



Australian Government
Parks Australia



Australian
Marine Parks

Commercial fishing in Australian Marine Parks

Australian Marine Park management plans are in effect and cover the 60 marine parks located in Commonwealth waters (3 to 200 nautical miles from the coastline) that are managed by the Director of National Parks*.

*Note that transitional management arrangements are in place for the Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands marine parks, the Macquarie Island Marine Park and the 13 Marine Parks of the South-east Marine Parks Network, until management plans for these marine parks are prepared.

Mandatory Vessel Monitoring for Commercial Fishers in Australian Marine Parks

The mandatory requirement for Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) when operating in or transiting through an Australian Marine Park, is now in effect. For more information, see the [Mandatory Vessel Monitoring for Commercial Fishers in Australian Marine Parks Frequently Asked Questions](#).

The management plans together with maps and zoning, can be accessed on the Parks Australia website: parksaustralia.gov.au/marine.

All commercial fishers who fish within or near Australian Marine Parks, need to be aware of the management arrangements and whether the zoning allows for commercial fishing.

Class approvals

Commercial fishing is authorised in Australian Marine Parks by class approvals developed in accordance with each management plan. These can be accessed on the Parks Australia website at: parksaustralia.gov.au/marine/activities/approvals/commercial-fishing/.

Class approvals set out the areas where commercial fishing can occur, the fishing methods that can be used, and the conditions that need to be followed while operating or transiting through Australian Marine Parks. They simplify regulation of marine parks by authorising a group of people undertaking the same activity, rather than requiring individual permits or licences.

The class approvals were developed through a consultative process with fisheries management agencies, peak industry groups and fishery associations around the country.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to apply to be on the class approval?

You don't need to apply to be covered by the class approval. The only requirement is that you hold a fishing concession or licence issued by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority or a state or Northern Territory fisheries agency and can comply with the conditions set out in the approval.

Are there any costs to commercially fish in an Australian Marine Park?

No charges apply to fish in Australian Marine Parks.

What is a zone?

Zones are areas of a marine park that have specific management rules based on International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) categories. Different zone types allow for different types of activity. For example, 'Green' National Park Zones (IUCN II) and 'Pink' Sanctuary Zones (IUCN Ia) do not allow any fishing. 'Yellow' Habitat Protection Zones (IUCN IV) and 'Blue' Multiple Use or Special Purpose Zones (IUCN VI) allow some types of commercial fishing. The plans set out in detail the types of fishing and gear allowed in different zones.

How do I comply with the class approval?

Responsibility for compliance with the class approvals ultimately lies with the concession or licence holder and those that have operational control of the fishing vessel. You must ensure that you are aware of and understand the requirements of the class approval, including:

- knowing the zones where you can and can't fish
- keeping a hard or electronic copy of the class approval on board each vessel
- keeping a navigational chart of the marine park boundaries that is relevant to your fishing operations on board each vessel
- undertaking commercial fishing in accordance with the relevant fishery management plan and the requirements of your individual fishing concession / licence (for example, fishery closures and speed restrictions)
- have a VMS unit installed and activated on your vessel in line with the Director of National Park's VMS requirement no later than 1 July 2028.

What are the rules about transiting through zones?

Transiting is allowed through all zone types (except Sanctuary Zones), however you are required to:

- keep all fishing gear stowed and secured while transiting a zone in which your fishing method is not allowed
- travel at more than 5 knots through National Park Zones (green zones)
- have a VMS unit installed and activated on your vessel in line with the Director of National Park's VMS requirement no later than 1 July 2028
- additional rules apply if you are transiting through the South-east Marine Park Network. See [South-east Network management plan](#) for details.

What does stowed and secured mean?

Stowed and secured is defined in the class approval and means that that all fishing gear is rendered inoperative in zones where fishing is not allowed. Apparatus must be inboard the vessel and otherwise completely out of the water.

What are the rules about anchoring?

Commercial fishing vessels are allowed to anchor in all zone types except National Park Zones (green zones) and Sanctuary Zones (pink zones). If stopping and anchoring within a zone where your gear type is not allowed, your gear must be stowed and secured. Additional rules apply if you are anchoring in the South-east Marine Park Network. See [South-east Network management plan](#) for details.

Are there any restrictions on when I process fish or move fish to another ship (tranship)?

