

PROTECTED ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES FOR COASTAL WATERS BETWEEN PRESERVATION BAY AND WATCOMBE BEACH – PENGUIN.

The *State Policy on Water Quality Management, 1997* requires the setting of Protected Environmental Values (PEVs) for all coastal waters around the State. Protected Environmental Values are the current uses and values of the water and the *Policy* outlines a range of PEV categories, for instance activities such as swimming and surfing would be considered as primary contact recreational values. Categories also exist for ecosystem values, industry values, drinking water values and agricultural water use values.

The Central Coast Council proposed to upgrade its wastewater treatment plant at Dial Point. As a consequence PEVs were set for waters between the western end of Preservation Bay and the eastern end of Watcombe Beach (see attached map). Protected Environmental Values will be set for other coastal waters in the area in the future. The PEVs for this area were determined by the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Board and the Central Coast Council in close consultation with the community.

The waters along the entire stretch of coast have long been subject to human influence, and could therefore be considered to be in pristine condition. Recreational fishing for fin-fish occurs off the rocks and from boats along the entire stretch. It is also believed that “one-pot licence” fishing for crayfish occurs in some areas and that shell fish may be harvested from some parts of the rocky platform (although information gained at the workshop indicated that people do not harvest shell fish from around the Dial Point area). Primary contact recreational activities such as swimming, windsurfing and surfing currently occur around Preservation Bay, Johnsons Beach, Main Beach (Penguin Beach) and Watcombe Beach. There was some unconfirmed evidence that scuba diving may occur in these waters, including between Preservation Bay and Johnsons Beach, and surf-lifesaving training exercises in the latter area may sometimes involve primary contact activities. In addition many secondary contact activities, such as boating, beach walking and paddling occur along the coastline.

The Protected Environmental Values for the above stretch of coastal waters are outlined in Table 1. These PEVs have recognised the need for a mixing zone associated with the upgraded waste water treatment plant at Dial Point. The community water values obtained from the stakeholder workshop are presented in Table 2. These community water values are “real” examples of the PEVs, and should be taken into consideration during planning and development within the Penguin area.

The Protected Environmental Values have been approved by the Board of Environmental Management and the Central Coast Council.

Table 1: Protected Environmental Values for coastal marine waters between the western end of Preservation Bay and the eastern end of Watcombe Beach.

Marine Waters between the western limit of Preservation Bay and the eastern limit of Watcombe Beach, including Johnsons Beach and Penguin Beach, for a distance of 500 metres seaward from low water mark

A. Protection of Aquatic Ecosystems

- (ii) Protection of modified ecosystems from which edible fish, crustacea and shellfish are harvested*;

* (Shellfish should not be taken from within any mixing zone for the Dial Point Sewage Treatment Plant outfall that is set by the Board of Environmental Management and Pollution Control)

and:

B. Recreational Water Quality and Aesthetics

- (i) Protection of primary contact water quality outside of any mixing zone set by the Board of Environmental Management and Pollution Control for the Dial Point Sewage Treatment Plant outfall; and
- (ii) Protection of secondary contact water quality; and
- (iii) Protection of aesthetic water quality

That is, as a minimum, water quality shall be managed to provide water of a physical and chemical nature that will:

- support a modified, but healthy ecosystem from which edible fish and crustacea may be harvested; and
- from which shell fish may be harvested from outside of any mixing zone set by the Board of environmental management and Pollution Control for the Dial Point Sewage Treatment outfall; and
- that allow people to safely engage in primary contact recreational activities such as swimming and surfing outside outside of any mixing zone set by the Board of Environmental Management and Pollution Control for the Dial Point Sewage Treatment outfall, and
- that allow people to safely engage in secondary contact activities such as paddling, boating and fishing, in aesthetically pleasing waters.

Table 2: Community Water Values - Preservation Bay to Watcombe Beach, Penguin

Water Value Categories	Community Water Values
Ecosystem values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich diversity of invertebrates in rock pools in rocky areas but especially on rock platforms; • Penguins (Dial Point, eastern end of Watcombe Beach (scattered) and the occasional penguin of a different species); • Dolphins within 100 m of foreshore and whales within 500 m of foreshore (more often in spring and summer); • Pied oyster catcher – sighted on beaches usually in pairs; • Gulls, pelicans and other wading birds including migratory waders; • Seaweed washed up on beaches as important food source for shore birds; • Native fish; • Minimise the amount of nutrients entering the sea to reduce to growth of sea grass; • Fish, crustacea and shell fish free of man-made contaminants; • Protection of seals and whales that enter the coastal waters; • Protect the sandy and rocky coastline.
Consumptive or non-consumptive values: Industry intakes, drinking water supply intakes and agricultural use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No values recorded
Recreational values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking along beaches and rocks at low tide; • Swimming (Preservation Bay, Johnsons Beach, Penguin Beach, Watcombe Bay); • Digging for sand worms (for bait) on Penguin Beach; • Surfing (eastern and western ends of Preservation Bay, off Beecroft Point, Penguin Beach) extends up to 500 m off shore; • Surf club activities (rowing, swimming, surf boats) starting at Preservation Bay and extending east and west along coast for up to 1 km off shore; • Horse riding on Watcombe Beach; • Fishing from boats throughout coastal area; • Beach fishing from all beaches; • Rock fishing (Eastern end of Preservation Bay, Western side of Beecroft Point); • Exploring rock pools and reef areas at low tide around Beecroft Point; • Dog walking on Watcombe Beach; • Shore diving near Penguin caravan park and in the Beecroft Point region for both spear fishing and general interest; diving also occurs about 2.5 km off shore at a reef site. • Limited sailing; • Water skiing off beaches; • Rock platforms and beaches used by Penguin Primary School for Science and Social-Science Programs; • Tourism

Water Value Categories	Community Water Values
Aesthetic values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandy beaches (colour of sand and water); • Rocky areas at low tide; • Geological significance of rocks in the inter-tidal area at eastern end of Watcombe Beach; • Fish trap near western end of Watcombe Beach (exposed at low tide); • Foreshore gardens (i.e. Parry and Lings Flower Gardens); • Remnant vegetation; • Protect remnant native vegetation on foreshore (including <i>Banksia marginata</i> and She Oaks)
Other Values and comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geoheritage values of rocks at eastern end of Watcombe Beach (National Estate listed); • Stone fish trap on eastern side of Watcombe Beach; • Remnant native foreshore vegetation (scattered throughout catchment) should not be replaced by introduced vegetation; • Visual impacts of facilities when being upgraded should be minimised by use of appropriate colours and planting of vegetative screens.