



# New England Recreational Fishing Guide

## Fisheries Compliance Unit

July 2024

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

The New England district boasts a tremendous variety of waterways from which to choose. Situated on the New England Tablelands and north-west slopes and plains, the waterways range from large dams and fast running mountain streams to slower western and eastern flowing rivers.

Situated in the district are the large dams of Copeton and Pindari and the smaller dams of Malpas, Dumaresq and Beardy Waters. These dams provide excellent fishing and are regularly stocked with Murray cod, golden perch, silver perch, Australian bass and rainbow trout.

The New England district also has a midstream border with QLD in the Dumaresq, Macintyre and Barwon Rivers and fishers are advised that different state rules apply in these waters.

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](http://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](http://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:

- 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;
- 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;
- 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 [www.onegov.nsw.gov.au](http://www.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 go to [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://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

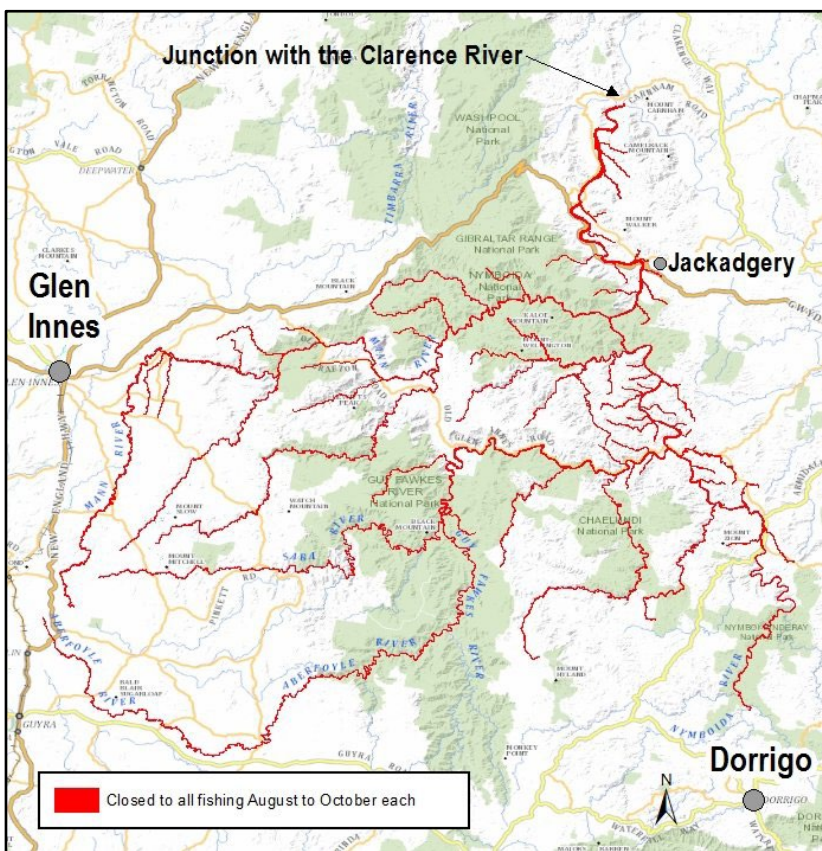
A number of fishing closures exist in the New England area. These exist for a variety of reasons, from public health and safety to preserving unique aquatic environments. The majority of these closures are signposted and penalties apply for not complying with fisheries rules and regulations.

### Total fishing closures

All methods of fishing are prohibited in the following waters.

