

Hunter/Lake Macquarie 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 Hunter district provides excellent beach, rock, and boat fishing opportunities. This guide provides essential information on fishing, including any closures and restrictions, which apply within the Hunter district from the Sygna wreck located on Stockton Beach in the north, to Wybung Head in the south, west to Musswellbrook and Denman.

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 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 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 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.

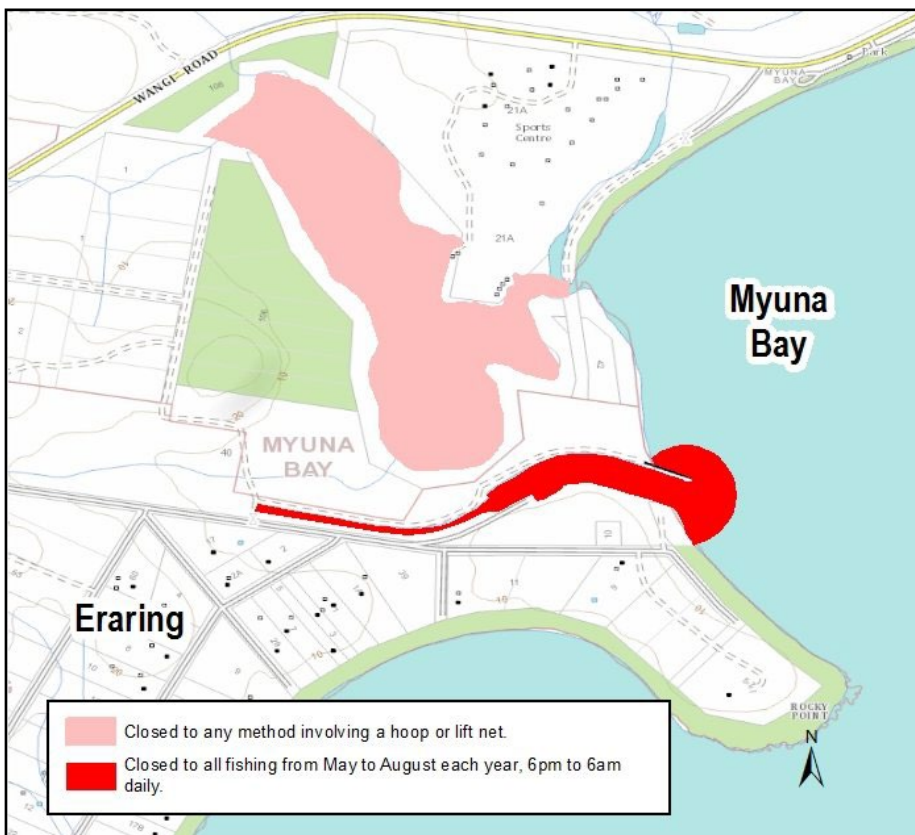
RECREATIONAL FISHING CLOSURES

A number of fishing closures exist in the Hunter/Lake Macquarie 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.

Figure 1. Eraring Power Station and Whitehead Lagoon



Lake Macquarie (Eraring Power Station) (Figure 1). The waters of the Eraring power station outlet canal and the waters within 100m of the canal extremity. The period is from May to August (inclusive) in each year, from 6 pm to 6 am on each day.

Lake Macquarie (Vales Point Power Station) (Figure 2). The waters of the Vales Point power station outlet canal and the waters within 100m of the canal extremity. The period is from May to August (inclusive) in each year, from 6 pm to 6 am on each day.

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

Hunter River – Prawn Nets (Figure 5). The following waters are closed to hand hauled prawn nets and push/scissors net from June to October inclusive each year: the Hunter River together with all its creeks, tributaries and inlets, from a line drawn south-westerly from the boat ramp adjacent to Punt Road, Stockton, to the eastern extremity of the State Dockyard (Dyke Point), upstream to its junction with the Williams River.

