FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Marine Estate Management Strategy 2018 - 2028

FAQ #1

The NSW marine estate is one of our greatest natural assets. It comprises tidal rivers and estuaries, the shoreline, submerged lands, offshore islands, and the waters of the NSW coast from the Queensland to the Victorian border and out to three nautical miles offshore.

IT’S YOUR MARINE ESTATE
Almost six million people live within 50 kilometres of the NSW coastline, including the people of eleven coastal Aboriginal nations who are intimately connected to their land and Sea Country.

WHAT IS THE MARINE ESTATE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY?

The Marine Estate Management Strategy 2018-2028 is a first for NSW and is the centrepiece of the marine estate reforms. The Strategy is a requirement of the Marine Estate Management Act 2014 and sets out the vision and principles for the management of the marine estate.

Our vision is a healthy coast and sea, managed for the greatest wellbeing of the community, now and into the future.

The Strategy has nine interlinked management initiatives supported by detailed actions that address the priority and cumulative threats to the marine estate over the next ten years. It outlines how these threats to community benefits will be managed.

The Strategy was developed by the Marine Estate Management Authority (the Authority) with input from key stakeholders and the broader community. It reaffirms the NSW Government’s commitment to holistic management of the marine estate as a single continuous system.

More information on how the Strategy was developed and the Authority’s decision-making process can be found in the Marine Estate Management Strategy 2018-2028.
WHY DO WE NEED THE STRATEGY?

Overall, 75 per cent of estuaries in the Hawkesbury Shelf marine bioregion of NSW and 35 per cent of estuaries on the north and south coasts have been rated as having poor health. This is due to water runoff and other pollution from existing housing, industry and agriculture.

Poor water quality contributes to the degradation and loss of vital coastal habitats such as wetlands, saltmarsh, mangroves and seagrass. These habitats are important to the State’s fisheries production and support coastal biodiversity.

Population growth along the coast also threatens important habitats. The NSW population is projected to grow by 28 per cent to 9.9 million in 2036, with an extra 2.15 million people to be accommodated along the NSW coast.

Habitat degradation will have long-term impacts on birdlife, fish stocks and how ecosystems function more broadly, which has flow-on effects on tourism, recreation, Aboriginal cultural heritage and marine industries.

Good water quality, healthy coastal and marine habitats and reducing threats to marine wildlife are therefore a key focus of the Strategy.

WHAT ARE THE PRIORIT Y THREATS?

The Strategy is underpinned by the comprehensive, evidence-based NSW Marine Estate Threat and Risk Assessment Final Report (statewide TARA).

The statewide TARA found that the greatest threats to the environmental assets of the marine estate were:

- Urban and rural water pollution or run off
- Climate change (over a 20-year outlook)
- Disturbance to habitats and species from estuarine entrance modification, harbour maintenance, foreshore development, wetland drainage and other works.

The greatest threats to social, cultural and economic benefits were primarily associated with water pollution and a general lack of social, cultural and economic information, lack of compliance with regulations and lack of access to the marine estate.

Cumulative threats were also assessed. The statewide TARA identified five cumulative threats (in no priority order):

- Multiple threats to estuarine water quality
- Climate change (over a 20-year outlook)
- Multiple threats to Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Multiple threats to marine wildlife
- Multiple threats to fish assemblages.

For more information on the statewide TARA, please visit the marine estate reforms website.

HOW DOES THE STRATEGY ADDRESS THE PRIORIT Y THREATS?

Collectively the initiatives and actions in the Strategy will address the priority and cumulative threats by:

1. improving water quality and reducing litter
2. delivering healthy coastal habitats with sustainable use and development
3. planning for climate change
4. protecting the Aboriginal cultural values of the marine estate
5. reducing impacts on threatened and protected species
6. ensuring sustainable fishing and aquaculture
7. enabling safe and sustainable boating
8. enhancing social, cultural and economic benefits
9. delivering effective governance.
WHAT ARE THE KEY ACTIONS THE STRATEGY WILL DELIVER IN STAGE 1?

The Strategy will be implemented in stages. Stage 1 (2018-2020) will focus on addressing the most severe threats to the health of the marine estate from pollution and marine litter. Other priorities within the Strategy include: initiatives to deliver healthy coastal habitats and sustainable land use, plan for climate change, protect Aboriginal cultural values; reduce impacts on marine life, deliver sustainable boating and fishing, enhance social, cultural and economic benefits and deliver effective governance. An infographic and one page snapshot depict the regional benefits and key actions the Strategy will deliver.

Stage 1 will:

**IMPROVE WATER QUALITY, REDUCE LITTER AND DELIVER HEALTHY HABITATS**

The water quality actions in the Strategy will complement and build on the support being provided to councils to deliver the coastal reforms. We will:

- provide local councils with additional training, tools and support to identify the water quality problems in their area and the most effective actions to address those problems
- align and expand existing monitoring to deliver a statewide water quality monitoring program and a regular statewide report card on catchment health.

We will expand the NSW Environment Protection Authority’s ‘Don’t be a Tosser!’ program to include a targeted campaign for marine litter hotspots.

We will deliver on-ground activities to reduce diffuse source pollution including:

- coastal floodplain management and habitat restoration to improve floodplain infrastructure and drainage management. This will enhance natural water flows and address poor water quality from acid sulfate soils and low dissolved oxygen conditions
- rehabilitate wetlands, reduce erosion from roads and improve stormwater infrastructure
- restore oyster reefs to stabilise estuary foreshores and help filter water to improve water quality, starting with a pilot program in Port Stephens
- restore fish passage at two priority coastal barrier sites.

- undertake an agricultural nutrient reduction trial on the north coast, which includes research on industry behaviour and how to best influence agricultural practices.