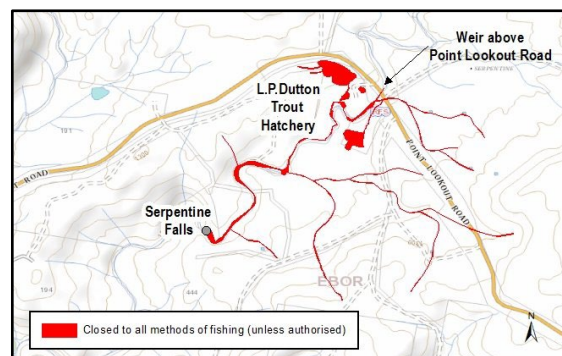
**Mann River (Figure 1).** The following waters are closed to any method of fishing between August and October (inclusive) each year: The whole of the waters of the Mann River and its tributaries, upstream from its junction with Clarence River except for the Oban River and its tributaries, upstream from its junction with, but not including, Sara River, Guy Fawkes River and its tributaries, upstream from its junction with, but not including, Aberfoyle River and Nymboida River and its tributaries, upstream from its junction with, and including, Wild Cattle Creek.

Figure 1. Mann River



**Serpentine River – L.P. Dutton trout Hatchery (Figure 2).** That part of the Serpentine River and its tributaries upstream from the Serpentine Falls to the weir above the Point Lookout road crossing and including all dams and ponds of the L.P. Dutton Trout Hatchery (unless authorised by NSW DPI).

Figure 2. Serpentine River – L.P. Dutton Trout Hatchery



## Species Restrictions

**Freshwater Catfish** cannot be taken by any method in all western flowing waters including the backed up waters of western impoundments, except the backed up waters of the following impoundments; Ben Chifley Dam, Burrendong Dam, Chaffey Dam, Copeton Dam, Keepit Dam, Pindari Dam, Split Rock Dam, Windamere Dam and Wyangala Dam.

**River Blackfish** cannot be taken by any method in any NSW waters.

**Australian Bass and Estuary Perch.** 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.

**Silver Perch** cannot be taken by any method in any NSW waters except the backed up waters of the following impoundments: Ben Chifley Dam, Burrendong Dam, Chaffey Dam, Copeton Dam, Glenbawn Dam, Glennies Creek Dam, Googong Dam, Hume Weir, Jounama Pondage, Keepit Dam, Lake Albert, Lake Wyangan, Pindari Dam, Split Rock Dam, Windamere Dam, Wyangala Dam and Yass Weir.

**Murray Cod** cannot be taken during the period 1 September to 31 November, except Copeton and Blowering dams.

**Spiny Crayfish.** There are several species of Spiny Freshwater Crayfish in Northern NSW. Whilst they may be targeted by fishers, size and bag limits apply. It is prohibited to take Spiny Freshwater Crayfish from designated trout waters.

## Weir Closures

**Bonshaw Weir (Figure 3).** The following waters are closed to the taking of all species of fish by all methods of fishing: the Dumaresq River within 100m downstream of the weir face.

**Goondiwindi Weir.** The following waters are closed to the taking of all species of fish by all methods of fishing: the Macintyre River within 150m upstream and 150m downstream of the weir face.

**Moree Weir (Figure 4).** The following waters are closed to the taking of all species of fish by all methods of fishing: the Mehi River within 15m upstream and 85m downstream from the weir face.

Figure 3. Bonshaw Weir

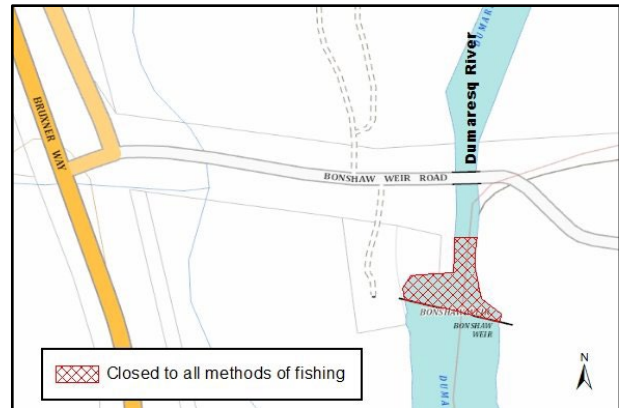
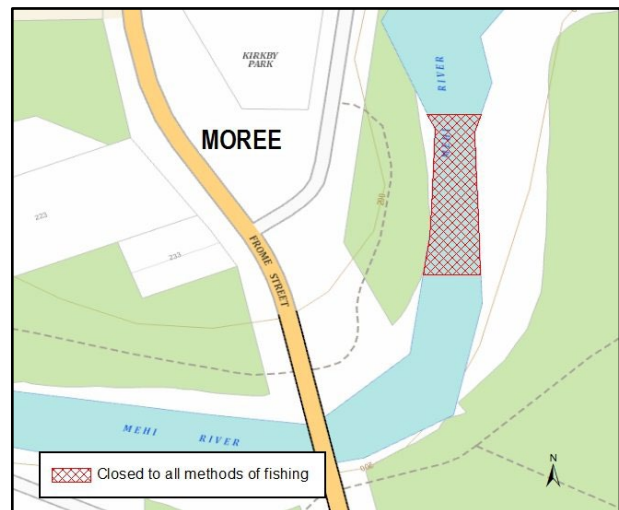


