

Declaration of the Cod Grounds Commonwealth Marine Reserve

The Cod Grounds Commonwealth Marine Reserve has been declared to protect important habitat of the critically endangered grey nurse shark. The Reserve has been declared as a strict 'no take' Sanctuary Zone and covers an area of about 300ha.

This declaration follows two periods of public consultation under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). A structural adjustment process for affected commercial fishing businesses is being implemented under the Australian Government's *Marine Protected Areas and Displaced Fishing Policy*.

What is special about the Cod Grounds?

The east coast population of the grey nurse shark is listed as critically endangered. The population is known to be in decline and highly vulnerable to extinction due to its low reproduction rates, as well as fishing related mortality.

The Cod Grounds is a series of underwater pinnacles that is known as a significant aggregation site for the grey nurse shark. This area provides prime habitat for the sharks, which are often observed in unusually large numbers in or near the deep, sandy-bottomed gutters between the pinnacles at the Cod Grounds. The Cod Grounds support a large proportion of female sharks compared to other aggregation sites surveyed off the New South Wales coast and also provide habitat for prey species preferred by the grey nurse shark. *The Recovery Plan for the Grey Nurse Shark (Carcharias taurus) in Australia* made under the EPBC Act recommends that the Cod Grounds be declared as a sanctuary zone.

How will the Reserve be managed?

The Cod Grounds Commonwealth Marine Reserve has been assigned to World Conservation Union (IUCN) category 1a – strict nature reserve. This means the Reserve will be managed primarily for scientific research and environmental monitoring. The Reserve will be managed to ensure that the habitats, ecosystems and native species necessary for the protection of the grey nurse shark are preserved in as undisturbed a state as possible.

The following table outlines what activities are allowed and not allowed in the Reserve. Note that **all fishing is prohibited in the Reserve. Any vessels entering the Reserve must have all fishing gear unrigged and stowed away while in the Reserve.**

The Director of National Parks (DNP) has made arrangements with the NSW Department of Primary Industries to carry out compliance and enforcement activities in the Reserve.

Black cod were known to be abundant in the Cod Grounds several decades ago – hence the name of the area – but their numbers have been drastically reduced. This species is now protected under New South Wales law.

It's hoped the declaration of the Reserve will also help protect this threatened species.

Cod Grounds Commonwealth Marine Reserve



Australian Government

Director of National Parks

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The Cod Grounds Commonwealth Marine Reserve, located about four nautical miles off Laurieton in NSW, has been established.

The management arrangements are outlined in this brochure.

Additional information is available at
www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mpa/codgrounds/index.html

Advice to users of the Cod Grounds NSW

Interim Management Arrangements

Activity	Arrangements
Accessing the Reserve	Visitors may access the Reserve providing all fishing gear onboard the vessel is unrigged and stowed away.
Commercial fishing	All forms of commercial fishing are prohibited. Commercial fishing vessels are prohibited from entering or transiting the Reserve.
Recreational fishing	All forms of recreational fishing (including spearfishing) are prohibited. Any vessels entering the Reserve must have all fishing gear unrigged and stowed away while in the Reserve.
Commercial SCUBA diving	Allowed under an approval from the Director of National Parks (DNP).
Recreational SCUBA diving	Permitted in accordance with the NSW Code of Conduct for diving with grey nurse sharks.
Scientific activities	Allowed under an approval from the DNP.
Mining operations	Prohibited.
Other commercial activities	Assessed on a case-by-case basis and subject to approval from the DNP.

Management Plan

The interim management arrangements set out above will remain in force until a management plan for the Reserve is approved by the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Water Resources. Management plans provide for the protection and conservation of the Reserve. They must set out how the Reserve is to be managed, what activities will be allowed within the Reserve and how they must be carried on. The development of the plan will involve two periods of public consultation in which all stakeholders will have the opportunity to have their say about the plan. The first is expected to begin soon after declaration.

Photos by David Harasti – grey nurse sharks

