

Minutes

Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park Advisory Committee Meeting 1 - 2023

Note – These minutes were circulated to the committee for endorsement out of session prior to expiry of the committee. No objections were received from committee members

Details

Location:	Port Stephens Fisheries Institute and via Microsoft Teams
Date/time:	Thursday, 23 November 2023 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
Chairperson:	Clr Leah Anderson, Deputy Mayor, Port Stephens Council

People present

Members present

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Iain Watt | Marine conservation |
| 2. James McArthur | Maritime industry |
| 3. Paul Lennon | Recreational boating |
| 4. Clr Leah Anderson | Local government (chair) |
| 5. Gregory Finn | Spearfishing |

Members via Microsoft Teams

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 6. Brad Verdich | Aquaculture |
| 7. Prof Troy Gaston | Marine science |
| 8. Allan Freihaut | Recreational fishing |
| 9. Marisha Ewart | Tourism |

Alternate members present

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 10. Frank Future | Tourism |
| 11. Chris Taylor | Marine Conservation |

Alternate members via Microsoft Teams

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 12. Elizabeth McEntyre | Aboriginal culture |
| 13. Kathleen Cheers | Commercial fishing |
| 14. Liz McEntyre | Aboriginal culture |
| 15. Robert Gauta | Commercial fishing |

Guests

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 16. Bill Talbot | EDF Renewables |
|-----------------|----------------|

NSW DPI Fisheries staff

- | |
|---|
| 17. Sarah Fairfull, Director Aboriginal Fishing & Marine
Conservation (MS Teams) |
| 18. Michelle Fletcher, Director Marine Coastal Estuaries & Flood
(MS Teams) |
| 19. Rodney James, Program Leader Marine Planning (MS
Teams) |
| 20. Peter Gallagher, Program Leader Marine Operations |
| 21. Luke Erskine, Marine Park Manager |
| 22. Andrew Hampstead, Marine Park Officer |
| 23. Andrea Hawke, Marine Park Administration Officer |

24. David Harasti, Fisheries Research

Apologies

Members

1. Lorraine Lilley Aboriginal Culture
2. Margo Smith Recreational water use

Alternate Members

1. Daniel Aldrich Maritime industry
2. Robert Bailey Recreational boating
3. Kate Akkerman Marine science

Guests

4. Cassandra Kottaras Port Stephens Council

Previous Meeting/s

Action	Responsible	Status
Action 22.1: Marine Park Manager to contact Irukandji Shark & Ray Encounters to facilitate advice on injured wildlife and collate information regarding impacts.	Marine Park Manager	Completed
Action 22.2: Use an out-of session process to facilitate the nominations, voting, recommendation, and appointment of a new Chair for the PSGLMPAC, prior to the end of 2022	Marine Park Manager	Completed
Action 22.3: Provide committee with Fishers Watch contact details	District Fisheries Officer / Marine Park Manager	Completed
Action 22.4: Provide committee with links to DPI webpages on artificial reefs	Marine Park Manager	MPM to re-circulate links to DPI webpages on artificial reefs. Completed
Action 22.5: Link to sailing related interview/podcast be circulated to committee members (requested by Chris Taylor)	Marine Park Manager	Pending

This Meeting

No	Issue	Action	Responsible
1	Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country The Chair welcomed the committee and formally introduced herself. Acknowledgement of Country provided by the Chair		Chair
2	Apologies	Refer to above	Marine Park Manager (MPM)
3	Actions from previous meeting 2022.1 Marine Park Manager provided an update on the status of actions from previous meeting.	Refer to above	MPM
4	Adoption of minutes from meeting 2022.1 The committee was asked to adopt the minutes of the previous meeting amended in response to comments from Paul Lennon regarding HPZ's (circulated to members). Motion: That the minutes of the 13 October 2022 meeting be accepted as a true and accurate record: Moved: Frank Future Seconded: Iain Watt Carried unanimously		Chair
5	Status of the draft network management plan and management rules The Program Leader Marine Operations provided a presentation on the status of the draft network management plan and management rules. • The Draft Network Management Plan sets out 10 management programs including a 'Rules' program. • The Draft Network Management Plan remains under active consideration within government. • Following adoption of a final management plan, the next stage of the management planning process involves the development of management rules in support of the management plan.		Program Leader Marine Operations (PLMO)

