

24 September 2025

Sydney Harbour and Northern Beaches Recreational Fishing Guide

A guide to fishing Sydney Harbour and Northern Beaches 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.

Sydney Harbour (Port Jackson) and surrounding waterway's provide a wide range of fishing opportunities from beach or jetty fishing to the more adventurous rock and boat fishing. This guide provides essential information on fishing, including any closures and restrictions, which apply within Sydney Harbour and Sydney's northern beaches.

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.

SYDNEY HARBOUR RECREATIONAL FISHING AND DIOXON CONTAMINATION

Test results have revealed elevated levels of dioxins in fish and crustaceans throughout Sydney Harbour, including Parramatta River and other connected tidal waterways. A ban has been placed on commercial fishing as a precautionary measure.

Recreational fishing in Sydney Harbour has not been banned, but fishers are urged to follow dietary advice on the consumption of seafood taken from Sydney Harbour. Fishers can also continue to practice catch and release.

An expert panel has recommended that fish and crustaceans caught west of the Sydney Harbour Bridge should not be eaten. You should release your catch.

For fish caught east of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, you should generally not eat more than 150 grams of fish per month. Higher amounts of some fish and crustacean species may be eaten. For more information, see Table1.

Note. This advice is provided if one single species is being eaten. For example eating 150g of bream and 600g of prawns in one month would exceed the recommended intake. Eating 300g prawns, 300g sand whiting and 300g yellowtail scad in one month would equal the recommended maximum intake.

For further information visit NSW Food Authority website www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au or phone 1300 552 406 for more information.

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.

Table 1: Recommended maximum intake based on eating a single species caught east of the Sydney Harbour bridge.

Seafood	Number of 150g serves	Amount per month
Prawns	4 per month	600g
Crabs	5 per month	750g
Bream	1 per month	150g
Dusky Flathead	12 per month	1800g
Fanbelly Leatherjacket	24 per month	3600g
Flounder	12 per month	1800g
Kingfish	12 per month	1800g
Luderick	12 per month	1800g
Sand Whiting	8 per month	1200g
Sea Mullet	1 every 3 months	50g
Silver Biddy	1 per month	150g
Silver Trevally	5 per month	750g
Tailor	1 per month	150g
Trumpeter Whiting	12 per month	1800g
Yellowtail Scad	8 per month	1200g
Squid	4 per month	600g
Prawns	4 per month	600g

RECREATIONAL FISHING CLOSURES

A number of fishing closures exist in Sydney Harbour and surrounding waterway's. 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.

Shellfish Closures

Shellfish (Figure 1). Sydney Harbour (Port Jackson) and all its tributaries are closed to the taking of any species of shellfish (eg. Pipis, cockles, mussels, snails, whelks, oysters and abalone).