Figure 4. Moree Weir



**Headwaters.** The following waters are closed to nets of every description other than the landing net: the Mann River (Mitchell River), Nymboida River, and the upper reaches of the Clarence River together with all their lakes, lagoons, inlets, channels, creeks and tributaries upstream from a line drawn across the Clarence River at the power line above the rapids approximately 5 km upstream of Copmanhurst.

**Macleay River (Upper Reaches).** The following waters are closed to nets of every description other than the landing net: the of Macleay River and its tributaries, from Belgrave Falls, Kempsey upstream to its source.

## Seasonal Closures – Trout Waters

### General Trout Streams

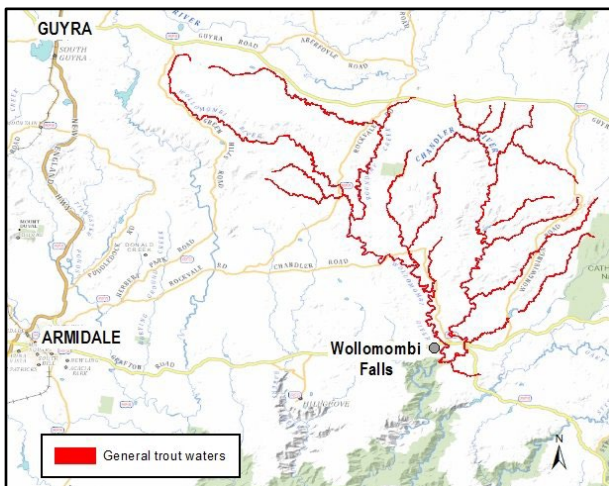
The following waters are general trout streams and are closed to the taking of all species of fish by any method, from the Tuesday after the June (Queen’s Birthday) long weekend until midnight on the last Friday before the start of the October (Labour Day) long weekend (inclusive) in each year.

The following methods are permitted during the fishing season: one attended rod and line with not more than 2 hooks attached and with not more than 3 treble hooks, or 3 double hooks, attached to any lure; and a landing net used for retrieval of fish lawfully taken.

**Beardy Waters** and its creeks and tributaries, upstream from its junction with and including Furracabad Creek.

**Chandler River (Figure 6)** and its creeks and tributaries, upstream from its junction with and including the Wollomombi River.

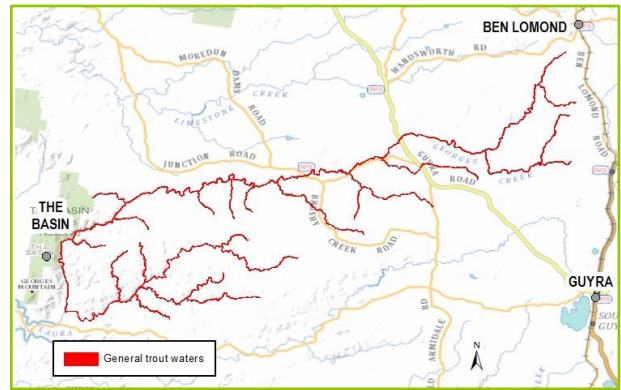
Figure 6. Chandler River



**Deepwater River** and its creeks and tributaries upstream of the New England Highway road bridge near Deepwater.

**Georges Creek (Figure 7)** and its tributaries, upstream from its junction with and including, Louisa Creek.

Figure 7. Georges Creek



**Guy Fawkes River** and its creeks and tributaries upstream from its junction with, but not including, the Aberfoyle River.