Yes. You can only process or tranship fish in zones where your fishing method is allowed. This is for compliance purposes, to ensure that park surveillance officers are clear on when fish is and isn't being taken. However, exceptions can be considered for individual circumstances, where this rule creates site specific operational constraints on normal fishing activities. Any exceptions need to be authorised by the Director of National Parks. Please contact marineparksauthorisations@dcceew.gov.au.

What actions may be taken for non-compliance with management plans?

Parks Australia has focussed on increasing awareness of Australian Marine Parks and the requirements within the class approvals to help commercial fishers comply with the management plan rules. Parks Australia will investigate all potential non-compliance in Australian Marine Parks, and where there is evidence of non-compliance serious penalties may apply.

Do I need to get a vessel monitoring system (VMS) unit?

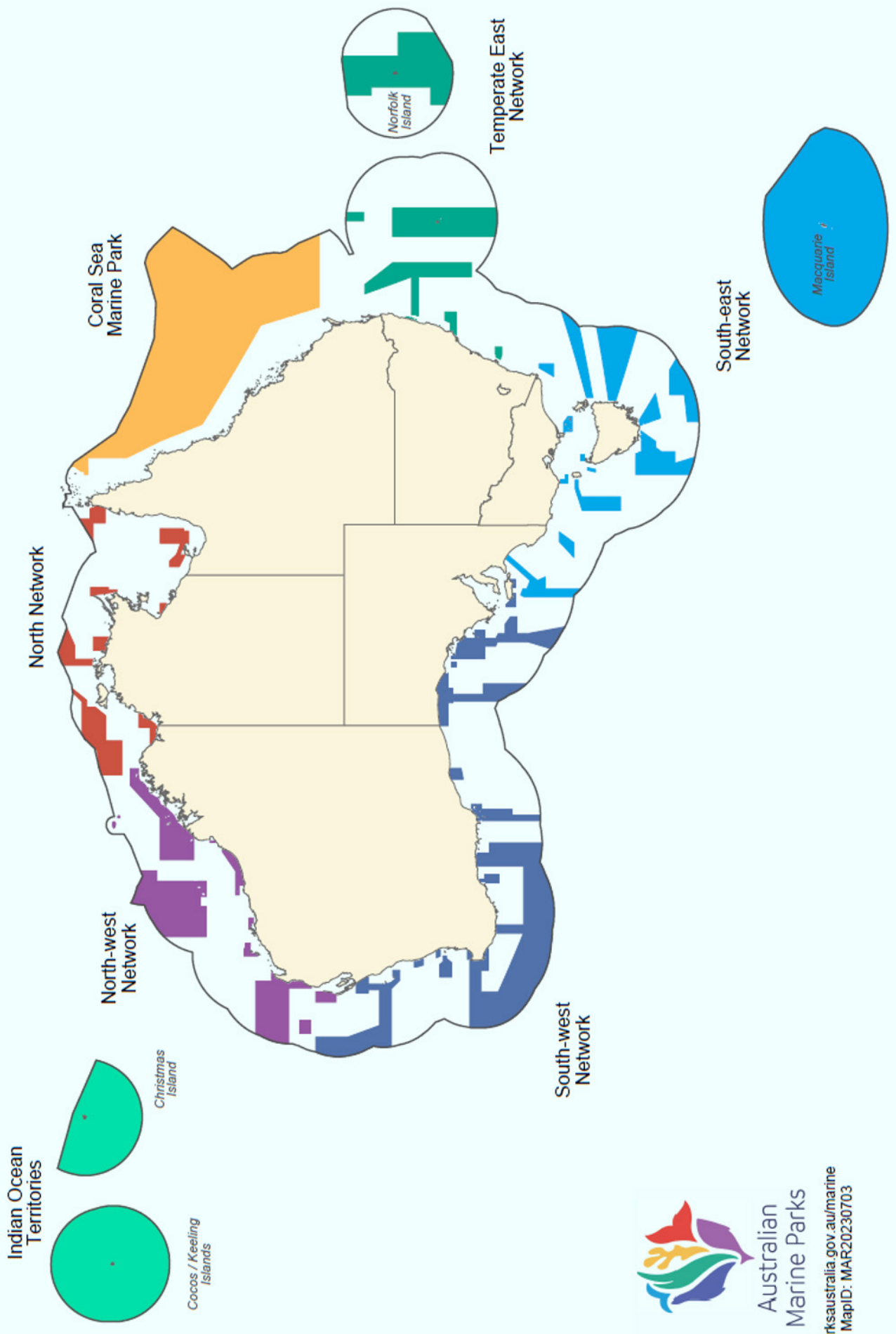
If you are operating in or transiting through an Australian Marine Park, you are required to have a VMS unit installed and active no later than 1 July 2028 in line with the Director of National Park's VMS requirement. More information can be found at the [Mandatory Vessel Monitoring for Commercial Fishers in Australian Marine Parks](#) Frequently asked questions page.