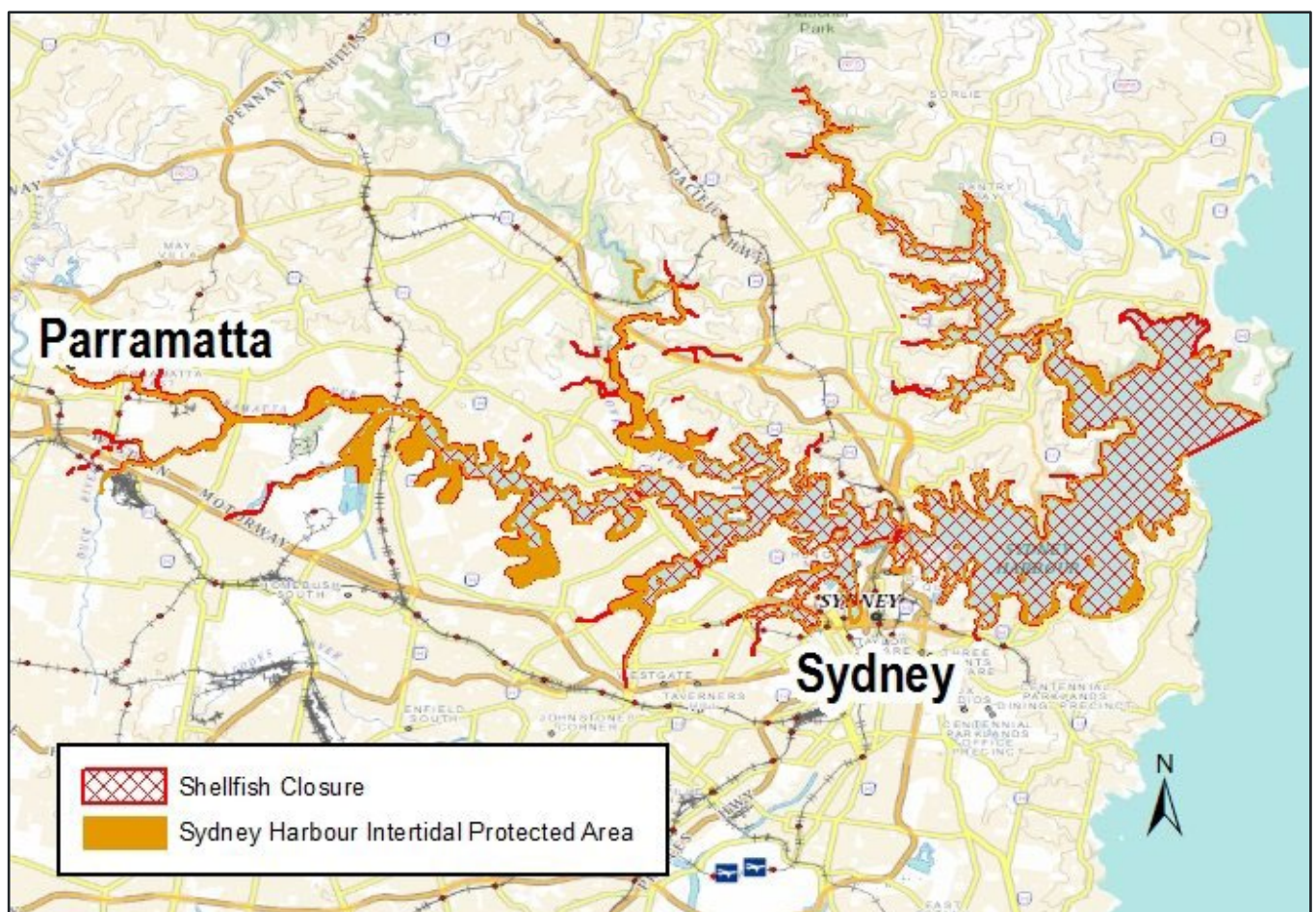


Figure 1: Sydney Harbour Shellfish & Intertidal Protected Area

Total fishing closures

All methods of fishing are prohibited in the following waters.

Duck River and Homebush Bay (Figure 2). The whole of the waters of Duck River and Homebush Bay (including Haslams and Powells Creeks) located in the upper reaches of the Parramatta River.

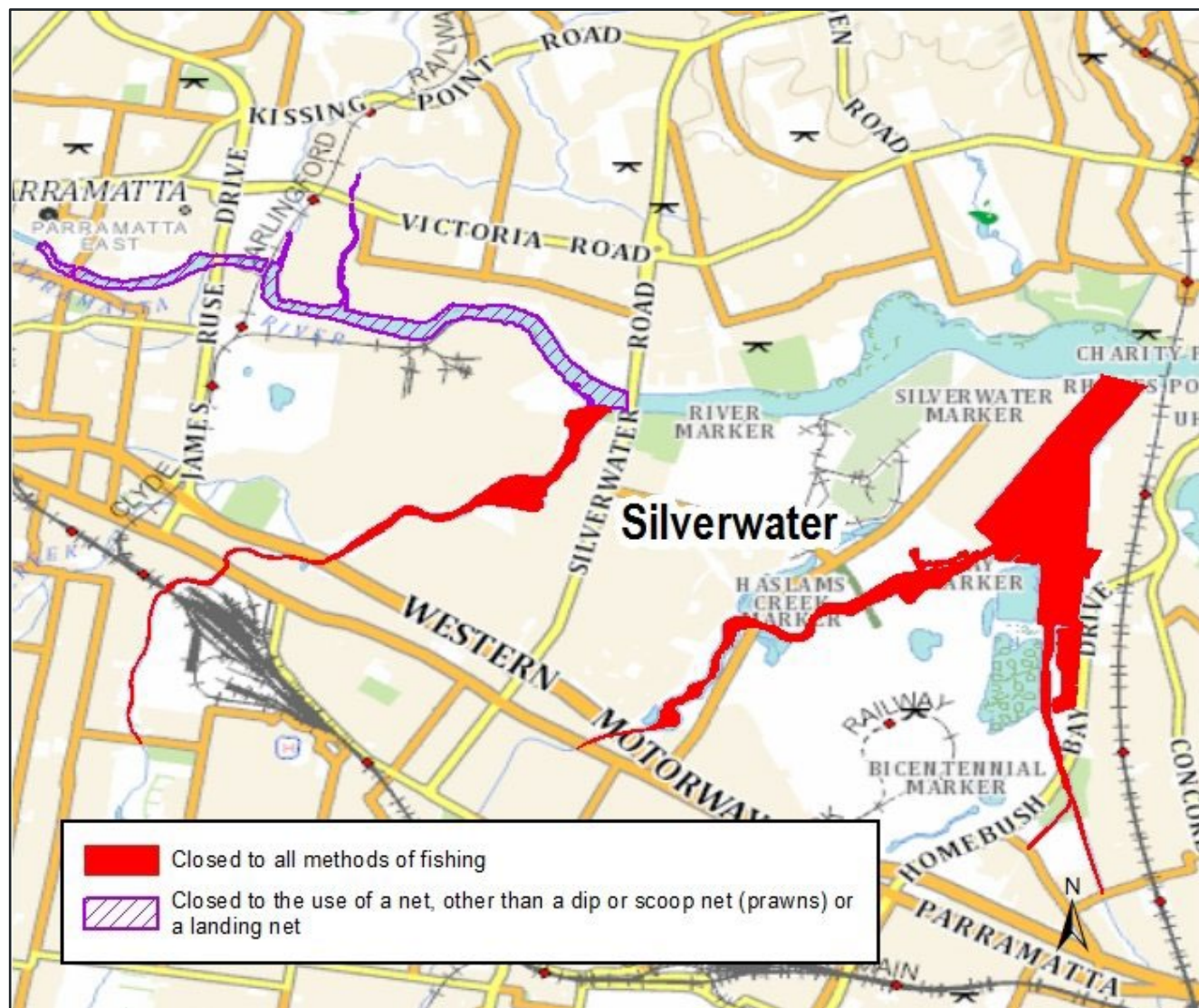


Figure 2: Duck River, Homebush Bay and Parramatta River

Lane Cove River (Little Blue Gum Creek to Boatshed) (Figure 3). The whole of the waters of Lane Cove River and its tributaries, from a line drawn between two posts on opposite banks of the river at the junction of Little Blue Gum Creek, (approximately 50 metres downstream from the weir) upstream to a line drawn from a post at the boatshed to a post on the opposite bank.