Figure 2. Vales Point Power Station and Mannering Bay

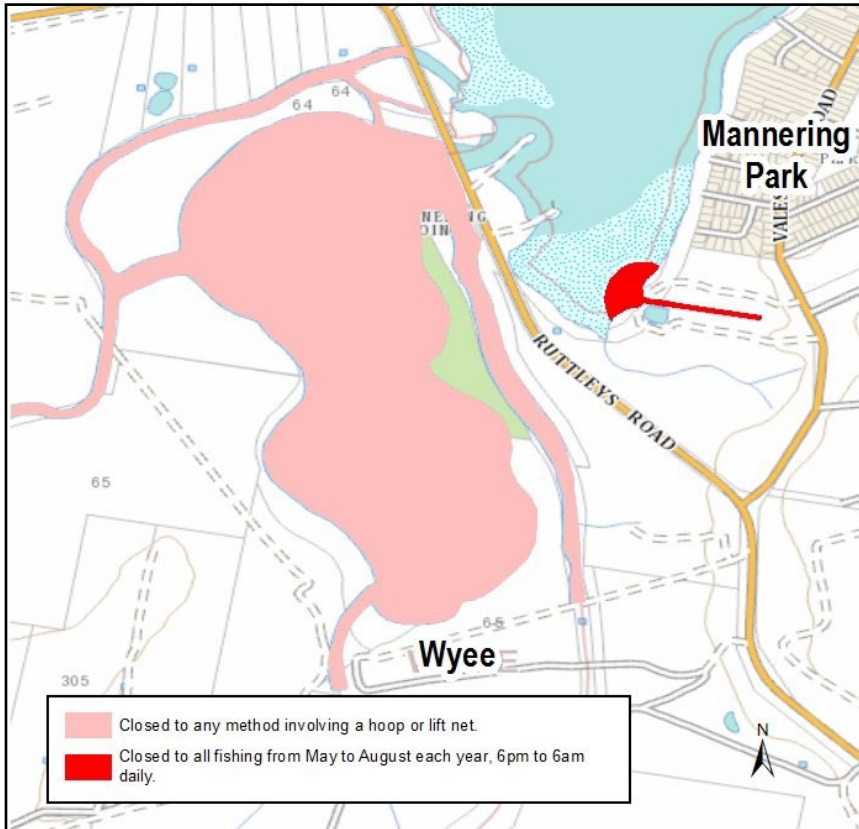
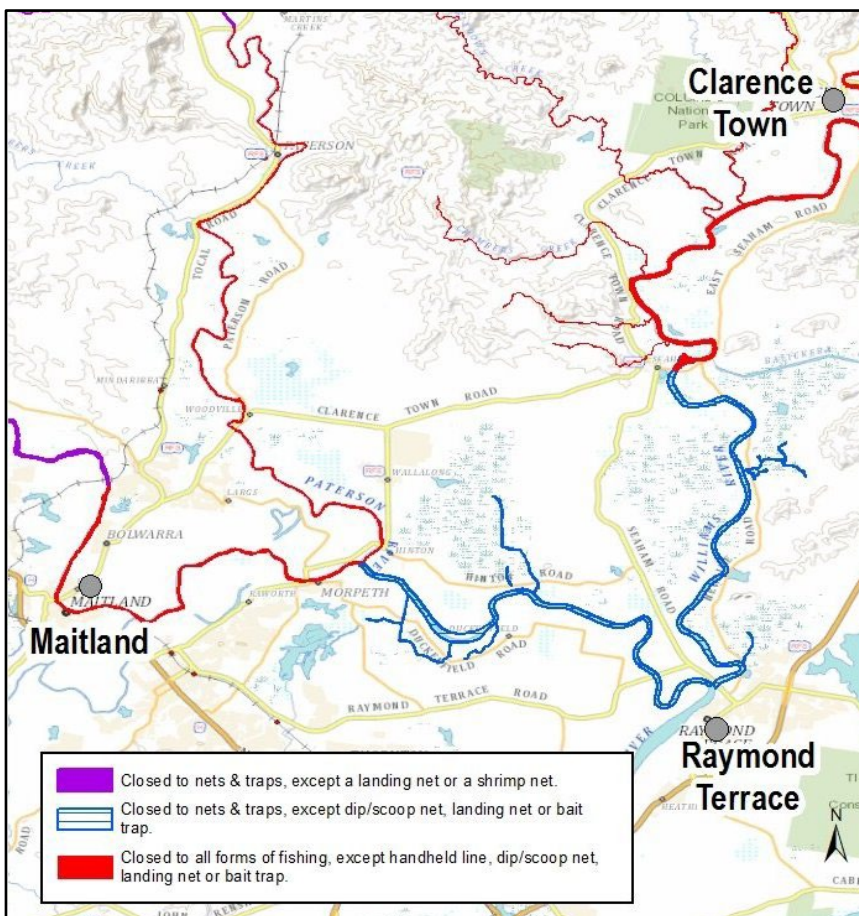