**Gwydir River upstream of Torryburn road bridge (Figure 8)** and its creeks and tributaries.

**Gwydir River downstream of Copeton Dam (Figure 9)** and its creeks and tributaries downstream of Copeton Dam and upstream of its junction with, but not including, Dingo Creek.

**Horton River upstream from its junction with, and including, Cut Road Creek (Figure 10)** and its creeks and tributaries

**Laura Creek (Figure 11)** and its tributaries upstream of the ford at Baldeslie Station.

**Macintyre River** and its creeks and tributaries upstream from the road bridge at Elsmore.

Figure 8. Gwydir River upstream of Torryburn Road bridge

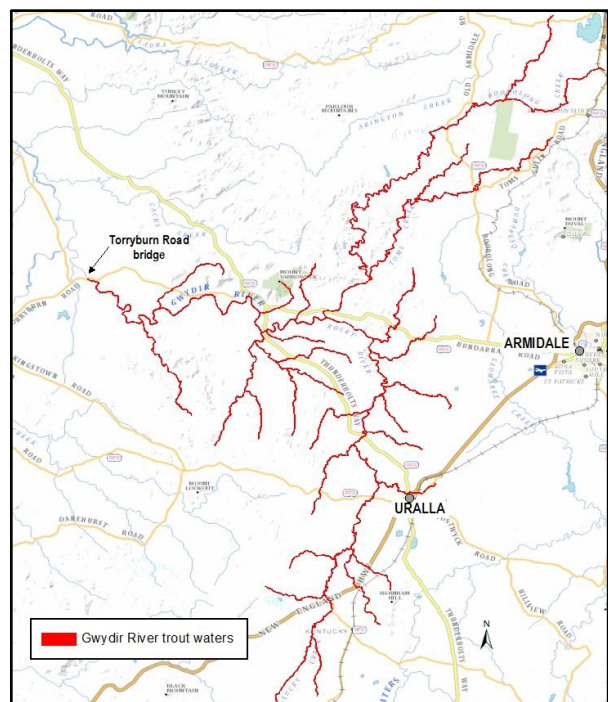


Figure 9. Gwydir River downstream of Copeton Dam

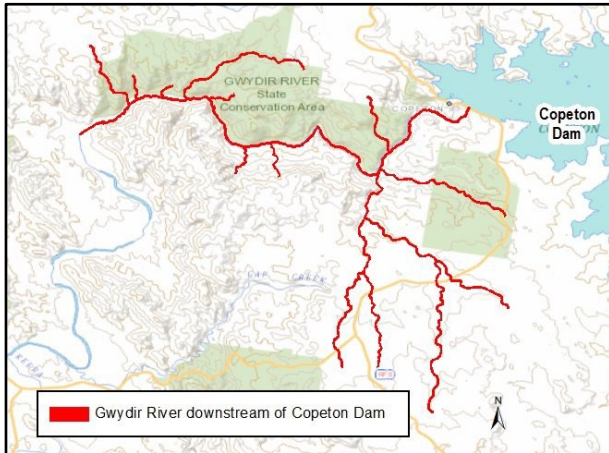
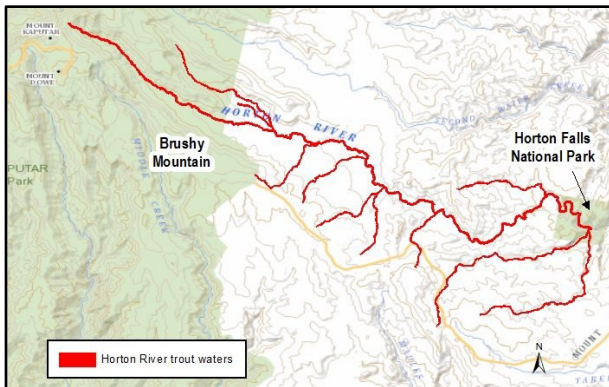
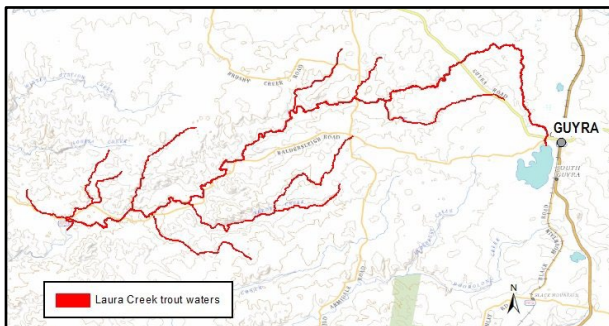