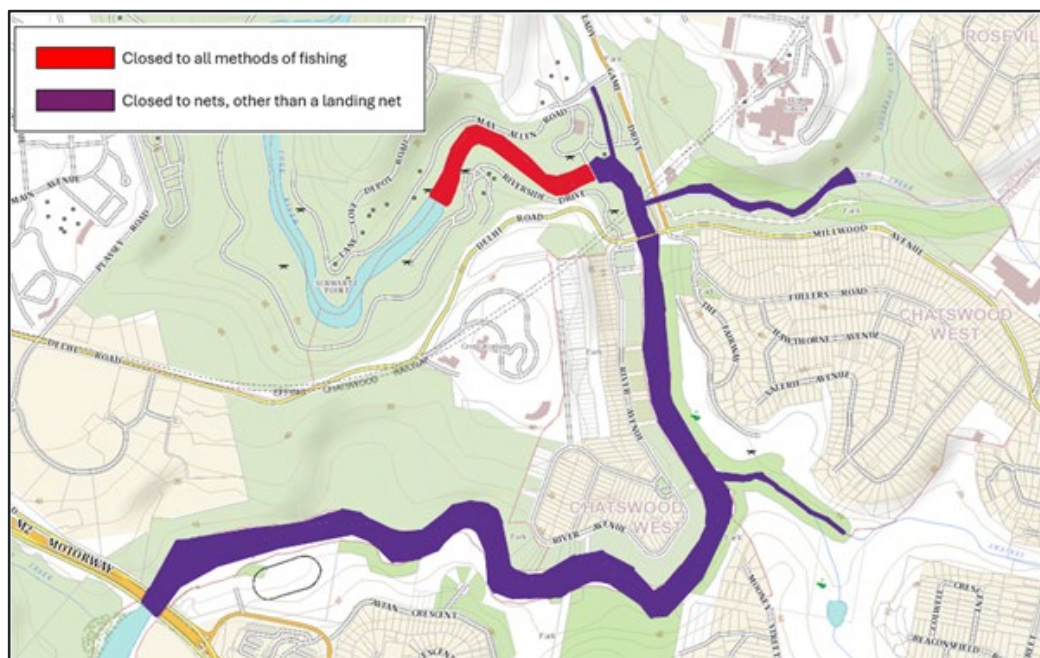


Figure 3: Lane Cove River

Cabbage Tree Bay Aquatic Reserve (Figure 11).

Little Penguin Critical Habitat Areas (Figure 4). From sunset to sunrise 1 July to 28 February (inclusive). For more information visit <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/native-animals/native-animal-facts/birds/little-penguin/manlys-little-penguins>

To report fishing within the Little Penguin Critical Habitat Area, please call National Parks and Wildlife Service on 1300 072 757.

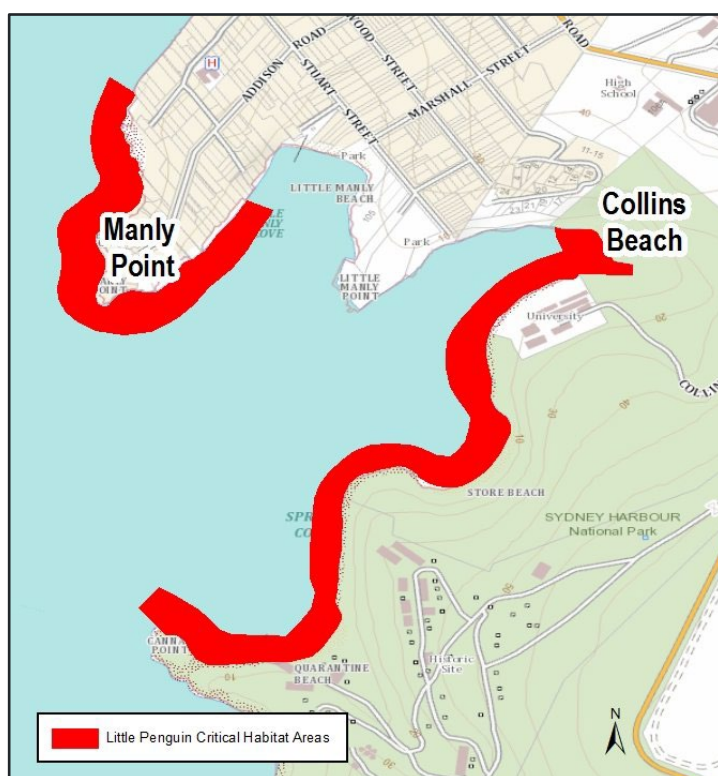


Figure 4: Little Penguin Critical Habitat Areas

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

Parramatta River (Silverwater to Parramatta Weir) (Figure 2). The following waters are closed to the use of a net, other than a dip or scoop net (prawns) or a landing net: all tidal waters of Parramatta River and its tributaries, from the Silverwater Road bridge upstream to Parramatta Weir (excluding the waters of Duck River).

Middle Harbour. The whole of waters of Middle Harbour and its tributaries, upstream from the Roseville Bridge (Warringah Road) are closed to any method involving the use of a net, other than a landing net.

Lane Cove River (Epping Highway bridge to Little Blue Gum Creek) (Figure 3). The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a net other than a landing net: that part of Lane Cove River and its tributaries, from the Epping Highway bridge, upstream to a line drawn between two posts on opposite sides of the river at Little Blue Gum Creek.

Darling Harbour and bays (Figure 5). 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 Darling Harbour, Johnston's Bay, White Bay, Rozelle Bay, and Blackwattle Bay, south of the Darling Street ferry wharf.