**INCREASE ABORIGINAL PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT**

We will ensure Aboriginal people’s participation in Sea Country management, planning and monitoring is significantly enhanced through employment and training. We will also assist Aboriginal people to explore opportunities for cultural tourism development in marine parks.

**FISHING, AQUACULTURE, BOATING AND MARINE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT**

We will take action to address threats associated with fishing (harvest and bycatch) and illegal sale of fish. These include developing harvest strategies, undertaking an environmental assessment of recreational fishing and expanding the commercial fishing observer program to better understand threats associated with bycatch and interactions with threatened and protected species.

We will undertake fisheries enhancement projects such as fish stocking in estuaries and provision of infrastructure (e.g. jetties), to enhance fishing experiences.

We will introduce a targeted education and compliance campaign to minimise harm to marine wildlife, including a more strategic approach to the management of whale beachings.

We will also reduce threats to sensitive seagrass by introducing new mooring technologies and delivery mechanisms.
ENHANCING SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND ENSURING EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

We will undertake a range of projects including enhancing school and community education programs, mapping the range of uses in the marine estate, exploring opportunities for economic growth of marine related industries, developing a Marine Integrated Monitoring Program and establishing an integrated governance framework.

WILL THERE BE FUNDING FOR THE STRATEGY?

The NSW Government has committed $45.7 million over the first two years (Stage 1) to address the most severe threats to the health of the marine estate.

The Strategy will require additional funding over the subsequent eight years to continue the work undertaken in Stage 1.

WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT MARINE LITTER?

In line with the Premier’s priority to reduce the volume of litter in NSW by 40 per cent by 2020, we will expand the land-based ‘Don’t be a Tosser!’ to include a targeted marine litter campaign. Focusing on marine litter hotspot sites, the campaign will focus on specific marine litter issues, such as wildlife entanglement, to improve awareness and drive behaviour change.

We will also establish a Marine Litter Working Group that will focus on identifying strategic ways to target marine litter to reduce its threats. The group will also oversee research tasks on emerging litter issues such as microplastics.

Poor stormwater management is another key contributor to marine litter. To reduce the amount of litter entering our waterways from stormwater outlets, we will clarify local and state government responsibilities for managing stormwater and ensure access to funding mechanisms.

WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

The initial focus, in Stage 1, will be the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation program that focuses on the key knowledge gaps that were identified in the statewide TARA. This includes:

- targeted mapping of saltmarsh habitats that are at risk from sea level rise
- monitoring of coastal kelp communities that are impacted from ocean warming and storm events
- expansion of sea temperature monitoring across the state
- monitoring of changes in fish assemblages along the coast using citizen science programs.

This work complements related climate change assessments in the coastal regions as part of other NSW Government initiatives such as the NSW Coastal Reforms.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Following the finalisation and release of the Strategy, the development of an Implementation Plan is now a priority. The Implementation Plan will rely on input from key stakeholders. This ensures that stakeholders who assisted in the development of the Strategy, and who may partner in the delivery of actions, can further contribute to implementation planning.

A key aspect of implementation planning is how progress on the Strategy will be monitored, evaluated and reported on. The Implementation Plan and a Marine Integrated Monitoring Program (Monitoring Program) will be developed concurrently. They are closely linked and both are needed for the seamless delivery of actions and for measuring their success.
WHAT IS THE MARINE INTEGRATED MONITORING PROGRAM?

Implementation of the Strategy’s initiatives and actions will be monitored, and reported on annually, informed by the Marine Integrated Monitoring Program. Research providers, universities, State and local government and other key stakeholders will assist in the development of the Monitoring Program.

In 2023 a five-year health check will review how initiatives are performing against key performance indicators and whether the risk of the threats identified in 2017 have changed. The five-year health check will also respond to research and monitoring outputs, new evidence and emerging threats.

WHAT HAS CHANGED SINCE THE DRAFT MARINE ESTATE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY?

The final Strategy incorporates stakeholder and community feedback from engagement in late 2017. The Strategy now includes more outcomes-focused management actions, clarity around spatial management, improved communication of habitats and species management, better alignment of threatened species management and inclusion of a stand-alone governance initiative (Initiative 9) to ensure robust governance. More detail on what has changed is in the Overview of Feedback - Draft Marine Estate Management Strategy Report.

HOW DOES THE STRATEGY LINK WITH THE COASTAL REFORMS?

The coastal zone is an important part of the marine estate. The Strategy and the Coastal Reforms are both aimed at ensuring we plan for and manage coastal areas for the wellbeing of our community, now and into the future.

The Coastal Reforms commenced in April 2018, with local councils now developing coastal management programs (CMPs) under the Coastal Management Act 2016. CMPs will help to deliver some of the actions in this Strategy. For example, through Initiative 1 we will build the capacity of local councils to incorporate water quality actions into their CMPs by applying the Risk-based Framework for Waterway Health Outcomes. Councils can then apply for Coastal and Estuary Grants funding to implement works consistent with a certified CMP.

Implementation of the Strategy will provide a range of other inputs to CMP’s, either through state level guidance and better practices, or more specifically through pilot projects and other actions at local levels. Local councils will be an important partner for these local projects.

HOW DOES THE STRATEGY LINK WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT REFORMS?

The Strategy integrates with other coastal and marine reforms in NSW such as the Commercial Fisheries Business Adjustment Program (BAP), Land Management and Biodiversity Conservation Reforms and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Reforms, to achieve a more coordinated approach to management of the marine estate by all levels of government. The Implementation Plan and Monitoring Program will reflect this integration to further enhance social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes for the NSW marine estate.

MORE INFORMATION

The Marine Estate Management Strategy 2018-2028 is available at the marine estate website www.marine.nsw.gov.au