Figure 3. Hunter River (Nets & Traps) and Lower Williams River



Hunter River – Lower Reaches (Figure 5). The following waters are closed to nets of every description, except the dip or scoop net and the landing net: the tidal waters of the Hunter River, from a line drawn south-westerly from the boat ramp adjacent to Punt Road, Stockton, to the eastern extremity of the State Dockyard, downstream to the confluence of the South Pacific Ocean, including Throsby Basin and Carrington Basin.

Hunter River – Nets & Traps (Figure 3). 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.

Upper Hunter and Paterson Rivers (Figure 3). The following waters are closed to all forms of fishing other than a handheld line, a dip or scoop net, the landing net and the bait trap: the whole 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.

Lower Williams River (Figure 3). The tidal waters of the lower Williams River and its tributaries, upstream to the Seaham Weir at Seaham are closed to nets and traps of every description, except a dip or scoop net (prawns), a landing net or bait trap.

Upper Williams River (Figure 3). The following waters are closed to all forms of fishing except a handheld line, a dip or scoop net, the landing net; this includes bait digging and hand gathering: the Williams River and tributaries, from the James Scott Bridge at Seaham, upstream to its source.

Lake Macquarie – Traps and Digging. The waters of Lake Macquarie and its tributaries from its confluence with the South Pacific Ocean are closed to any method involving the use of a trap, other than a bait trap or a spade or fork.

Mannering Bay (Figure 2). The whole of the waters of Mannering Bay and its tributaries (including Wye Creek), upstream from the causeway across the entrance to Mannering Bay are closed to any method involving the use of hoop or lift nets.

Lake Macquarie - Prawns (Figure 6). The following waters are closed to any method involving the use of a hand-hauled prawn net or a push or scissors net (prawns): the waters of Lake Macquarie from its confluence with the South Pacific Ocean upwards to a line drawn from the westernmost extremity of Marks Point generally south to the northern most extremity of Coon Island Nature Reserve.

Lake Petite. The whole of the waters of Lake Petite, upstream from its confluence with Bardens Bay are closed to any method involving the use of hoop or lift nets.

Whiteheads Lagoon (Figure 1). The waters of Whiteheads Lagoon upstream of the road bridge near its confluence with Lake Macquarie are closed to any method involving the use of a hoop or lift net.

Muddy Lake and Lake Eraring (Figure 4). The waters of Muddy Lake and Lake Eraring, upstream from a line drawn from the southern extremity of Pipers Point to the north eastern most point of the north bank of Dora Creek are closed to any method involving the use of a hoop or lift net.

Duck Hole Lagoon. All waters of Duck Hole Lagoon are closed to any method involving the use of a hoop or lift net.

Figure 4. Muddy Lake and Lake Eraring

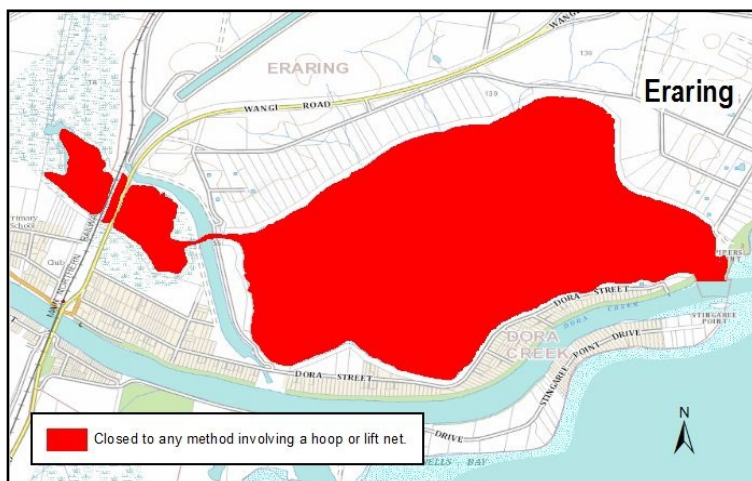


Figure 5. Hunter River and Shellfish



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.