	• The <i>Marine Estate Management Act 2014</i> saved the former marine park zoning plans as management rules and these remain in place until amended. • The relevant Ministers are to conduct a review of the management rules for each marine park every 10 years to determine whether the management rules remain appropriate for securing the purposes of marine parks. • The 10-year period occurs in December 2024. • The Department is currently exploring options for the statutory review.		
6	Proposed amendments to the Marine Park Advisory Committee Handbook The Program Leader Marine Operations provided a presentation on the proposed amendments to the Marine Park Advisory Committee Handbook. Proposed amendments to the Handbook include: • Call for nominations can be made at any time and suitable nominees may be added to a register of interest. • The Marine Estate Agency Steering Committee may recommend appointment of a member from the register of interest to fill vacancies. • Phasing out of alternate members over time in favour of more rapid appointments from the register of interest. • Clarifying that staff of Marine Estate Management Authority agencies are not eligible for appointment to committees. • Clarifying that local government members may be either council staff or councillors nominated by the relevant Joint Organisation of Councils • Preference to be given to new nominees who meet the selection criteria over persons who have served two consecutive terms on a committee.		PLMO

	• Providing for the appointment of an independent Chair if required. • Providing more flexibility in disciplinary actions such as written warnings as an alternative to removal of a member in relation to breaches of the code-of-conduct having regard to the circumstances of the matter.		
7	Port Stephens - Great Lakes Marine Park Advisory Committee (MPAC) membership update The Program Leader Marine Operations provided an update on the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park Advisory Committee membership status. • The Departments have provided a briefing to the relevant Ministers on the status and operation of the MPACs. • Membership of the Solitary Islands, Port Stephens-Great Lakes, Jervis Bay and Batemans Marine Park Advisory Committees is due to expire on 3 February 2024. • A process to establish the new committees is expected soon, in line with the approved revised Handbook. A committee member suggested the possibility of extending current membership for a year to provide ongoing continuity. PLMO advised there are broader reviews of boards and committees underway across government and the department is unable to commit to an extension at this stage. A committee member raised concerns about the proposed offshore windfarm and opportunities for MPAC input. PLMO advised the windfarm is proposed in Commonwealth waters outside the PSGLMP in a renewable energy zone established under Commonwealth legislation. The development site is outside NSW state waters. NSW Government agencies have provided feedback around approval requirements with respect to the marine park and associated approval requirements. A committee member raised concerns around risks to marine park values from potential impacts from ships with wind turbines. Further discussion around what kind of parameters will be set for these		PLMO

	companies that want to use part of the marine park for access or storage for construction or mooring etc. Chair suggested to defer remainder of windfarm conversation until we have the presentation from Bill Talbot (item 13 of agenda).		
8	Draft Marine Park video update The committee received an update on a draft video that is being prepared to promote the values of marine parks. These will build upon earlier videos prepared for Lord Howe Island and Solitary Islands marine parks. The department is keen to ensure the videos reflect the range of values that exist across the marine park network. A link to the draft video will be provided for committee members to provide any advice and comments. Committee discussed ensuring adequate representation of recreational fishing values, gender representation and values to be reflected in the video.	Action 23.1: Include better representation of recreational fishing in PSGLMP video. Action 23.2: MPM to share link to video with committee members.	MPM
9	PSGLMP Management Update Introduced new staff Andrea Hawke – Administration Officer, and Andrew Hampstead – Marine Park Officer. Across the marine park network in the past 12 months there has been 332 marine park permits issued with 34% issued within PSGLMP. Management of moorings has been a current issue in PSGLMP. There are 46 designated mooring areas within the marine park boundaries. 80% of those 46 comprise sensitive seagrass habitat and the allocation of infrastructure such as moorings in these areas needs to be adequately assessed. Committee discussion around availability of mooring areas, supporting infrastructure and access, associated administrative, environmental and social issues, and mooring related issues in the Myall River associated with channel siltation. Fly Point and Halifax Park 40th anniversary occurred this year. Process to have this small aquatic area gazetted started in the 1970's and was combined in		MPM

