Marine Park 3 West Coast Bays Marine Park

Park at a glance

West Coast Bays Marine Park is on the west coast of South Australia and includes Sceale, Venus and Baird Bays.

At 789 km², it represents 3% of South Australia's marine parks network.

Community and industry

- The Wirangu and Nauo-Barngarla Aboriginal people have traditional associations with the area.
- Commercial fishers target abalone, rock lobster, mud cockles and scalefish species including King George whiting and snapper.
- Sceale, Baird and Venus Bays are popular holiday destinations. Swimming with bottlenose dolphins and Australian sea lions in Baird Bay is a highlight.
- Recreational fishing, boating and beach activities are popular pastimes around Sceale, Baird and Venus Bays, while Point Labatt is popular for viewing Australian sea lion colonies as well as the coastal scenery.
- Also featured in the park are five historic shipwrecks including the *Elizabeth Rebecca* and the *Arachne*.

Fauna and flora

- The world's smallest live-bearing starfish (known locally as "Little Patty").
- The Australian sea lion, seabirds and migratory shorebirds visit key habitats.

Habitat

- West Coast Bays Marine Park includes parts of the Eyre Bioregion.
- Habitats typical of this region include:
 - very sheltered coastal embayments featuring islands and seagrass meadows, and
 - exposed coastal cliffs, headlands and beaches facing the open ocean.
- The habitats inside West Coast Bays Marine Park provide critical baselines to measure any changes to the State's marine ecosystems that may arise over time from, for example, pollution or climate change.

- West Coast Bays Marine Park is influenced by Western Australian marine ecosystems via the Leeuwin Current, which flows in an easterly direction across the Great Australian Bight.
- Land and sea are linked at important sites adjacent to Venus Bay, Baird Bay, Sceale Bay, Point Labatt and Nicolas Baudin Island Conservation Parks.

Boundary description

The West Coast Bays Marine Park comprises the area bounded by a line commencing on the coastline at median high water at a point 134°41′42.29″E, 33°15′42.09″S (at the southern end of Rincon Beach), then running progressively:

- westerly along the geodesic to the intersection with the seaward limit of the coastal waters of the State at a point 134°18′53.5″E, 33°15′42.09″S;
- generally north-westerly along the seaward limit of the coastal waters of the State to a point 134°3′36.72″E, 33°0′21.94″S;
- northerly along the geodesic to the intersection with the coastline at median high water at a point 134°3′36.72″E, 32°54′24.42″S (at or about Point Westall); and
- generally south-easterly along the coastline at median high water (inclusive of all bays, lagoons and headlands) to the point of commencement.

NOTE: This boundary description is indicative only. It does not describe inclusions and exclusions of specific land parcels. For this detailed information, please refer to the DEH website: www.marineparks.sa.gov.au or Surveyor-General's office for the relevant marine park plan (known as a Rack Plan).



Marine Parks Reserve today. Preserve forever.

West Coast Bays Marine Park



Bioregions and South Australia's marine parks network

Eight biologically distinct regions have been identified off South Australia's coastline. The State's marine parks have been carefully designed to include parts of each bioregion and the various habitats within them.

By including some examples of the marine biodiversity typical of the Eyre Bioregion, West Coast Bays Marine Park contributes to the marine parks network's goal of representing and protecting examples of the full diversity of South Australia's marine life.

The marine life, habitats and natural processes typical of this region include the sheltered, tidal embayments and islands of Baird Bay and Venus Bay as well as the exposed coastal cliffs and surf beaches in the Sceale Bay and Searcy Bay areas.

The 14 marine park Design Principles

To guide the initial identification and final selection of South Australia's multiple-use marine parks, 14 Design Principles were defined and adopted by the Government. The seven Biophysical Principles and seven Community Principles help ensure the marine parks network meets the objects of the *Marine Parks Act 2007*, as well as South Australia's national and international obligations for marine protection.

The Biophysical Design Principles guided the identification of proposed marine park sites. The Community Design Principles were then applied to fine-tune site selection of the 19 multiple-use parks in the network.