Figure 10. Horton River



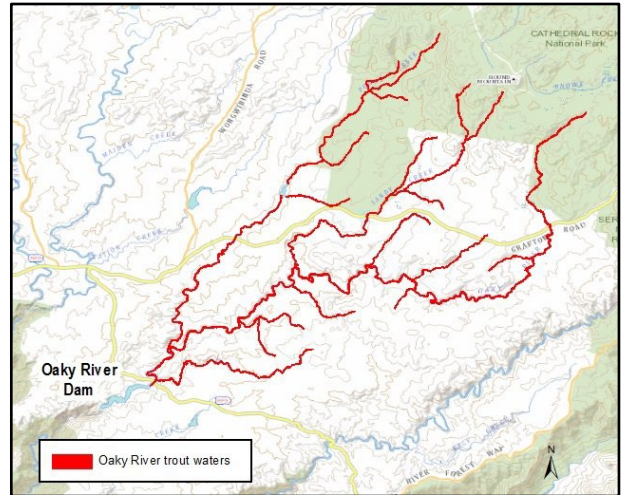
**Moredun Creek** and its tributaries upstream of the ford, immediately below its junction with Limestone Creek.

Figure 11. Laura Creek



**Oaky River (Figure 12)** and its creeks and tributaries, upstream from where it enters the backed-up waters of Oaky River Dam.

Figure 12. Oaky River



**Oban River (or Ann River)** and its creeks and tributaries, upstream from its junction with, but not including, the Sara River.

**Styx River** and its creeks and tributaries, upstream of the road crossing on the Armidale-Bellbrook road.

**Swan Brook** and its tributaries, upstream of the Kings Plain road crossing near Inverell.

**Wellingrove Creek** and its tributaries upstream from the Gwydir Highway road bridge near Glen Innes.

### General Trout Dams

The following waters are general trout dams. These waters are open to fishing all year round. When fishing in general trout dams, up to two attended rods each with a line may be used with not more than 2 hooks per line or no more than 3 hooks per line, where those hooks are artificial flies or lures. An artificial fly or lure is considered to be a single hook. Bait fishing is permitted. A landing net may be used as an ancillary for retrieval of fish lawfully taken.

DAM	TOWN
Beardy Waters Dam	Glen Innes
Dumaresq Dam	Armidale
Malpas Dam	Armidale

**NOTE:** When taking Atlantic Salmon, Brook Trout, Brown Trout and Rainbow Trout in general trout streams and dams the maximum quantity that a person may take on any one day is 5 and the maximum quantity that a person may have in their possession is 10, consisting of any single species or a combination of species.