Figure 5: Darling Harbour and bays

Narrabeen Lake (Figure 6), Curl Curl Lagoon and Manly Lagoon (Figure 7), Dee Why Lagoon (Figure 10). All waters and tributaries are closed to any method involving the use of a hoop or lift net, a hand hauled prawn net, push or scissor net (prawns), a crab trap or lobster trap.

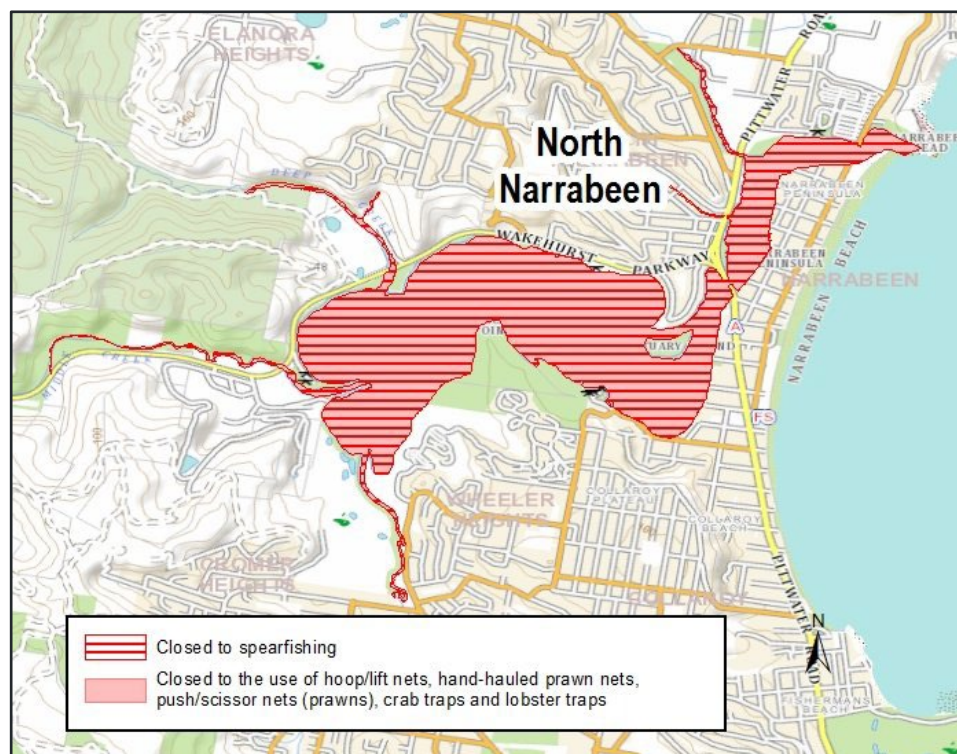


Figure 6: Narrabeen Lake

Manly Dam (Figure 7). All waters of Manly Dam and its tributaries are non-tidal waters (freshwater). A maximum of 2 attended lines with up to 2 hooks per line are permitted. Attended lines must be within 50m and in your line of sight. Check the freshwater recreational fishing regulations prior to fishing.



Figure 7: Manly and Curl Curl Lagoons and Manly Dam

Hunters Bay (Figure 12). The following waters are closed to the use of all nets other than a landing net from October to March (inclusive) each year: the waters of Hunters Bay, Middle Harbour, enclosed by a line drawn generally southeasterly from Wyargine Point to the western end of Cobblers Beach.

North Harbour (Figure 12). The following waters are closed to the use of nets or traps, other than a landing net, lobster trap or bait trap: all waters north of a line drawn on a bearing of 115° from the eastern extremity of Forty Baskets Beach, to the southern extremity of Manly Point, northern boundary of North Harbour Aquatic Reserve.

AQUATIC RESERVES

There are four aquatic reserves along Sydney's northern beaches: Barrenjoey Head, Narrabeen Head, Long Reef and Cabbage Tree Bay. North Harbour aquatic reserve is located within Sydney Harbour.

These aquatic reserves have been established to protect marine life and habitats. They conserve important habitat and nursery areas for protected species and are valuable areas for research and education. For more information visit: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/marine-protected-areas/aquatic-reserves>.

The boundaries of the aquatic reserves extend 100m seaward from mean low water mark, except for Cabbage Tree Bay and North Harbour aquatic reserves. Fishing restrictions vary between aquatic reserves.

Barrenjoey Head Aquatic Reserve (Figure 8). Includes the rocky platform around Barrenjoey Head from the northern end of Station Beach to the northern end of Palm Beach. Within the aquatic reserve, you can line fish and spearfish (subject to normal restrictions) and collect rock lobster, sea lettuce and bait weed. It is prohibited to collect cunjevoi and all invertebrates (dead or alive) including anemones, barnacles, chitons, cockles, crabs, mussels, octopus, pipis, sea urchins, starfish, snails and worms, and empty shells. Note: This includes a prohibition on the killing of cunjevoi or invertebrates to feed fish.