Biophysical Design Principles

The seven Biophysical Principles address environmental conservation.

In the first instance, all parks were designed to meet the Precautionary Principle. Rigorous application of the Adequacy, Comprehensiveness and Representativeness Principles ensure the marine parks network meets South Australia's national and international marine protection obligations.

The remaining three Biophysical Principles helped prioritise important local sites, to ensure the marine parks network maximises ecological outcomes (South Australia's Strategic Plan Target 3.4).

The Precautionary Principle

The Precautionary Principle is a risk-management tool which requires action to be taken now in areas where scientific knowledge is not yet complete. One of the ways the Precautionary Principle has been applied in developing marine parks is to include areas of unsurveyed seabed habitats.

In the Eyre Bioregion, 14,973 $\rm km^2$ (80%) of seabed habitats are yet to be surveyed.

As a precautionary measure, 574 km² (4%) of unsurveyed habitat are included within West Coast Bays Marine Park. Including unsurveyed habitats increases the likelihood that all the habitats that exist in a region are included within a marine park.

The Adequacy Principle

Adequacy is achieved if the marine park provides for both ecosystem integrity and the viability of whole populations of species.

A marine park is considered to have achieved Adequacy if both it and the network it contributes to are large enough to protect the species and habitats found there and close enough to connect populations.

West Coast Bays Marine Park covers 789km² (3% of the whole network). It has been designed to include multiple examples of each habitat type where possible, at sizes sufficient to contain viable populations of marine species.

The Principles of Connectivity and Linkages, Resilience and Vulnerability and Ecological Importance also contribute to the Adequacy of a marine park. Ultimately, Adequacy is closely linked to the success of marine park management plans with zoning.

Comprehensiveness and Representativeness Principles

To meet the Principle of Comprehensiveness, examples of all habitats that occur in a bioregion need to be included within whatever marine parks are in that bioregion.

To be Representative, all habitats in a region (e.g. reefs, beaches, seagrass, mangroves) need to be included across the full variety of physical situations in which they occur (e.g. shallow and deep water reefs, low and high energy beaches). This variety must be represented within the combination of parks created in a bioregion.

Habitats of West Coast Bays Marine Park include high energy surf beaches, cliffs, and rocky headlands with fringing reefs and sandy plains extending rapidly into deeper waters. In contrast, the enclosed embayments of Venus Bay and Baird Bay provide very sheltered conditions and support dense seagrasses, sandy seafloor habitats, tidal flats and coastal saltmarshes.

Baird Bay also features numerous groundwater seepages creating brackish soak springs, which support marsh and sedge lands and attract many types of waterbirds.

The high tidal flow reef environments of Venus Bay include sponge dominated reefs.

The orientation of Baird and Venus Bays is a significant factor in their role as nursery areas for many forms of fish and other marine life. The mouths of both bays face the summer southeasterly winds, allowing the bays to receive the larvae of summer spawning species.

Connectivity and Linkages Principle

Connectivity describes how plants and animals move between different places.

Linkages refers to the transfer of materials (e.g. organic matter) and energy flows. Connectivity and Linkages both depend in part on the way currents, tides and waves move water and on the abilities of marine life to move between different areas.

West Coast Bays Marine Park creates continuous Connectivity and Linkages along-shore from Point Westall in the west to just past Venus Bay in the east.

Offshore, the marine park creates the opportunity to protect connected habitat systems from the tidal flats and seagrasses of the sheltered bays through to offshore reefs and sandy plains. This helps protect species whose life cycles depend on access to different feeding, spawning, breeding and nursery habitats in small areas, as well as species dependent on areas separated by anything from tens of kilometres to hundreds of kilometres. For example, western king prawns use the seagrass meadows of Baird and Venus Bays as nursery areas during their juvenile life stages, before moving into deeper, offshore waters as adults.

The warm Leeuwin Current, originating in Western Australia, flows eastward across the Great Australian Bight transporting nutrients and larvae, linking this part of the Eyre Bioregion to more distant ecosystems.

