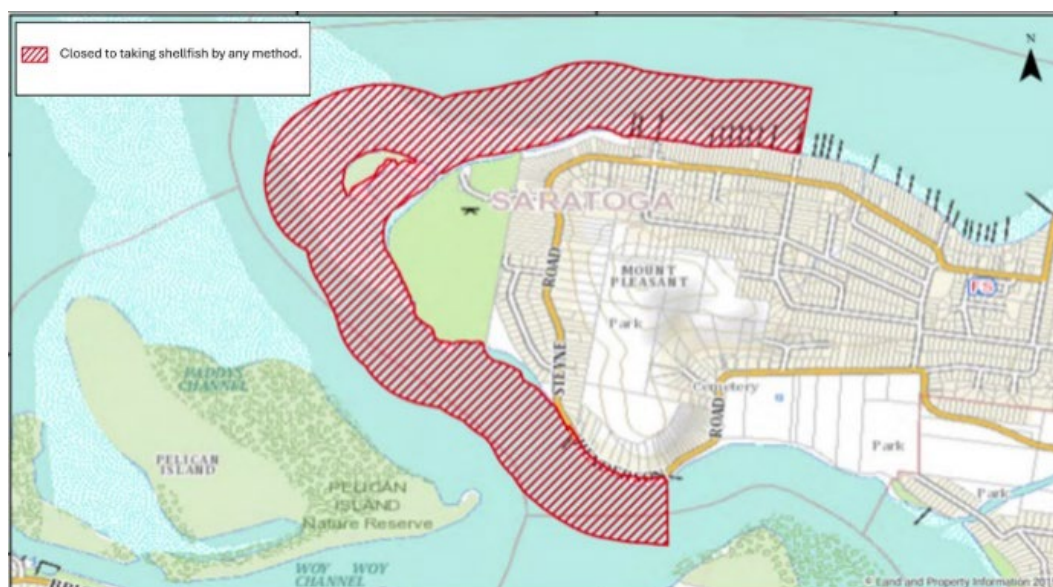


Figure 9: Brisbane Water (Saratoga Area)

Brisbane Water (Ettalong). The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a spade or a fork: the whole of the waters and intertidal zone of Brisbane Water from the mean high water mark to the middle of the estuary, and extending from the boat ramp at the southern end of Ettalong Beach (at the end of Kourung Street) to the Maitland Bay Drive road bridge at The Rip. A nipper pump is permitted.

Brisbane Water (Cockle Creek). The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a spade or a fork: The whole of the waters and intertidal zone of Brisbane Water, upstream to its source, from a line drawn from a point at 33°29.405 ' S, 151°29.355 ' E, adjacent to Myler Avenue (suburb of Empire Bay), generally north-westerly to the nearest point on the opposite shore at Davistown (includes waters of Cockle Creek, Cockle Channel, Empire Bay, Cockle Broadwater, Cockle Bay and Kincumber Creek). A nipper pump is permitted.

GENERAL RECREATIONAL FISHING RULES

- It is illegal for recreational fishers to sell their catch.
- Taking Eastern Blue Groper (also known as Blue, Brown or Red Groper) is prohibited.

- Protected species, prohibited size or fish in excess of the bag limit must be returned to the water immediately.
- It is illegal to jag/foul hook fish other than through the mouth.
- 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.

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

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.
- Reduce wildlife injuries by attending your lines and avoid bird feeding 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 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 Central Coast's waterways and beaches, please contact the;

Central Coast Fisheries Office

Central Coast Primary Industries Centre

The University Of Newcastle, Ourimbah Campus

North Loop Road

Phone: 1800 043 536

Web: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries

Check for updates of this Recreational Fishing Guide at:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/recreational/resources>

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