

## **9. SOLITARY ISLANDS MARINE RESERVE**

### **9.1 Description<sup>20</sup>**

#### **Location, size**

The Solitary Islands Marine Reserve is located on the New South Wales north coast close to Coffs Harbour. The Marine Reserve is 70 km long and has an area of around 100 000 ha. It includes marine waters from the coast out to 50 m depth and adjoining rivers to the limit of tidal influence.

#### **Major natural features**

The Marine Reserve includes estuaries, beaches, headlands, islands and offshore waters. The waters of the area support marine life typical of tropical reefs, including coral communities, together with species found as far south as Tasmania. The Solitary Islands are important seabird nesting sites. The reserve abuts a mainland National Park for about half its length.

#### **History**

The Marine Reserve was declared in 1991. A draft Management Strategy was released in 1989, with a final pending.

#### **Management arrangements**

The Solitary Islands Marine Reserve includes 85 000 km<sup>2</sup> of waters under New South Wales jurisdiction and 15 000 km<sup>2</sup> of Commonwealth waters, the latter being entirely offshore. The New South Wales portion of the Marine Reserve is declared under legislation administered by NSW Agriculture and Fisheries. The Australian Nature Conservation Agency has responsibility for the portion of the Marine Reserve in Commonwealth waters. NSW Fisheries takes responsibility for planning and day to day management of the Marine Reserve. A community based Management Advisory Committee has been formed.

#### **Management funding**

Management funds come almost entirely from the budget of NSW Fisheries. Expenditure on the Marine Reserve is not separately identified. The agency has two inspectors and a boat located in Coffs Harbour and 50 per cent to 60 per cent of their time is dedicated to the Marine Reserve. In addition staff in the local region and in Sydney spend some of their time on Solitary Islands Marine Reserve matters. There is currently no regular revenue raising program. Some sponsorship has been received for publications. There are plans to try to develop a sponsorship base in the local community.

#### **Management objectives**

The management objectives of the Marine Reserve are to protect habitat to maintain high productivity of the marine resources and to protect areas of aesthetic and scientific importance.

#### **Major uses**

Nature conservation is the primary use of the Marine Reserve. Commercial fishing and recreation and tourism are the main direct uses of the area. The Marine Reserve is new and data collection programs are still under development.

Commercial fishing vessels based in Coffs Harbour and other ports undertake some of their fishing in the Marine Reserve area. Fishing methods used include, line and trap fishing and prawn trawling. Catch landing records are available for the ports of Coffs Harbour, Wooli, Arrawarra, Woolgoolga and Brooms Head (all adjacent to the reserve) but as fishermen are not currently required to supply information on where the product was caught, the volume taken from within the boundaries of the Marine Reserve can not be identified. Surveys in the past have revealed that 70 per cent of production from Coffs Harbour was from Commonwealth waters and the remaining 30 per cent from inshore fisheries (NSWAF

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<sup>20</sup> Information was compiled from Clayton 1991, NSW Agriculture and Fisheries 1989 and personal communication NSW Fisheries staff.

1989). The landing records reported here would therefore overestimate the volume and value taken from within the Marine Reserve.

In 1991-92, the volume by whole weight of fish and shellfish landed in the ports listed above was 862 150 kg<sup>21</sup>. The revenue received by fishermen for this product is not available but an estimate can be made based on information available on the 1987-88 catch. In that year, the volume landed was 889 655 kg and the value was \$4.8 million (NSWAF 1989). Given that the volume landed in both years is similar, adjusting the value of the catch for inflation provides an estimated value of \$6 million for 1991-92.

Commercial tourist operators provide sightseeing and SCUBA diving trips within the Marine Reserve. Around six vessels operate from Coffs Harbour. A permit system has been introduced and information on the numbers of people carried will be required monthly, but no data are available yet.

Private recreational use of the Marine Reserve from the mainland and from boats is a feature of use of the area. No figures have yet been compiled on the extent of this use.

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<sup>21</sup> Unpublished information supplied by NSW Fisheries.

TABLE 9.1 SOLITARY ISLANDS MARINE RESERVE

<i>USES</i>	<i>DESCRIPTION</i>	<i>GROSS FINANCIAL VALUES</i>	<i>ECONOMIC VALUES</i>
<b>PRIMARY USES</b>			
Nature conservation	100 000 ha of relatively undisturbed marine environment.	Nil, however these attributes provide the resource base for potentially sustainable direct uses which generate financial values	These attributes provide the resource base for economic values of potentially sustainable direct uses <b>plus</b> the economic values of non-market indirect uses  Economic values of non-market indirect uses have not been measured for Solitary Islands Marine Reserve.
<b>COMPATIBLE DIRECT USES</b>			
Tourism and recreation	6 commercial tour boats, visitor numbers not known	not known	not known
Commercial fishing	Less than 862 000 kg catch weight	Less than \$6million (1992)	not known
Research	minor	minor	not known