

Key questions and answers about

If you are reading this article, you probably enjoy fishing and boating, which are two of South Australia's most popular pastimes.

You probably also want your children and grandchildren to enjoy the same outdoor activities. For this reason, it is critical that we look after the marine environment and the habitats, plants and animals that live within it.

In 2004, the South Australian Government announced its intention to develop a system of 19 marine parks by 2010 in selected areas of the State's waters. This announcement has naturally attracted the interest of fishers and boaties alike.

The Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) is responsible for the development of marine parks in South Australia.

We understand that the marine environment is essential to the economy and lifestyles of local communities. This is why it is important to develop and manage marine parks for multiple uses.

We will be working closely with local communities to achieve the best mix of conservation and use within each marine park by considering a wide range of environmental, cultural, social and economic factors. While some areas will be set aside as "no-take" areas, there will be plenty of opportunities for fishing and boating within marine parks.

Over the past twelve months, the DEH Marine Parks Team has been attending a range of local community events.

Our discussions with communities have enabled us to hear local issues and to answer questions about the development of marine parks in South Australia. We would like to share with you our responses to some of the most frequently asked questions.

Why do we need marine parks?

Southern Australia's marine environment is internationally recognised for its unique biological diversity. Most of the plants, fish and other animals are found nowhere else on Earth.

While most of the State's marine environment is in good condition, the pressure of coastal development and human activity has already caused noticeable changes in some areas. You probably have seen changes in your lifetime.

A combination of fisheries management, natural resources management on land, and a network of marine parks is considered to be the best way to ensure that our marine environment and its resources are looked after into the future.

Communities can then continue to rely on them, whether it is for commercial, recreational or traditional purposes.

What exactly are you trying to protect?

We are aiming to conserve the wide range of marine plants and animals found in our State's waters.

Marine parks will protect examples of all the different types of habitats where our marine plants and animals live. Although we have similar types of habitats across the State (for example reef systems and seagrass beds are common), the animals and plants that live there may be quite different.

This is because the characteristics of the marine environment change. For example, if you live in the lower south-east or on the west coast, you will know that much of the coastline is quite exposed, the sea is rougher, and the water temperatures are colder than in the shallower, less exposed areas in the upper gulfs.



The proposal at a glance ...

- The Government of South Australia is committed to developing 19 new marine parks by 2010.
- A panel of expert marine scientists identified focus locations for the 19 proposed marine parks.
- All marine parks will be located within State's waters (indicated in blue on the map above).
- South Australia's marine parks will be zoned for multiple uses.
- The community and stakeholder groups will be directly involved in developing marine parks.

out marine parks in our waters

Some plants and animals are only able to live in certain areas, or within certain temperature ranges. This is why we need to establish a carefully selected network of marine parks to ensure that we conserve the full range of habitats, plants and animals found in our State's waters.

How do you protect animals that are constantly moving?

Some animals travel between different parts of the ocean in search of food. Others use different habitats at different stages of their life cycles, such as blue swimmer crabs or King George whiting.

So, when designing marine parks, it is important to conserve the full range of marine habitats, as well as the connections between them, to ensure our marine ecosystems remain healthy, functioning and productive.

Will marine parks be closed to fishing?

No! South Australia's marine parks will be zoned for multiple uses with four different zones allowing for different activities and uses.

The General Managed Use and Habitat Protection Zones will allow for various forms of recreational and commercial fishing, as well as a range of other activities. These zones will cover the major part of each marine park.

The Sanctuary Zone will be designated as "no-take", but will allow for various low impact activities.

The Restricted Access Zone will be designated as "no go" and will be the smallest of the zones in each marine park. As an example, the draft zoning plan for the pilot Encounter Marine Park, released in 2005, proposed only 13 per cent of the marine park as Sanctuary Zone and less than 1 per cent as Restricted Access Zone.

This left approximately 87 per cent of the area available for various forms of fishing.

How big will marine parks be?

The proposed Encounter Marine Park measures approximately 2,400 square kilometres in area, extending from the Murray Mouth to Kangaroo Island. The exact size and location of the other 18 proposed marine parks have not yet been determined.

Importantly, the outer boundary or perimeter of a marine park should have minimal effect on the way people use the marine environment. Any necessary changes to local activities would likely come into effect once the zoning within each marine park is developed.

Why can't you fish in a sanctuary zone?

The objective of a sanctuary or "no-take" zone in a marine park is to conserve and protect marine ecosystems in their natural condition.

Every species of plant, fish and other animal has an important role to play in maintaining a healthy marine environment. When fish and other plants and animals are removed, the natural balance of the marine ecosystem is altered.

For this reason, fishing and collecting will not be permitted in a sanctuary zone. This view is supported by a recent National Geographic article, which describes no-take areas as "reference collections of the sea or wet libraries."

This article further states: "... allowing animals to be taken from a sanctuary area makes as much sense as allowing the most popular books in the library to be borrowed and never returned."

Will local communities be consulted?

Yes. There will be many opportunities for local communities to be involved. Firstly, communities will have an opportunity to comment on the location of the 19 marine parks.

The proposed boundaries will be developed in 2007, based on a set of scientific and community design principles, and they will be released for comment once the Marine Parks Bill is approved by Parliament.

Once the boundaries have been finalised, the community will be invited to assist with the development of zoning and marine park management plans.

Local communities will be able to provide information for consideration in the planning process, nominate for membership of local consultative committees, and provide written submissions on the draft zoning and management plans, once released.

The information we receive from local communities will be of vital importance in developing the system of marine parks, so we encourage you to get involved!

For more information, please contact us on 8124 4900 or marineDEH@saugov.sa.gov.au or view our website www.environment.sa.gov.au/coasts/mpas.html