



Port Stephens 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.

Port Stephens waterways provide excellent beach, rock, and boat fishing opportunities. This guide provides an overview on fishing, including closures and restrictions, which apply within the Port Stephens region. For further information, including additional closures, regulations or advice, please www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries or contact the Port Stephens Fisheries Office on (02) 4916 3933.

The Port Stephens–Great Lakes Marine Park extends from Cape Hawke Surf Life Saving Club near Forster south to Birubi Beach Life Saving Club at the northern end of Stockton Beach and includes offshore waters to the 3 nautical mile limit of state waters. It includes Port Stephens and the Karuah River, the Myall River, Myall and Smiths Lakes and all their creeks and tributaries to the tidal limit.

Maps of the Marine Park are now available free for mobile devices, see last page of this brochure for details. For further information on marine park rules and zoning maps, see www.mpa.nsw.gov.au or phone (02) 4916 3970.

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 <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing>, through the DPI FishSmart app 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 <https://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 spearfishing, 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 fish into 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 many 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 Port Stephens 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 (eg; Glennies Creek Dam).

Recreational netting and trapping

Port Stephens Estuary (modified crab catching gear to reduce turtle mortalities). The whole of the waters of Port Stephens and its tributaries, from a line drawn between the southern extremity of Yacaaba Headland to the northern extremity of Tomaree Headland up to the tidal limits of the tributaries, including that part of the waters of the Myall River to the downstream side of the Myall Street Bridge at the town of Hawks Nest are closed to the use of hoop or lift nets and crab traps except when the following conditions are complied with:

1. the hoop or lift net is used only between sunrise to sunset,
2. crabs may only be taken using hoop or lift net during the hours of sunrise to sunset,
3. when using the hoop net, no part of the net is suspended above the hoop(s) after the net has been set,
4. when using the recreational crab trap, all entrances to the trap do not exceed a maximum internal diameter of 320mm.

Port Stephens – Prawn Nets. The following waters are closed to the use of a dip or scoop net (prawns), a hand-hauled prawn net or a push or scissor net (prawns): the whole of the waters of Port Stephens, including its creeks and tributaries, inlets and bays, west of a line drawn in a northerly direction from Soldiers Point to Fame Point.

Williams River (Lower Reaches) (Figure 1). The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a net or trap, other than a dip or scoop net (prawns), a landing net or a bait trap: the whole of the tidal waters of the lower Williams River and its tributaries, upstream to the Seaham Weir at Seaham.

Williams River (Upper Reaches). The following waters are closed to any method, other than the following; a hand held line, a dip or scoop net (prawns) or a landing net: the whole of the waters of Williams River and its tributaries, from James Scott Bridge at Seaham upstream to its source.

Hunter River upstream of Raymond Terrace (Figure 1). The waters of the Hunter River and tributaries, from the Fitzgerald Bridge at Raymond Terrace, upstream to the junction of the Hunter and Paterson Rivers are closed to nets and traps of all descriptions, except a dip or scoop net (prawns), a landing net or a bait trap.

Hunter (Upper Reaches) & Patterson River. The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a net or trap, other than a dip or scoop net (prawns), a landing net or a bait trap: the whole of the tidal waters of Hunter and Paterson Rivers and their tributaries, upstream from a line drawn across Hunter River at the junction of those rivers to the railway bridge crossing at Oakhampton on Hunter River and to Gostwyck Bridge near Martins Creek on Paterson River.

Hunter & Patterson Rivers (Upper Reaches). The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a net or trap, other than a landing net or a shrimp net: the whole of the non-tidal waters of Hunter and Paterson Rivers and their tributaries, on the Hunter River upstream from the railway bridge crossing at Oakhampton to its source and on Paterson River upstream from Gostwyck Bridge near Martins Creek to its source.