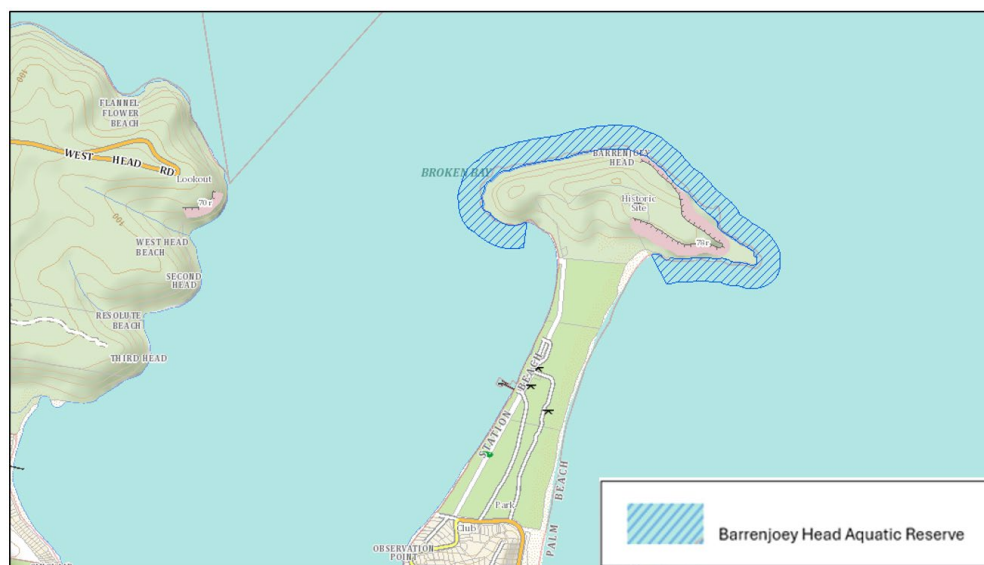


Figure 8: Barrenjoey Head Aquatic Reserve

Narrabeen Head Aquatic Reserve (Figure 9). Includes the whole foreshore from the south end of Turimetta Beach to the rock baths at Narrabeen Head. Within the aquatic reserve, you can line fish and spearfish (subject to normal restrictions) and collect rock lobster, sea lettuce and bait weed. It is prohibited to collect cunjevoi and all invertebrates (dead or alive) including anemones, barnacles, chitons, cockles, crabs, mussels, octopus, pipis, sea urchins, starfish, snails and worms, and empty shells. Note: This includes a prohibition on the killing of cunjevoi or invertebrates to feed fish.

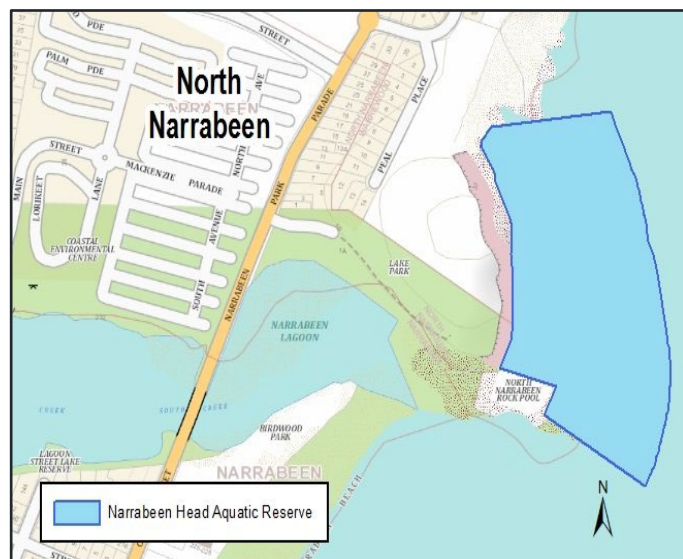


Figure 9: Narrabeen Head Aquatic Reserve

Long Reef Aquatic Reserve (Figure 10). Extends from Collaroy rock baths south to Long Reef surf lifesaving club. Fin fish can be taken by line or spear only, but you must bring your own bait. With the exception of fin fish, you cannot collect or harm any other marine plants or animals, whether alive or dead. Note: This includes a prohibition on the killing of cunjevoi or invertebrates to feed fish.

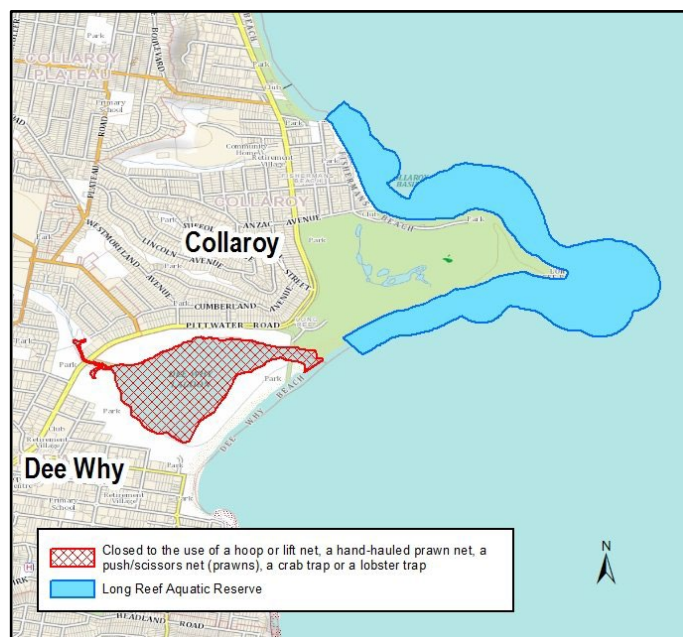


Figure 10: Long Reef Aquatic Reserve & Dee Why Lagoon

The map displays the coastal area of Shelly Beach. A large blue area represents the Cabbage Tree Bay Aquatic Reserve, which borders the beach. An orange area along the shoreline represents the Shelly Beach (Intertidal Protected Area). The map shows a grid of streets including Bower Street and Montpelier Place. Several parks are marked, including Fairy Bower Beach, Shelly Beach, and Park. A legend in the bottom left corner provides the key for the colored areas. A north arrow is located in the bottom right corner.

