



Patron HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

Submission on Marine Reserves, East Coast Temperate Zone, Norfolk Island

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the future zoning of the waters surrounding Norfolk Island, in the East Coast Temperate Zone.

The Norfolk Island Flora & Fauna Society is the peak environment body in the Norfolk Island group. At a meeting of our members on Monday 4 September 2017, the proposed Plan of Management was discussed at length and the members present have agreed that the following comments be included in our submission.

Primarily, it should be said that the majority of members present wished it be stated that they do not believe that this should be a process under the jurisdiction of the Australian government as the territorial waters surrounding Norfolk Island should be in the care and control of the Norfolk Island people.

Having said that, we acknowledge the current situation, and until a change is effected to alter that status, we should participate in this process.

The Box

The inshore fishery zone, reserved for the exclusive use of Norfolk Island-based fishers, appears to have recently been reduced in size, and all protections removed through rezoning. Whilst the Box is a matter between AFMA and the Norfolk Island Fishing Association and therefore outside the auspices of the current draft Plan of Management it is a matter of great concern in regard to its potential effects on the marine environment.

To enable the ongoing health and preservation of fish stocks within a reasonable proximity to the island, and to allow for certain areas to be 'rested' to avoid overfishing, it is most important that the Box be retained in its original dimensions.

Furthermore with improved scientific ability comes improved knowledge of the seafloor, seamounts and other geological features, which suggest it would be prudent to increase the area of the Box to include more of these, as they are critical in protecting the marine ecosystems and the food chain.

We request that in your discussions with AFMA, within whose jurisdiction this lies, you reinforce our representations in this matter.

The Zones

Various levels of protection have been shown in a variety of maps produced over the years of discussion around the proposed Marine Parks surrounding the Australian coast, and also around the offshore islands and Territories.

Having discussed the various levels of protection for the ocean biota, and the proposed recent changes, we believe that :

1. the Box, currently a Multiple Use Zone (depicted in blue on your maps) should be changed to a Habitat Protection Zone (HPZ, depicted in Yellow).
2. the 200nm Zone surrounding Norfolk Island, including the Box, currently indicated in blue as a Multiple Use Zone, should be upgraded to a Habitat Protection Zone, except for those parts shown in green, providing a higher level of protection as National Park Zones.

Our understanding is that this zoning (HPZ) continues to allow for Recreational and Charter fishing activities in the water column, but does not allow for any interference with the seafloor, thereby protecting it from damaging exploratory and extractive activities.

This zoning should also prevent international commercial fisheries undertaking any form of fishing that disturbs or destroys the seabed within the Box, and within the island's 200nm EEZ.

The Flora & Fauna Society is primarily concerned with the protection of natural assets, and we believe that protection can best be achieved by applying Zoning as described (above). Our approach however, is pragmatic and we believe this decision serves the interests of many interested parties.

The added protection thus achieved will also support the ongoing protection of the Norfolk Island waters by the Norfolk Island Fishing Association.

This will result in multifaceted positive outcomes for the environment, fishers, tourism, food security, health, recreation and the island's economy.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Christian

President

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Celebrating 50 Years of Service in 2017

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