NOTE* for information on additional closures in the Hunter River downstream of its junction with the Williams River please visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/info/closures or contact the Hunter Fisheries Office on (02) 4980 9202

Figure 1. Williams River (Lower Reaches) and Hunter River

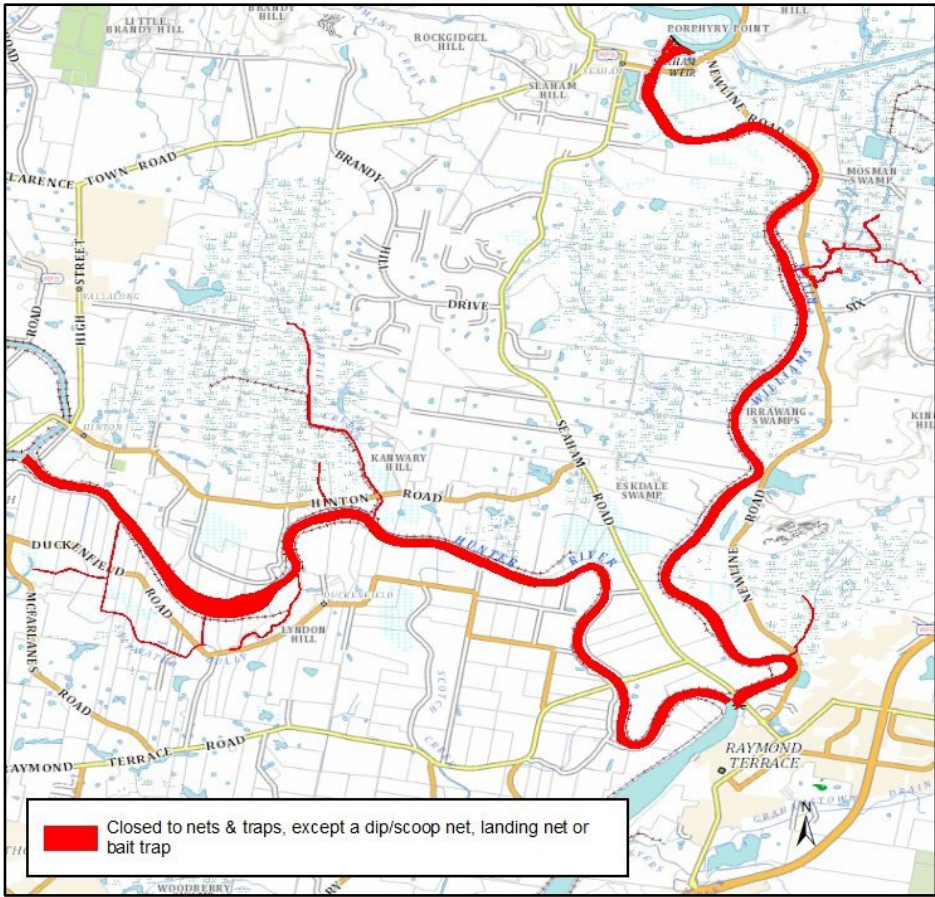
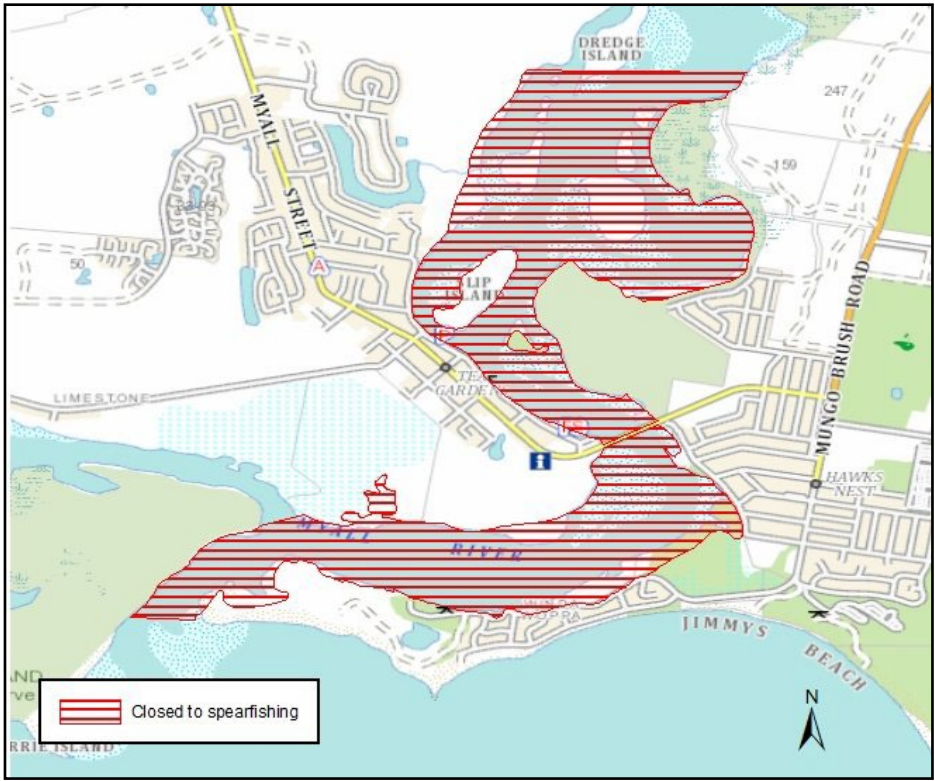


Figure 2. Myall River



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.

