

What lies beneath:

Addressing conflicts arising from spearfishing activities in Waverley

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Defining the conflict

anti-spearfishing nutters

Has anybody ever had anybody chase them down when they've been out spearfishing?

I went out for an afternoon spearfishing off Coogee beach in Sydney today, then some lady saw me snorkelled over to me and said what do you think your doing to which I told her to "go away" (my exact words) then she followed me around for the next half an hour and shadowing my every move even as much to follow me up onto the beach telling me how "I am pathetic, and I should go to the fish market like everybody else the fish are only there to view and I mustn't be a local if I want to kill fish" to which my response is "So you go up to every line fisherman on the beach and have the same argument with them?" She replies something to the effect that no one line fishes on her beach which I can tell you isn't true cause 2 lines hooked up within 20 mins

Is this a constant problem that anybody else has had?

Just edited by helms: 01-10-2012 at 04:15 PM

<http://www.spearfishingplanet.com/australia-new-zealand/17247-anti-spearfishing-nutters.html>

Boundaries and Barriers: Managing the Tidal Zone, 14 August 2012

Spearfishing 101

- Ancient method of fishing used for millennia
- Modern spearfishing utilises elastic powered spear guns and slings or compressed gas pneumatic powered spear guns
- Spearfishers catch < 1% of fish globally
- Activity itself generates much emotion and debate –is it a sustainable fishing method or environmental vandalism?
- Sport heavily regulated in Australia
- Research shown that in Australia spear fishing is the most sustainable method of fishing!
 - diver is restricted to shallow water, can be selective and target specific size and species to capture
 - No adverse impacts compared to other types of fishing such as by-catch, bait, loss of equipment and habitat destruction

Reference: Smith, A and Nakaya, S (2002) Spearfishing – Is it Ecologically Sustainable? Available at http://www.cifed.com/documents/sustainable_spearfishing.pdf

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Spearfishing in NSW

- One million recreational fishers in NSW including spearfishers
- All fishing activities in NSW regulated by Department of Primary Industries
- Spearfishing is a relatively small sector within the overall fishing sector and in comparison to other user groups
- Many factors constrain the activity of spearfishing – depth of diving, visibility, swell, harvesting, range etc.
- Much more constrained than line fishing
- Spearfishers are required to pay NSW Recreational Fishing Fee
- Compliance infringements by spearfishers are low but high profile when they occur

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What are the rules?

- In Australia, spearfishers are not permitted to:
 - Use a spear to take Blue, Brown or Red Groper
 - Take fish with a spear using a light
 - Spearfish on ocean beaches (except for the last 20m at each end)
 - Use SCUBA equipment
- A number of longstanding spearfishing closures exist in river mouths, coastal lagoons, and tidal waters



http://in.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Spearfisherman_Pyo_Kyo_Islands_July_2007.JPG

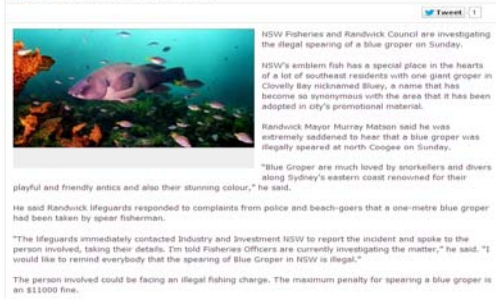
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Why do spearfishers get a bad wrap?



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Illegal groper spearing under investigation



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Eastern Blue Groper



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Images: <http://farm3.static.flickr.com>

Bronte to Coogee Aquatic Reserve

- Prohibition on:
 - the taking of groper by all methods of fishing from the northern end of Clovelly to the southern end of Gordon's Bay and the adjoining waters to 100 metres
 - spearfishing from the northern end of Clovelly to the southern end of Gordon's Bay and then subject to normal restrictions in other parts of the reserve
 - the collection of cunjevoi, commonly used as bait, and all invertebrates (dead or alive)



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Spearfishing in Waverley

- Southern Bondi located in a Intertidal Protected Area (IPA)
- Restriction on collection of bait in intertidal areas but fishing allowed
- North Bondi popular area for recreational activities including snorkelling, swimming and fishing
- The proximity of spear fishing to other swimmers has given rise to public safety concerns in this area.
- Confusion about the regulations between aquatic reserves and IPAs – rules are confused / misunderstanding cause of conflict
- Strong community opposition to all spearfishing activities in Bondi Bay – safety and perceived link to groper decline (later disproved by Macquarie Uni research)

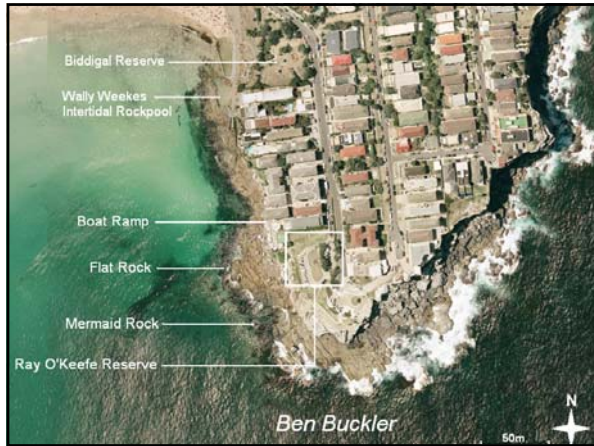


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Intertidal Protected Area (IPA)



