



Spearfishers points of recommendation for the Hawkesbury Bioregion Marine Park

Note. These recommendations are to be used as a guide for helping you to fill out a submission, however please write it in your own words otherwise the submission will be disregarded as a form letter and will not counted. Feel free to add your own points of why each site is important to you.

Bird Island

- This is an important offshore Island on the Central Coast surrounded by a significant amount of <20m reef
- There is now no safe spot to dive in the lee of an island and poses safety risks from diving from vessels.
- Offshore reefs and islands are very important to spearfishers as they can provide clear visibility when inshore conditions are unsuitable due to runoff/pollution from heavy rain or after big storms have stirred up conditions in close. They are also more likely to be hit by clearer ocean currents and attract migratory pelagic species.

Norah Head

- This is an important shore dive area due to its protection is a southerly swell. It too has safe entry and exit points out of the swell.
- This location is important for novice and junior divers due to its naturally sheltered offerings from southerly winds and swell conditions. It also allows safe access for people to swim out to surrounding reef from the protection offered by Norah Head.
- There has been a significant investment in infrastructure and facilities at Norah Head to accommodate recreational fishers. This includes the upgrade of the boat ramp and surrounding fishing amenities. It is worth noting that the next boat ramp is 27 kilometers away in Terrigal.

Tuggerah Bay

- This area is known to not be used regularly by spearfishers due to poor water quality concerns.

Forresters

- This is a hugely significant area for spearfishing on the Central Coast, it encompasses a large area of headland and shallow reef vital for safe spearfishing. Locking out and banning such a vast area of shallow reef has the potential to lead to significant concentration of effort in other shallow reef areas within the marine estate.

Bouddi

- Spearfishing is banned in the current marine reserve, however the proposed extension will further remove shallow reef which is vital for safe spearfishing. The East and West reef are very important safely accessible offshore fishing grounds. This is due to their close proximity to the mouth of the Hawkesbury river system which allows safe offshore access.

Lion Island

- This is a significant location as it encompasses a large area of <20m estuarine reef which is vital for safe spearfishing.
- The island provides safe access to reef as it is located in the mouth of the Hawkesbury river system.

Barrenjoey Head

- Provides significant land based access for spearfishers.
- Offers safe access and use in adverse southerly wind and swell conditions.

Narrabeen Head

- This is a significant location as it encompasses a large area of <20m reef which is vital for safe spearfishing.
- Spearfishers are concerned that the expansion of the current aquatic zone could restrict the take of scyllaridae, cephalopods and urchins.

Long Reef

- Long Reef is where spearfishing was consolidated in 1948. WW2 veterans returning from the campaign in the Pacific Islands saw the local indigenous populations spearfishing and took up this fishing method of their own here in Sydney and around the country to feed their families. At Collaroy in 1948, hundreds of spearfishers gathered and formed the Underwater Skindivers and Fisherman's Association (USFA) which has since led the way with educating spearfishers in safe and sustainable practices.
- The proposal of catch and release rules are not compatible with spearfishing for the obvious reason that catch and release is not possible when spearfishing. Furthermore, it states it will seek to address threats caused by recreational fishing without stating what those supposed threats are or how they intend to be addressed. This offers no chance for user engagement ahead of any restriction.
- The proposal seeks to class Long Reef as a Special Purpose Zone with the intent to place further restrictions on recreational fishing in the future. It states, "*Other management methods that address the threats caused by recreational fishing are to be trialled at this site in consultation with recreational fishers. Examples include catch-and-release fishing, gear-based restrictions, and specific bag and size limits.*" The ambiguity of this statement and exemplars stated are of significant concern, as controls are not presented for consultation ahead of any re-zoning.
- A catch and release zone in this area will be extremely difficult to enforce adequately.
- The proposal is to extend enormously the Special Purpose Zone at Long Reef, this further inhibits the catch of crayfish by hand, spearfishers do not wish to see this extension occur at the loss of more crayfish territory.
- Spearfishers are concerned that the expansion of the current aquatic zone could restrict the take of scyllaridae and cephalopods and urchins.
- Spearfishing is classed in the TARA report as a low to minimal risk to the marine estate. Under this classification there is no justification to ban spearfishing from Long Reef.

Cabbage Tree Bay

- The expansion of the sanctuary area will deny the entire headland to spearfishing from the shore as it will remove the only safe entry exit point frequented by spearfishers. Some divers may try to use

less safe areas to access the water down towards bluefish point where they will be exposed to very steep cliffs, swell, and dangerous currents pulling towards a very high boat traffic area.