Legend:

- Cabbage Tree Bay Aquatic Reserve
- Shelly Beach (Intertidal Protected Area)

Map Labels:

- FAIRY BOWER BEACH
- BOWER STREET
- MONTPELIER PLACE
- SHELLY BEACH
- Park
- Shelly Beach
- Park
- Park
- DRIVE

North Harbour Aquatic Reserve (Figure 12). Boundaries are formed by a line between headlands at North Head and Grotto Point, and another line joining Little Manly Point, Manly Point and Forty Baskets Beach and extends from the seabed at these outer boundaries up to the mean high-water mark. Within the reserve, you are permitted to take fin fish by hand held line only and must bring your own bait. With the exception of fin fish you cannot take, gather, destroy, injure or interfere with any fish or marine vegetation (whether dead or alive). Note: This includes a prohibition on the killing of cunjevoi or invertebrates to feed fish.



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Bronte-Coogee Aquatic Reserve (Figure 13). Includes the whole foreshore from the southern end of Bronte Beach to the rock baths at Coogee Beach – 4000 meters of coastline - and extends 100 metres seaward from mean low water. Within the aquatic reserve, you can line fish and spearfish (subject to normal restrictions) and collect rock lobster, sea lettuce and bait weed. It is prohibited to collect cunjevoi and all invertebrates (dead or alive) including anemones, barnacles, chitons, cockles, crabs, mussels, octopus, pipis, sea urchins, starfish, snails and worms, and empty shells. Note: This includes a prohibition on the killing of cunjevoi or invertebrates to feed fish.



Figure 13: Bronte-Coogee Aquatic Reserve

INTERTIDAL PROTECTED AREAS

Intertidal protected areas preserve and protect intertidal animals and habitat as well as acting as reservoirs to re-populate other areas.

The collection of all invertebrates and cunjevoi is prohibited from all Intertidal protected areas from the mean high-water mark to 10 meters seaward from the mean low water mark.

They are located at **Bungan Head (Figure 14)**, **Mona Vale Headland (Figure 15)**, **Dee Why Headland (Figure 16)**, **Shelly Beach Headland (Figure 11)**, **Bondi (Mackenzies Point) (Figure 17)** and the entire shoreline of **Sydney Harbour (Figure 1)** and its tributaries, including the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers and Middle Harbour excluding the shoreline of North Harbour from Manly Point to the southern end of Forty Baskets Beach.

Fishing is allowed in these areas but taking, gathering or collecting seashore animals including crabs, snails, worms, octopus, sea urchins, anemones, pipis, cockles, mussels, oysters, saltwater nippers and cunjevoi is prohibited. Invertebrates that may be taken are Abalone (except from Sydney Harbour) and Eastern and Southern Rock Lobster.