Resilience and Vulnerability Principle

The combined Principle of Resilience and Vulnerability encourages the inclusion of places, plants and animals that are more susceptible to degradation or decline and/or less able to recover from damaging impacts.

Less resilient habitats, plants and animals are less able to resist disturbances or pressures.

In West Coast Bays Marine Park, populations of Australian sea lion at Nicholas Baudin Island and Jones Island are vulnerable to human pressures.

Other areas such as coastal cliff tops, which provide critical breeding and nesting locations for endangered white-bellied sea eagles and rare ospreys, adjoin this park.

More vulnerable habitats, plants and animals have less capacity to recover once pressures are removed. Coastal wetlands are a particularly vulnerable habitat type that features prominently in these sheltered coastal bays. West Coast Bays Marine Park includes coastal parcels of Crown land so that habitats such as saltmarshes may be able to move inland if sea levels rise as a result of climate change.

Ecological Importance Principle

The sheltered environments of Baird and Venus Bays are regionally significant, highly productive nursery areas for a wide range of species, including many of recreational and commercial significance.

Baird Bay is a recognised Wetland of National Importance, while both Baird and Venus Bays are of recognised international significance for local and migratory shorebirds, with many species of conservation importance and/or listed under international conservation treaties. For example, the extensive tidal flats of Baird Bay support the highest population on the west coast of grey plovers, a migratory species of international and national importance, while Venus Bay is of international significance for sooty oystercatchers.

The endangered white-bellied sea eagle and the endangered osprey are also known to nest on cliffs in the area.

Marine Parks

Reserve today. Preserve forever.

Point Labatt Conservation Park supports the largest mainland colony of Australian sea lions in Australia.

A key species of this marine park is the world's smallest live-bearing starfish, *Parvulastra parvivipara*, known locally as "Little Patty". It is found only on the Western Eyre Peninsula at locations including Point Labatt.

Locations such as Smooth Pool and Speed Point are of significance for juvenile and sub-adult blue groper.



Community Design Principles

Synergies With Existing Protected Areas Principle

By aligning with existing protected areas, marine areas can contribute to the establishment of protected corridors across the land-sea interface.

West Coast Bays Marine Park borders with the Venus Bay, Point Labatt and Sceale Bay Conservation Parks. Nicolas Baudin Island and the Point Labatt Aquatic Reserve are included within the marine park boundary.

Complementing Existing Management Principle

Management of South Australia's marine parks will complement, but not replace, current management arrangements. By providing a more inclusive management framework, South Australia's marine parks network is designed to help existing environmental management practices.

The District Council of Elliston and the District Council of Streaky Bay play an important role in managing coastal Crown lands which abut and, in some cases, are included within the marine park. West Coast Bays Marine Park management will seek to integrate with existing local government management practices for the continued care of coastal Crown land community assets.

The Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board is responsible for mitigating impacts on the marine environment from land-based activities. Ongoing monitoring of ecosystem health in West Coast Bays Marine Park will help the NRM Board prevent land-based pollution from reaching the sea.

No aquaculture policy zones exist in the marine park, however individual licences do exist. West Coast Bays Marine Park management will seek to integrate with existing management by the Department for Primary Industries and Resources South Australia's (PIRSA) Aquaculture Division in the area to ensure that the established aquaculture industry can continue to benefit from healthy seas in the region.

There is an aquatic reserve established at Point Labatt and a netting closure extends south of Sceale Bay, including Cape Blanche, and extends south and east including Venus Bay. Management of West Coast Bays Marine Park will respect and complement existing fisheries management arrangements, and will not change bag, boat and size limits or other areabased fisheries management arrangements.

There are several jetties and boat ramps in the region. West Coast Bays Marine Park will accommodate the ongoing management and maintenance needs of these facilities. Wherever possible, provision will be made in the West Coast Bays Marine Park management plan with zoning to accommodate current and future economic, social and infrastructure requirements. Administrative agreements between agencies will support streamlined assessment so that the marine park does not create an extra approval process.

Give Consideration to the Full Diversity of Marine Uses Principle

The Government is committed to designing marine parks for conservation and for sustainable use, in close consultation with local communities and with minimal impact on existing activities.

