



Strict Nature Reserve Policy

Policy

Recfishwest supports the use of Strict Nature Reserves, which are specified areas that aim to fully protect all environmental values to be fully protected, when they are either (a) established at an appropriate size to remove the identified threat for which it is being implemented, and (b) that they are an agreed allocation for scientific reference and research.

Recfishwest believes there can be long-term benefits for recreational fishers and the community generally from establishing a small portion of Western Australia's ocean areas as Strict Nature Reserves as set out in this policy. Their primary function is to provide protected scientific reference zones and pristine areas for fisheries research for future generations.

Recfishwest does not support the general widespread use of Strict Nature Reserves as a proxy for good fisheries management. Should an area be identified for consideration as a Strict Nature Reserve then the scientific research that drives the proposal should be acceptable to stakeholders. In the absence of any science the Precautionary Principle should be applied in full consultation with stakeholders.

Strict Nature Reserves would be characterised by two principal features:

- 1.** That the populations of marine species would be very close to their natural state before human exploitation. This accords with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature description of "*largely complete set of expected native species in ecologically significant densities*" and meets IUCN Category 1a. They should also have "*a full set of expected native ecosystems, largely intact with intact ecological processes*".
- 2.** That Strict Nature Reserves should be free of evidence of all human development and identified environmental impacts and there should be no anchoring or fishing for any species in the area. Strict Nature Reserves are primarily and principally areas for scientific reference and research.

Definitions

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in its definition of Protected Area Management Categories defines Strict Nature Reserves in Category 1a (*Note: this is the highest level of protection listed by the IUCN*):-

Strict Nature Reserves: A protected area to conserve regionally, nationally or globally outstanding ecosystems, species (occurrences or aggregations) and/or geodiversity features. Category 1a protected areas are strictly protected areas, generally with only limited human visitation. They are often (but not always) relatively small, in contrast to Category 1b.

Definition: Strict Nature Reserves protect biodiversity and possibly some geological/geomorphological features, where human visitation, use and impacts are strictly controlled and limited to ensure protection of the conservation values. Such protected areas can serve as indispensable reference areas for scientific research and monitoring.

Recfishwest would consider the following characteristics before supporting or recommending Strict Nature Reserves;

- Such areas have been clearly identified as being essential to the overall marine planning objectives of the MPA.
- Such areas should be adequate in size, but not excessive for the published scientifically supported objectives.
- Such areas will normally be remote from popular accessible recreational fishing locations, towns or tourist developments.
- That wherever possible the size and impact on stakeholders of Strict Nature Reserves should be kept to a minimum. This can often be achieved by utilizing Benthic Nature Reserve as buffers.
- Visitation in these areas should be restricted to scientific research and monitoring only.
- Adjacent terrestrial areas should be adequately managed to regulate any use which could impact on the integrity and objectives of the Strict Nature Reserves.
- The visual amenity of the area must be maintained, placement of management devices such as signage and markers must consider Benthic Nature Reserve values.
- The establishment of such areas will require effective consultation with other stakeholders such as local communities, representatives of indigenous groups, conservationists and commercial fishers.
- Wherever possible, detrimental impacts adjacent on the environment contained within Strict Nature Reserves should be strictly managed using the precautionary principle.