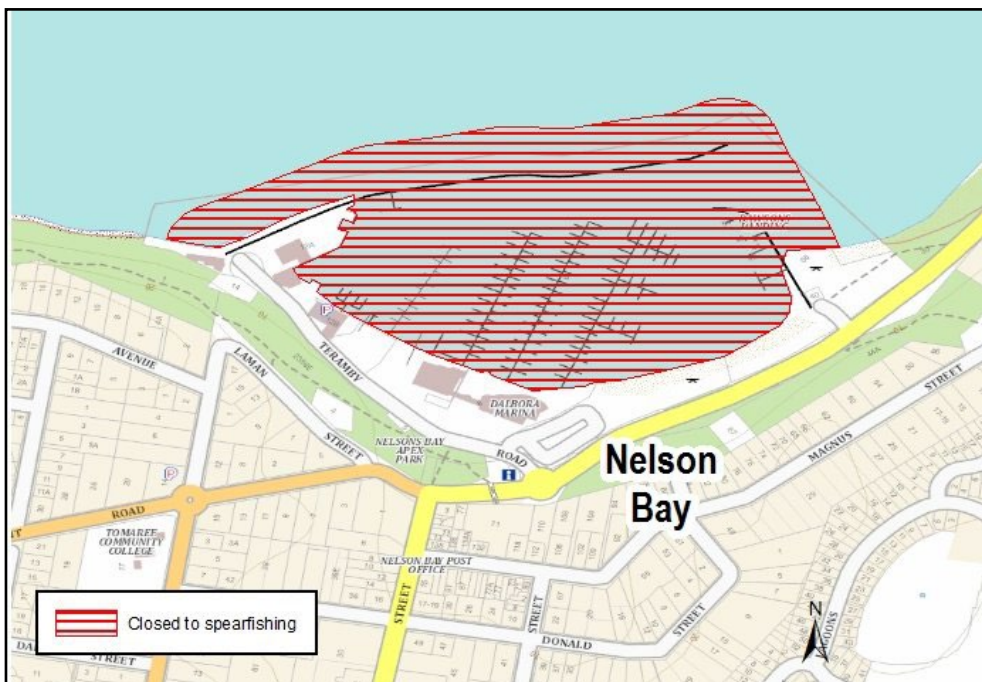
Spearfishers and divers are **not** permitted to use:

- 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:

Figure 3. Nelson Bay Boat Harbour



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

All NSW ocean beaches, excluding the last 20m at each end of the beach.

Myall River (Figure 2). The whole of the waters of Myall River and Paddy Marr's Bar between a line drawn from the southern tip of Dredge Island due east to the eastern bank and due west to the western bank of the river and a line drawn due east and west from the southwestern end of the training wall in Paddy Marr's Bar but exclusive of Corrie Creek from its confluence with the Myall River.

Nelson Bay Boat Harbour (Figure 3). The whole of the waters of Nelson Bay Boat Harbour within the walls and extending a distance of 50 metres from the outer edge of both walls into the waters of Port Stephens commencing at the junction of the western wall and Terambi Street to the junction of the eastern wall and Nelson Bay beach.

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.
- 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 Port Stephens waterways and beaches, please contact the;

Port Stephens Fisheries Office

Port Stephens Fisheries Institute

Taylors Beach Road

Taylors Beach NSW 2316

Postal address:

Locked Bag 1

Nelson Bay NSW 2315 NSW 2528

Phone: 1800 043 536

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

Check for updates of this Recreational Fishing Guide at:

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/recreational/resources

For information specific to the **Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park** please contact;

Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park

(street and postal address as above)

Phone: (02) 4916 3970

Fax: (02) 4982 1014

Web: www.mpa.nsw.gov.au/psglmp.html

Marine Parks Zoning Maps App - The Avenza PDF Maps App and the Marine Park Zoning Maps are free for download from the iTunes Store or Google Play.



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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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