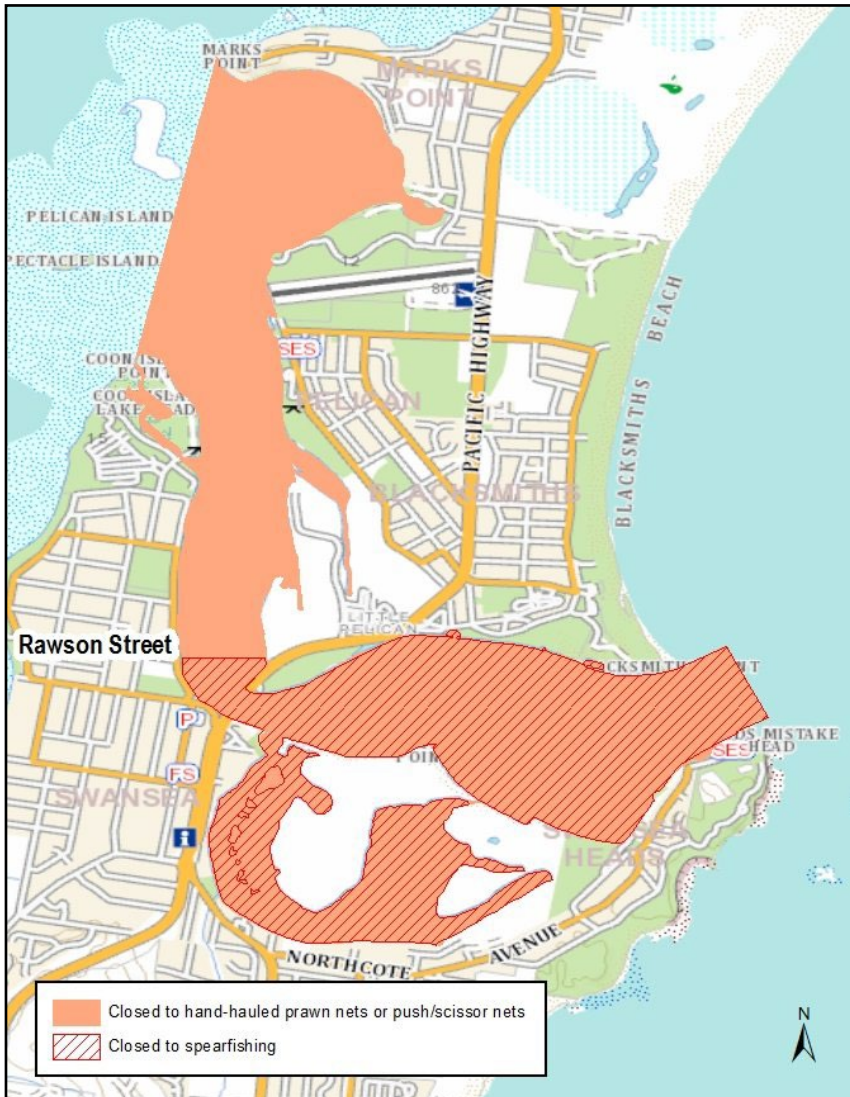
Lake Macquarie (Figure 6). The entrance to Lake Macquarie including Black Ned's Bay extending generally easterly to the South Pacific Ocean, from a line across that entrance being the easterly prolongation of the northern side of Rawson Street, Swansea, County Northumberland and the whole of the waters of that part of the South Pacific Ocean west of a line joining the more easterly extremities of the northern and southern breakwaters at the entrance to Lake Macquarie.

Shellfish Closures

South Channel (Figure 5). The waters of South Channel, Hunter River, downstream from the northernmost extremity of Hexham Island to a line across the river from the southernmost extremity of Walsh Point to the eastern side of Selwyn Street are closed to the taking of shellfish by any method.

Throsby Creek (Figure 5). The waters of Throsby creek and its tributaries, upstream from Cowper Street road bridge are closed to any method of fishing other than the taking of finfish by the use of a handheld line, a bait trap or landing net. Shellfish or crustacea (phylum Crustacea) must **NOT** be taken by any method.

Figure 6. Lake Macquarie



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 Hunter districts waterways and beaches, please contact the;

Hunter Fisheries Office

55 Lambton Parade

Swansea NSW 2281

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

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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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