What do I do if my fishing gear drifts into an Australian Marine Park where it is not allowed?

There is no allowable level of gear drift into zones where the given gear type is not allowed. All potential unlawful fishing activity, including accidental gear drift, will be investigated. You are encouraged to cater for the prevailing weather conditions and currents when setting gear close to zone boundaries, to avoid gear drifting into a marine park and fishing unlawfully. Fishers should take immediate action to retrieve their gear if it appears to be at risk of entering an Australian Marine Park zone where it's not allowed.

If your gear does accidentally drift into areas where it is not allowed, you are required to call the Parks Australia duty phone number (0419 293 465) as soon as you are aware of the situation.

Australian Marine Parks



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parksaustralia.gov.au/marine
MapID: MAR20230703

Can I fish recreationally from a commercial fishing vessel while in an Australian Marine Park?

The requirements of your fishing concession / licence and fishery management plans apply in relation to recreational fishing. If your fishery management arrangements allow for recreational fishing from your commercial vessel, then it can be undertaken in accordance with those arrangements and in accordance with marine park zoning requirements. You may need to notify your fisheries agency when fishing recreationally from a commercial vessel.

What are the arrangements for charter fishing and aquaculture operations?

Charter fishing and aquaculture activities are not included in the commercial fishing class approval. An individual licence is required for these activities, which can be applied for online. Please visit our website for further information: <https://parksaustralia.gov.au/marine/activities/>.

What are the provisions for cage towing in the South-west Marine Parks Network?

The class approval for the South-west Network allows cage towing through all zones except National Park Zones (green zones). There is one exception, which is the National Park Zone of Western Kangaroo Island Marine Park, where vessels engaged in cage towing can travel at speeds less than 5 knots.

How do I access maps and electronic files of the marine park boundaries?

They can be accessed on the Parks Australia website at: <https://parksaustralia.gov.au/marine/maps/>. Maps of marine park networks and individual marine parks are available, including Shapefiles, MIF files and KML files which can be downloaded to use on vessel hardware. If you have any difficulty with these electronic files or require a different file format, please contact marineparksauthorisations@dcceew.gov.au.

Australian Marine Parks

Australian Marine Parks are managed by Parks Australia on behalf of the Director of National Parks. The following management plans are in effect to 2028:

- Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan 2018 (consisting of the Coral Sea Marine Park)
- Temperate East Marine Parks Network Management Plan 2018 (consisting of Gifford, Solitary Islands, Norfolk, Cod Grounds, Lord Howe, Hunter, Central Eastern and Jervis marine parks)
- South-west Marine Parks Network Management Plan 2018 (consisting of Abrolhos, Eastern Recherche, Jurien, Twilight, Two Rocks, Great Australian Bight, Perth Canyon, Murat, Geographe, Western Eyre, Bremer, Western Kangaroo Island, South-west Corner, Southern Kangaroo Island marine parks)
- North-west Marine Parks Network Management Plan 2018 (consisting of Kimberley, Dampier, Cartier Island, Montebello, Ashmore Reef, Mermaid Reef, Gascoyne, Ningaloo, Argo–Rowley Terrace, Carnarvon Canyon, Roebuck, Shark Bay, Eighty Mile Beach marine parks)
- North Marine Parks Network Management Plan 2018 (consisting of West Cape York, Arnhem, Arafura, Limmen, Oceanic Shoals, Wessel, Joseph Bonaparte Gulf and Gulf of Carpentaria marine parks).

Further information

If you have questions regarding commercial fishing, please visit the Australian Marine Parks website parksaustralia.gov.au/marine, email us at marineparksauthorisations@dcceew.gov.au or call 1800 920 528.