## GENERAL FRESHWATER FISHING RULES

### Fishing gear and methods

- **Lines.** Two attended lines are permitted in all non-tidal waters other than in some trout waters. Attended lines must be within 50m, in your line of sight, and have no more than 2 hooks per line with up to 3 treble hooks attached to any lure per line other than in some trout waters. A lure is considered a single hook.
- **Setlines** are not permitted.
- **Traps and nets.** You may use up to 5 pyramid lift nets or hoop / lift nets or a combination of both and 1 shrimp trap other than in trout waters where the use of traps and nets is prohibited (except when using up to 5 hoop nets in Googong Dam or Lakes Lyell, Wallace, Eucumbene or Jindabyne to take yabbies).
- **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 under certain circumstances. For more information go to <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/fisheries-consultation/bowfishing-reform>

Persons must not set traps or nets for longer than 24 hours without lifting those traps or nets. Fishers are encouraged to regularly check set fishing gear, to ensure that any unwanted catch is returned to the water safely, unharmed.

On 30 April 2021 opera house style yabby traps were banned in NSW due to the risk that enclosed yabby traps can pose to native wildlife. From that date, up to five nets, comprised of either open pyramid lift nets, hoop / lift nets or a combination of both, can be used to catch yabbies in all inland waters where it is legal to use lift nets.

### Other Freshwater 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 any species 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 illegal to use a setline, hand held lines, traps, nets, a light, your hand or a gaff unless otherwise stated. The use of salmon roe or products containing them is also prohibited.
- You cannot use any chemical or explosive devices to take or assist to take fish.
- The use and/or possession of gaff hooks in any inland (non-tidal) waters is prohibited.
- It is illegal to jag/foul hook fish other than through the mouth.

For Further information on freshwater rules and regulations visit [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/recreational/regulations](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/recreational/regulations)

### Fishing safely

Fishing is fun, but remember to take care and exercise caution. Follow these basic safety tips:

- Observe first, fish later. Always check weather and water conditions before you start fishing
- Never fish alone and always inform others of your fishing plans
- Wear a lifejacket or buoyancy vest when boat fishing or when fishing in hazardous locations such as those located near areas of fast moving water
- Wear appropriate non-slip footwear and light clothing
- If someone is washed in or falls into the water, DO NOT jump in but look for a life buoy or something that floats and throw it to the person in the water. Alert emergency services by dialling 112 from a mobile phone or 000 from a landline - wait for assistance

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

### Wader Safety

Take extra care when wearing waders. Roads and Maritime Services recommends that waders should not be used in boats in case of capsizing or swamping. Basic wader safety tips include the following:

- To restrict the amount of water that can enter waders, fasten a belt around your waist. This must be as firm as possible but always comfortable. The belt will also trap air inside

and provide some buoyancy but caution is needed as you could end upside down if you fall into the water.

- If you fall into the water immediately assume a tuck position, then roll on to your back while keeping the knees tucked. Use your arms to balance.
- Don't panic, do not try to swim but either tread water or float.
- If swept into a fast flowing stream always go with the current feet first while working to a safe shore position.

## Responsible fishing

- Observe all bag and size limits as well as any other restrictions for the area you are fishing.
- Reduce wildlife injuries by attending your lines and use environmentally friendly tackle.
- Carefully release all undersize or unwanted fish and take only what is sufficient for your immediate needs.
- Dispose of all litter and fish waste responsibly.
- Be considerate of others and keep noise to a minimum.

## Catch and release

Catch and release fishing has increased in popularity in recent years. Research has shown that most fish survive using current catch and release fishing techniques. The following improved fishing practices are suggested to maximise fish survival.

- If a fish is deeply hooked, do not try to remove the hook, cut the line as close to the mouth as possible and release the fish.
- Barbless hooks can be used to make hook removal easier and minimise injuries to the fish.
- Use fish-friendly landing nets with soft, knotless mesh.
- Minimise the length of time the fish is out of the water.
- Use wet hands or gloves to handle fish before release.

## Penalties

Penalties apply to persons who take or possess fish taken in contravention of fishing closures.

## Further information

For more information about fishing restrictions that apply to the New England District waterways please contact the;

New England Fisheries Office.

127 Otho Street

Postal Address: PO Box 1196

Inverell NSW 2360

Phone: 1800 043 536

Web: [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries)

Check for updates of this Recreational Fishing Guide at:

[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/recreational/resources](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/recreational/resources)

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (July 2024).

However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

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