The proclamation of the West Coast Bays Marine Park does not change the way people use the marine environment, or change any existing land or sea-bed tenure.

Wildcatch fisheries in the region target abalone, rock lobster, mud cockles and scalefish species including King George whiting and snapper. Proclamation of the West Coast Bays Marine Park does not displace any existing commercial fishing activity. The Government recognises that high-value catch areas occur within the marine park and will work with stakeholders during the development of the West Coast Bays Marine Park management plan with zoning to avoid displacing effort from those areas wherever possible.

There is an existing aquaculture licence in Sceale Bay. No existing aquaculture activities will be displaced as a result of the proclamation of West Coast Bays Marine Park or future marine park zoning arrangements. In addition, no further approvals or permits will be required to conduct these existing activities. The habitats of the region are also important for biodiversity conservation and the marine parks program will seek to integrate with existing management strategies developed and delivered by PIRSA's Aquaculture Division to ensure that the needs of both marine parks and aquaculture can be met.

Tourism is an important industry in the region, with Sceale, Baird and Venus Bays long established as popular holiday destinations. Recreational fishing, boating and beach activities are some of the main drawcards. Point Labatt attracts tourists to view the spectacular coastal scenery and Australian sea lion colonies. Unique tourism and ecotourism experiences have been created, such as the opportunity to swim with bottlenose dolphins and Australian sea lions in the protected embayment of Baird Bay.

The outer boundary of West Coast Bays Marine Park does not change existing recreational fishing and boating activities and does not affect access to, or use of, jetties, break-walls or boat ramps. Existing access for recreational beach fishing will be maintained throughout West Coast Bays Marine Park, except in small areas designated as "sanctuary" or "restricted access" zones in the West Coast Bays Marine Park management plan with zoning. This will be developed over the next couple of years with extensive community input.

With input from a Marine Park Local Advisory Group, industry and the community, a management plan with zoning will be developed for West Coast Bays Marine Park which will cater for ongoing community use of the area. The management plan will be subject to community consultation and every effort will be made to minimise impacts on people and businesses.

Respect Indigenous Interests and Culture Principle

The Government is aware that there may be confidential Aboriginal heritage sites in South Australia's coastal areas. Where possible, these sites have been considered in the planning process. Future management plans will ensure these heritage sites are appropriately respected.

The Wirangu and Nauo-Barngarla Aboriginal people have traditional associations with the land and the waters around Sceale Bay, Baird Bay and Venus Bay areas.

Aboriginal people have expressed the aspiration to negotiate traditional Aboriginal fishing rights through an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA). West Coast Bays Marine Park will provide for continued traditional fishing in accordance with any fishing ILUAs.

Give Consideration to Cultural Heritage Principle

Five historic shipwrecks lie in the marine park including two from the 19th century, the Elizabeth Rebecca (1845) and Arachne (1848).

Point Labatt Conservation Park is listed on the Register of the National Estate and conserves the largest mainland colony of Australian sea lions in Australia.

Ensure Ease of Identification, Compliance and **Enforcement Principle**

West Coast Bays Marine Park was designed to ensure ease of identification, compliance and enforcement where possible.

The boundary of West Coast Bays Marine Park utilises identifiable landmarks such as Point Westall. Offshore, the park boundary follows straight lines where possible, with the exception being where it follows the State waters line. Along the coastline, the marine park boundary lies at the median high water mark unless otherwise specified.

Provide for Education, Appreciation and Recreation Principle

West Coast Bays Marine Park was designed to ensure the things we enjoy in this environment continue, by helping to maintain a healthy marine environment and our uses of it.

Further opportunities for education, appreciation and recreation will be achieved through the zoning and management planning process.

Need more information?

For further information, please see: Design Principles Guiding the Development of South Australia's Marine Park Boundaries and Technical Report on the Outer Boundaries of South Australia's Marine Parks Network. Both are available on the marine parks website: www.marineparks.sa.gov.au or by calling 1800 006 120.



Marine Parks