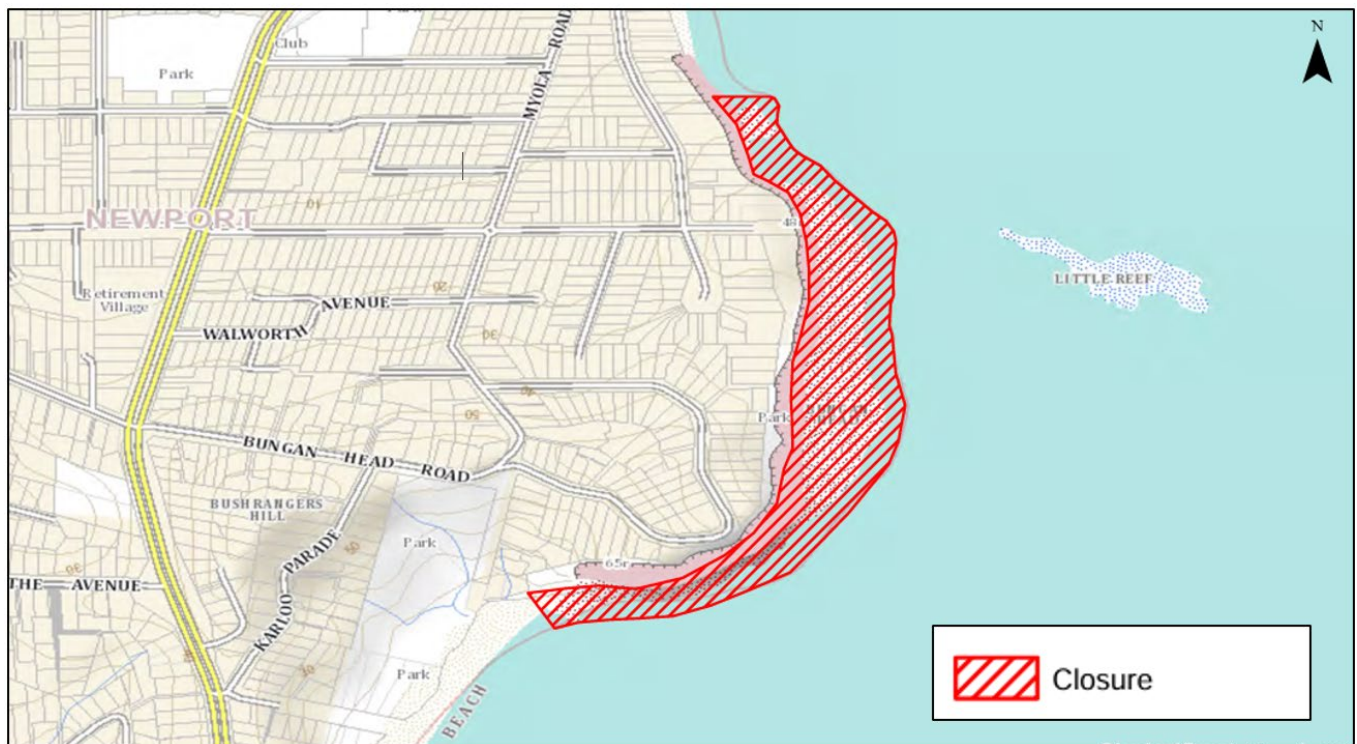


Figure 14: Bungan Head IPA

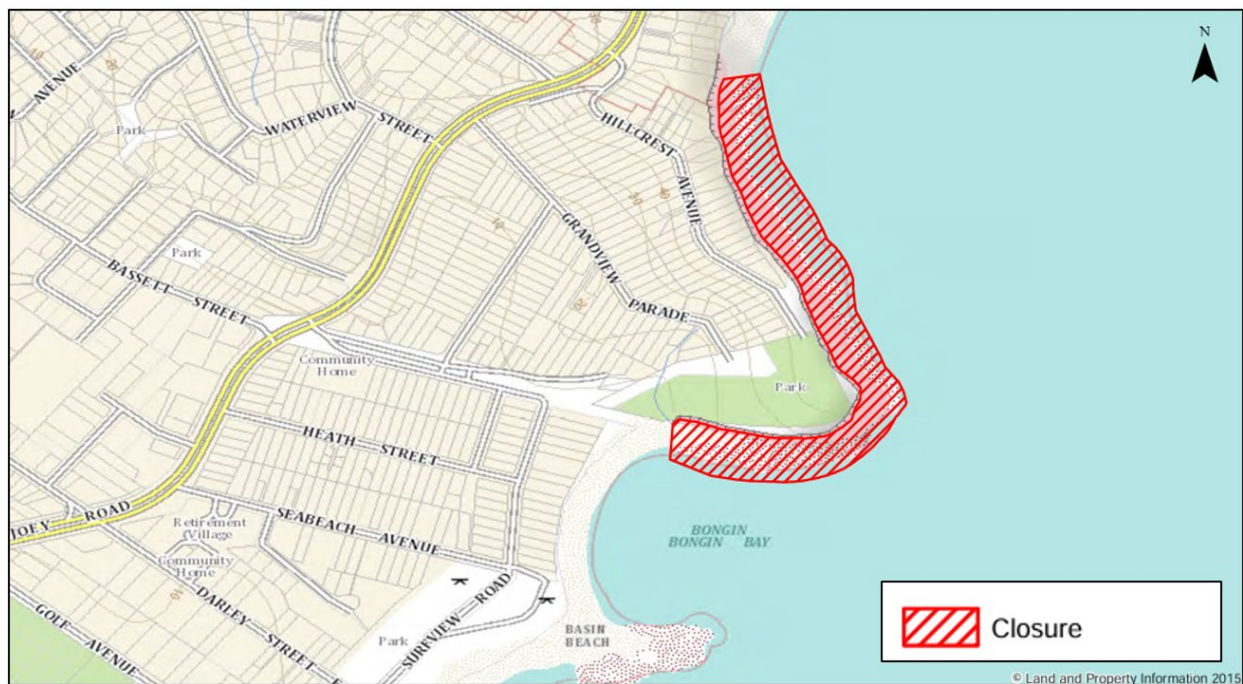


Figure 15: Mona Vale Headland IPA

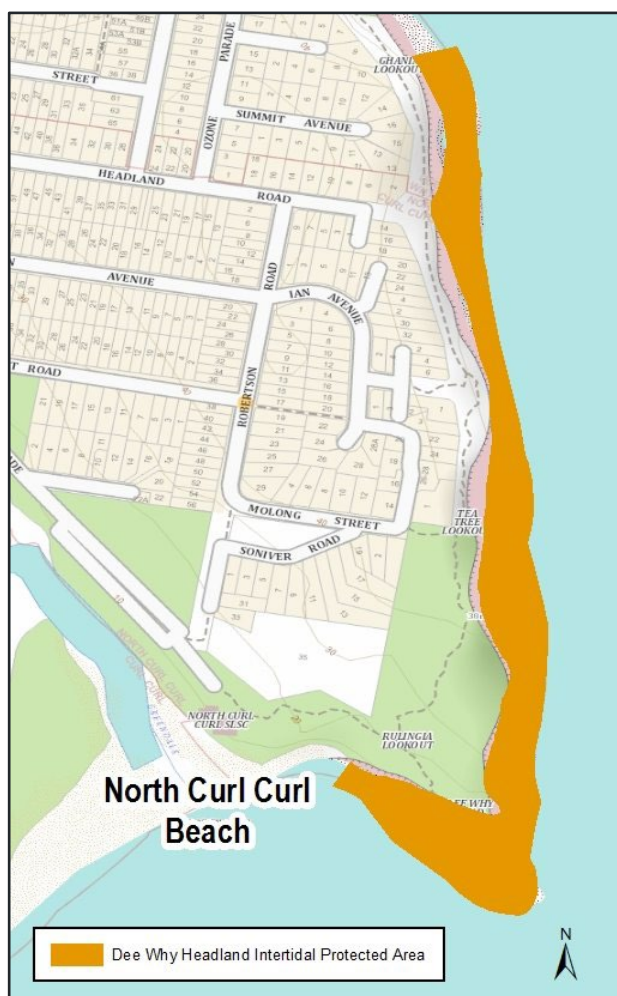


Figure 16: Dee Why Headland IPA

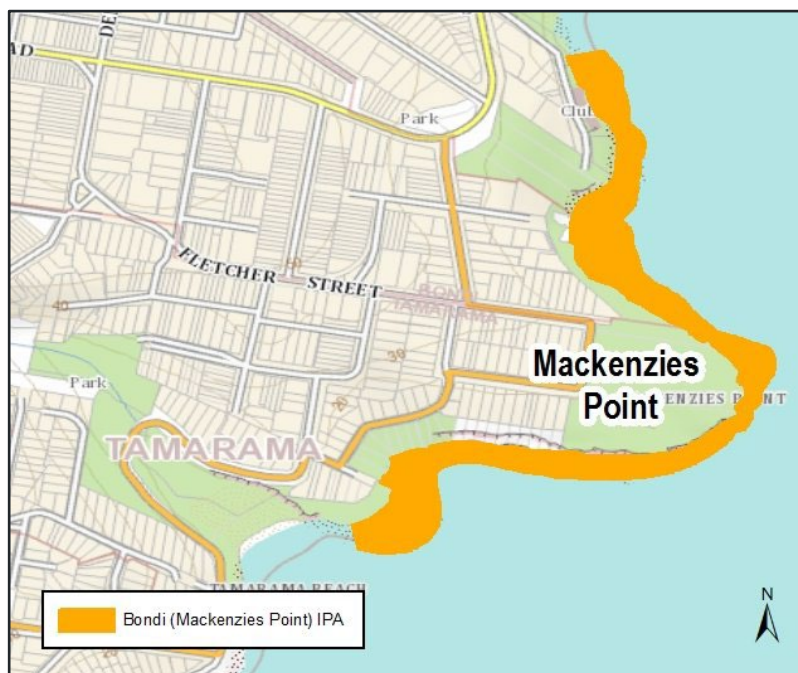


Figure 17: Bondi (Mackenzies Point) IPA

SPEARFISHING AND DIVING

Spearfishing in NSW is a popular form of recreational fishing and has been recognised for its selective fishing practices.

Spear fishers 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.

Spear fishers 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.

Clovelly & Gordons Bay (Figure 18). The waters of Clovelly Bay and Gordons Bay including waters encompassed by a line commencing at the southeastern extremity of Shark Point, extending southeasterly for 100 metres to a point 33°54.950 ' S, 151°16.300 ' E, then generally south-westerly to a point 33°55.100 ' S, 151°15.800 ' E, then 100 metres north-westerly to the easternmost point of the southern headland of Gordons (or Thompsons) Bay, then