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Spearfishing in Waverley

- Council does not have the authority manage areas below the mean low water mark.
- Authority lies with Industry & Investment NSW.
- Council resolved to reduce conflict by prohibiting the carriage of spearfishing equipment through Biddigal Reserve and Ray O'Keefe Reserve
- Administered under section 632 of the *Local Government Act 1993* and deemed lawful by Council solicitors.
- Complaints that signage at Ray O'Keefe was unclear and was interpreted as Council banning the activity itself – confusion and conflict continued

Waverley Council

Council response

- In 2007, Council requested a fishing closure for Bondi Beach from Minister Primary Industries
- As an interim measure Council requested officers investigate ways to legally restrict the activity
- There have been no reported spearfishing related incidents in the past 13 years.
- Investigation showed Council management practices were adding to the confusion and making the only legal entry point via the children's pool at North Bondi

Waverley Council

Current Approach

- Consultation with local spearfishing clubs, the Underwater Spearfishing and Fishing Association (USFA), Council staff and members of the community
- Council resolved to:
 - Lift the current ban at Ray O'Keefe Reserve
 - Work with local spearfishing clubs to use this as the only access point
 - Install signage regarding voluntary separation of swimmers and spearfishers
 - Prohibit the carriage of spearfishing equipment through other entry points to Bondi Beach.
 - Communicate the new regulations
 - Work with local spearfishing organisations to promote safer spearfishing practices

Waverley Council

Council Regulations

- Council prohibits the carriage of any spearfishing equipment through certain areas around Bondi Beach
- Promote sole access through Ray O'Keefe Reserve via Ramsgate Ave
- The purpose being to provide a more direct, legal and safer access point to Flat Rock therefore minimising beach user conflict and promote public safety

Waverley Council

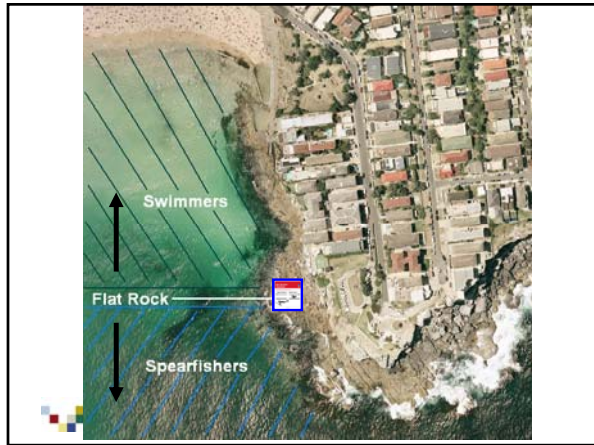
Beach Regulation signs

Waverley Council



Voluntary Separation Zone

- Installed informational signage regarding voluntary separation of swimmers and spearfishers at Flat Rock - Ben Buckler.
- Council discourages spearfishing in Bondi Bay or landward of Flat Rock
- This is to target inexperienced spearfishers
- Council are not permitted to ban spearfishing activities
- Purely a voluntary separation zone for the purpose of public safety



Informational Signage

In addition to the new regulations:

- Council has installed updated signage enforcing the DPI bag and size limits for saltwater species.
- Continues to promote safe spearfishing practices through education and awareness
- Will only pursue further action in regards to a fishing closure zone in the LGA if warranted and supported by scientific research and data.

Public Forum

- November 2010
- Purpose to launch new regulations
- 200 attendees
- Highlighted need to address the misunderstanding on the rules governing spearfishing, Aquatic Reserves, and IPAs
- Need for better education on the rules governing spearfishing as well as Aquatic Reserves and IPAs
- Need for partnerships with all interest groups
- Need to work with USFA to improve regulation of sport and education of those new to the sport
- Lobby the NSW Government to require the distribution of the USFA Code of Conduct with the sale of any spearfishing equipment

NEWS

Snorkeller takes aim at spear fishing

Snorkelling enthusiast David Hempton has challenged Waverley Council to hold an anti-spear fishing event after what he said was a "pro-spear fishing forum" last year.

The meeting, hosted by the council in November, was advertised in a fishing magazine and addressed by representatives of the Underwater Skin Divers and Fisherman's Association.

Mr Hempton said this excluded passive users who wanted to see spear fishing banned at Bondi, Camp Cove and from Bronte to Coogee.

A council spokesman said it did not pay for the advertisement but promoted it to residents via posters and its website.

Mayer Sally Betts said the purpose of the forum was not to promote the sport but explain new restrictions on it. She said the council did not have the power to ban spear fishing altogether but had prohibited carrying spears across beaches.

Mr Hempton said creating a marine sanctuary would boost the area's tourism potential and conservation credentials. "News of that would go all around the world, and for free," he said. "We've got a sanctuary there for the last of the grey nurse sharks in NSW and fishermen get upset that they can't spear fish there. They've got everywhere to go and passive users have nowhere."

The spokesman said there were no plans for another spear fishing forum.

Questions or Comments?