- Confining all spearfishing and rock fishing to one small area at bluefish will also cause user conflict between rock fishermen, charter operators, spearfishermen, and boat users. Swimmers do not use the ocean side of Cabbage Tree Bay.
- Much of the justification for this sanctuary zone is to protect sea grass beds however the extended area on the eastern cliff is not a sea grass habitat as it is too deep and has limited sunlight due to the high cliff. The structure of the reef in the extended zone is comprised mostly of large boulders in deep water and is not the same type of nursery habitat zone as can be found within the current Shelley beach sanctuary, this habitat is frequented mainly by pelagic or migratory species which are not the focus of the protection efforts for sanctuary zones as they are not resident fish. Spearfishers would also like to see the sewage be contained permanently at the Blue Fish Point site as we believe this causes untold damage to living habitat in the bioregion and disrupts biodiversity.

North Harbour

- North Harbour provides safe, shallow water access to many diving locations and is ideal for spearfishing at all levels of experience. Spearfishers believe that we should be allowed access in North Harbour as it was unfairly taken away in 1982.
- A letter from USFA Historian Mel Brown to Mr. Peter Gallagher Program Leader DPI Fisheries - ***“...rationale for excluding spearfishing was based on research from the U.S.A. at the time of declaration (1982) which indicated that this fishing method makes fish less approachable by passive divers wanting to photograph or study them (DPI internal 1979)”***. A reply was given to Mr Brown by Dr Geoff Allen Deputy Director General DPI Fisheries ***“I acknowledge that the spearfishing rules applied at the reserve appear to have been based on an opinion at the time, rather than research or dedicated study, that makes spearfishing makes fish less approachable by passive divers waiting to photograph or study them. I also concede that these management rules were prejudicial against spearfishing and the justification for the rules does not appear to have been transparently communicated. Instead, they were first publicly communicated approximately 9 months later. I would like to apologise on behalf of the Department for this situation.”***

Chowder Bay

- Spearfishing is already banned in Chowder bay and the proposed no-take extension will further remove important spearfishing access. The naval base restrictions in the northern area of Chowder Bay also already function as a de-facto sanctuary zone.

Camp Cove

- Camp Cove provides safe and shallow water spearfishing access for spearfishers. Spearfishers do not wish to lose access to such an area.

Nielson Park

- Conflict between swimmers and spearfishers in Nielson Park is very minimal as an exclusive netted swimming area currently exists.
- Neilson Park is already an Intertidal Protected Area with restrictions already in place and spearfishers are happy to see this continue. Neilson Park provides safe and shallow water spearfishing access for spearfishers. Spearfishers do not wish to lose access to such an area.

Bronte to Coogee

- This is a significant area and location as it encompasses a large area of <20m reef which is vital for safe spearfishing.
- Spearfishing is already banned in existing aquatic reserves at Clovelly and Gordons bay. The large proposed no-take zone has the potential to concentrate effort in surrounding areas suitable spearfishing areas.
- The suggested conservation zone beyond 50m where lobster and abalone can be captured is an embarrassment to DPI further showing their lack of knowledge, and disrespect to spearfishers. IT is a complete and total lockout to spearfishers who due to one breath are limited at most to 20m.

Cape Banks

- Large areas in adjacent Botany bay are already restricted from spearfishing including Towra Point, Cooks River, Penrhyn Estuary, Caltex pier, Port Botany and Airport areas.
- Cape banks offers safe protection to spearfishers from northerly winds and swell.

Towra Point

- Spearfishers have no impact on Mangroves or the species protected under the BCA.
- Large areas in Botany bay are already restricted from spearfishing including Towra Point, Cooks River, Penrhyn Estuary, Caltex pier, Port Botany and Airport areas.
- The proposed expansion of any no-take areas in Botany Bay would be in direct conflict with its status as a Recreational Fishing Haven.

Boat Harbour

- Boat Harbour is historically and culturally important to spearfishers and its sheltered location is important for novice and junior divers.
- This is a significant area and encompasses a large area of <20m estuarine reef which is vital for safe spearfishing.
- Spearfishers are concerned that the expansion of the current aquatic zone could restrict the take of scyllaridae, cephalopods and urchins.

Ship Rock

- Spearfishing is already banned in the waters of Port Hacking although the return of spearfishing access in Port Hacking is desired.

Cabbage Tree Creek

- Spearfishing is already banned in the waters of Port Hacking although the return of spearfishing access in Port Hacking is desired. The USFA supports the FRA recommendations for this site.

Offshore Artificial Reefs (OAR's)

- We support the zoning proposals for OAR's

Royal National Park

- To quote from the MEMA webpage "Spearfishing would be prohibited to address user conflict between spearfishers and swimmers." The USFA is not aware of any conflict between swimmers and spearfishers in this area. Less than 2% of the park is beach and the laws regarding spearfishing on beaches is quite clear and well known, we are allowed entry only within 20m at either end of a beach. Where the majority of spearfishing occurs in this area is along coastal cliffs.