by the mean high water mark to the point of commencement. Note: It is prohibited to take any species of Eastern Blue Groper (also known as Blue, Brown or Red Groper).

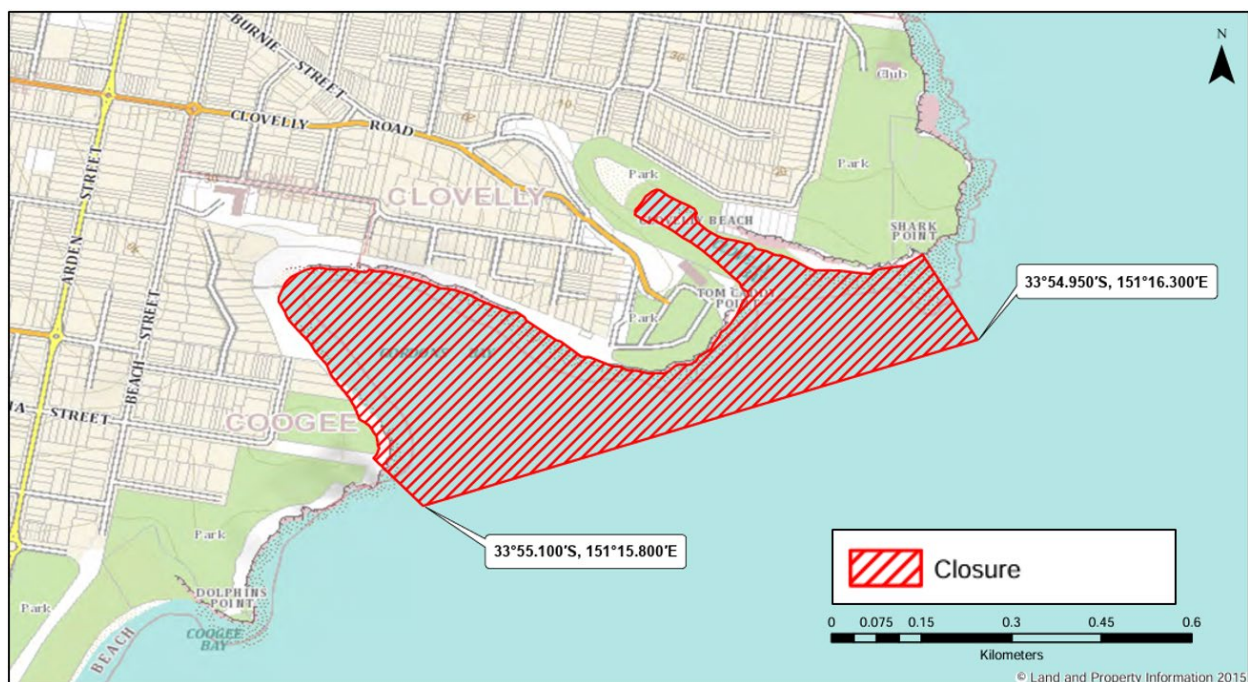


Figure 18: Clovelly & Gordons Bay

Narrabeen Lake (Figure 6). The waters of Narrabeen Lake and its tributaries.

Port Jackson (Figure 19). The waters of North Harbour, Manly Cove, Little Manly Cove and Spring Cove and their tributaries, north of a line drawn between Grotto Point and outer North Head and those waters of Chowder Bay west of a line drawn from the easternmost extremity of Chowder Head to the foreshore of the southeastern most extremity of Georges Head on the eastern side of the Army Maritime School.



Figure 19: Port Jackson

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;

Sydney North Fisheries Office

12 Shirley Road

Wollstonecraft NSW 2065

Postal address: PO Box 1305

Crows Nest NSW 1585

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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