	the gazettal of the former aquatic reserve in 1983. The area has since been incorporated into the broader Fly Point – Corrie Island Sanctuary Zone. Celebration taking place at Neil Carrol Park on Sunday 3rd December. Invitation extended to members to attend. Marine Discovery series event at Tomaree Community Library on Wednesday 29th from 6pm. Invitation extended to members.		
10	Fisheries Research Update Presentation provided by Dr Harasti on effectiveness of Sanctuary Zones (SZ's). Currently the department is synthesizing all of the papers published in the last decade in marine protected areas (68 journal papers published). One of the key purposes of this is to document the effectiveness of SZ's across all MP's within NSW. Key findings include an increase in target species abundance in SZ's, and HPZ numbers slowly on the rise. Removal of fishing pressure attributed to this abundance. Blackrock cod (BRC) surveys have recently finished, and more surveys are planned for next year. Data is showing no increase in BRC numbers anywhere. Rather decreases, even though species has been protected since 1983. Reasons for the decline are unclear. As part of the Fly Point 40th anniversary a paper was published highlighting the biodiversity of Fly Point and the benefits of this small SZ. Soft coral was impacted due to floods in 2021-22 from low salinities and sand inundation. Kelp, seagrass and sponges also suffered from flood impacts. Recovery of soft corals is now being seen. White's Seahorse was also impacted by soft coral decline. 60 seahorse hotels have been installed in Port Stephens to support recovery of this species. Mangrove dieback has been observed in various estuaries including Port Stephens following floods. Most extensive losses have occurred in the Hawkesbury River. Despite isolated dieback, mangroves are still increasing in abundance in Port Stephens. May be dying off in one area but increasing in others.		Dr David Harasti

	Greynurse Shark (GNS) project: genetics used to provide population estimate. This has been done for different species including the southern bluefin tuna and White Sharks. PSGLMP has some of the most important GNS sites in NSW. Most sampling done in PSGLMP due to numbers. General discussion and questions followed Dr Harasti's presentation.		
11	Port Stephens Council (PSC) – Coastal Management Program update The Chair explained the PSC representative couldn't attend the meeting, but an update on the coastal management program will be included with the minutes.	Action 23.3 Circulate Coastal Management Program update.	Chair
12	Offshore renewable energy infrastructure area proposal: a brief overview of licence and assessment requirements Chair handed over to Bill Talbot to provide a brief overview of licence and assessment requirements. Bill Talbot introduced himself to members and provided a background of his career to date. Key points discussed included: • Renewables driven by efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Particularly net zero 2050 target. • Groundwork for this proposal/project done by Morrison Govt in 2021. With introduction of the Offshore Renewable Infrastructure Act, which allows for declaration of areas, the licencing of the projects, and the management and regulation of operations. • Current Commonwealth Government arranged 65-day consultation (Feb-Apr 2023). Site was declared suitable on 12 July 2023. • Calls for applications from Aug-Nov 2023 (now closed) for feasibility licence. This licence allows one to progress through the application process for the next seven years (takes around 7 years to get approval).		Bill Talbot (Guest)

	- Public consultation likely to emerge in next couple of years. Commercial licence application will go out for public comment also. - During construction, operation, and decommissioning - coexistence of the areas and their impact will be closely monitored. To try and maximise benefits by having as much use of these areas, in addition to the power generation. - Issues raised around impacts on species and ecosystems, marine benthos, fishing (access issues), transmission lines going through to connection points (private and public land). Strong concerns in relation to local employment. - It is predicted that by 2030 up to 4 companies will receive approval with commercial licence. Need to pass through all assessment and approvals processes. - Construction estimated to take 7-14 years to complete. - The area is in Commonwealth waters (outside of NSW waters and the marine park). Potential for project to impact on marine park activities through ships passing through, commercial operators, moorings. Committee discussion and questions followed the presentation, including on the nature of the infrastructure, approval processes, community consultation, environmental assessment processes and impacts.		
13	General Business Discussion and questions regarding the status of the draft management plan and rules, and the upcoming statutory review of management rules. Member raised concerns around the draft marine park video and requested equitable representation be reflected. Suggestion to include northern end of the park as well. Noted that a Fisheries Compliance representative was not available to provide a compliance update however this would be standing agenda item moving	Action 23.4: Compliance	MPM