- This is a significant area and encompasses a large area of <20m reef which is vital for safe spearfishing.
- Spearfishing should not be restricted in this area as it was rated as low to minimal risk to the marine environment. Spearfishers leave no marine debris, are selective and sustainable, are no threat to threatened and protected marine species as we have practically zero bycatch. Spearfishers request that we have full access to this area and not be locked out now or any time in the future.

Five Islands

- The Five Islands area is historically and culturally important to spearfishers and encompasses a large area of <20m reef which is vital for safe spearfishing.
- Spearfishers are concerned that proposed management rules could restrict the take of scyllaridae, cephalopods and urchins.
- Offshore reefs and islands are very important to spearfishers as they can provide clear visibility when inshore conditions are unsuitable due to runoff/pollution from heavy rain or after big storms have stirred up conditions in close. They are also more likely to be hit by clearer ocean currents and attract migratory pelagic species.

Key dot points to be used for every site:

- Lack of science in determining proposed spatial management areas.
- There are alternative management options to lock-outs that can achieve the goals for the Marine estate.
- Priority threats are not being adequately addressed.
- Due to breath hold limitations, 90% of spearfishing is restricted to headlands and shallow reef in waters shallower than 20m.
- Many estuaries are already restricted to spearfishing.
- Spearfishers are restricted to daylight hours.
- Spearfishers are restricted by areas with suitable visibility.
- Proposals removal safe access.
- Concerns of concentrated fishing effort could lead to increased user conflict.
- Spearfishing classed under TARA as a low to minimal threat, yet we are still set to be banned from many proposed areas.
- Spearfishing is the most selective form of fishing
- Spearfishing contributes no marine debris
- Spearfishing is culturally and historically important to multiple generations and clubs
- Spearfishing is a growing sport, loss of revenue of small business

-Enhance the conservation of marine biodiversity

Spearfishing is the most selective and sustainable form of fishing with zero bycatch

-Enhance the intrinsic benefits derived by the community from the marine estate

Spearfishers are an integral component of the community that currently benefit from the marine estate.

There are nine active spearfishing clubs (Sans Souci Dolphins, St. George Dragons, Revesby Workers club, North Shore Seahawks, Mosman Whalers, Central Coast Sea Lions, South Coast Barracudas, Sydney Spearos, Newcastle Neptunes) that exist within the proposed Marine Park bioregion. Club members and their families engage in various social and voluntary fundraising events that benefit services within the community such as Westfield Children's Hospital, various boy's homes, OzHarvest, Clean up Australia Day, Caulerpa weed clearing, Grey Nurse Shark sightings, the CSIRO's USFA Index to name a few.

Spearfishers have a high level of affinity with the ocean and the proposed no-take regions will directly impact these spearfishers who stand to lose these intrinsic benefits that they currently enjoy as local members of their community.

-Enhance bequest values for current and future generations

Banning spearfishing from proposed no-take areas removes all bequest values that those locations currently provide to spearfishers and removes opportunities to future spearfishing generations.

-Reduce conflicts between users of the marine estate

The proposed marine park zonings will increase conflict between many users of the marine estate. Currently, users are able to disperse across much of the marine estate avoiding overcrowding and overpressure. The proposed no-take areas will increase conflicts between fishers who will be confined to smaller areas.

-Provide enhanced recreational experiences for particular user groups

The proposed marine park removes the opportunity for spearfishers to experience recreational experiences across areas that have been proposed as no-take that are adequate for spearfishing. Spearfishers are inherently restricted to areas that are <20m in depth, have adequate visibility, have suitable reef structure and locations that provide safe access to and from the waterway.

-Provide baseline monitoring areas (scientific reference sites)

Spearfishers across the marine estate have contributed to the CSIRO's USFA index for baseline fish population analysis. The proposed marine park will remove spearfishing from many areas where spearfishers have contributed to seven decades of data.

-Promote stewardship of the marine estate

Spearfishers are at the forefront of conservation and in the past have successfully campaigned for many issues listed are just a few 1) the banning of spearfishing while on SCUBA. 2) the banning of spearfishing Blue groper. 3). the protection of Grey Nurse Shark. 4) the protection of Bluefish.

Spearfishers are stewards of their environment and educate their community on sustainable seafood choices that are available in their areas. Spearfishers observe underwater activities in their areas not seen by the general public and are active in reporting illegal fishing (e.g. Illegal traps.) The proposed marine park removes spearfishers from many areas and it is likely that illegal fishing in the proposed no-take areas will increase.

-Promoting marine ecotourism

Spearfishing is a growing sport and several retail stores across the proposed marine park service the spearfishing community. The introduction of no-take zones will decrease spearfishing opportunities and attraction to these areas for travelling spearfishers and loss of revenue for many small businesses.

-Maintaining and supporting Aboriginal cultural use

Spearing fish has been used by Aboriginal cultures since pre-European occupation.

On behalf of the USFA Hawkesbury Bioregion Marine Park Committee