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Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

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KEY ISSUES IN MANAGING THIS AREA:

- public safety, especially to swimmers, snorkellers and divers;
- damage to the Ningaloo reef;
- natural limitations on access to southern Bills Bay and the increasing number of boat users in the area. This raises a need for equity among users of the Bay including commercial operators such as tourist charter boats and commercial fishers; and
- the capacity of the Bay to tolerate any increase in boating and recreational activity.



A reference group of tourism operators, commercial and recreational fishers, and Government agencies considered the issues and developed guidelines to ensure people could continue to enjoy the waters of southern Bills Bay in safety while at the same time conserve the bay's natural environment.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Department of Conservation
and Land Management

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All photos courtesy of Gordon La Praik,
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services

Coral Bay BOATING STRATEGY



MAUD SANCTUARY ZONE – NINGALOO MARINE PARK

The waters of Bills Bay at Coral Bay are among the most popular areas in the Ningaloo Marine Park which attracts 300,000 visitors each year.

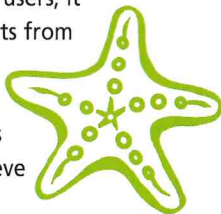
Conserving the distinctive features of the bay, particularly the beauty of its coral reef and myriad of marine life, is a responsibility for everyone.

The increasing numbers of visitors, and their impact in and around the Maud Sanctuary Zone in the waters of Bills Bay, has become a major concern for the Coral Bay and wider community.

There are several State Government initiatives proposed for the Coral Bay area including a \$7.5 million sewerage treatment plant, a public environmental review process for an alternative to the boat launching facility in southern Bill's Bay and a review of the Ningaloo Marine Park Management Plan.

While these are under way there is an immediate need to manage boating activities in the Coral Bay area in response to the area's popularity as a tourism destination. The increase in visitor numbers had led to an increase in the potential conflict with swimmers, snorkellers, divers and boat users.

To address the safety concerns of these users, it would be preferable to relocate all boats from accessing southern Bills Bay. However, at present there is not an alternative boat launching facility to service vessels or allow boat users to launch and retrieve their vessels.



LONG TERM STRATEGY

The long term strategy is to manage the Maud Sanctuary Zone by allowing people to interact with the environment in a way that conserves the area's ecological and social values and has minimal impact on the environment. This includes catering for low-impact sustainable tourism and recreation, including swimming, snorkelling, scuba diving from the beach, canoeing, sea kayaking and commercial activities such as viewing coral by boat.

SHORT TERM STRATEGIES

The short term strategies have been addressed in the Coral Bay boating strategy which outlines the management initiatives that are being introduced as interim measures. An environmental assessment review over proposals for an alternative boat launching facility in the Coral Bay area proceeds. Short term strategies include changes to access for large vessels, and changes to the anchoring and mooring of all vessels. Please refer to table.

In brief...

RECREATIONAL BOAT USERS

- Access to the restricted area (see map) is for launching and retrieving vessels only.
- Anchoring and beach anchoring is not permitted in the restricted area.
- Vessels with a draught of 1.2 metres or greater should not be in the restricted area unless they have a permit.
- There are no private moorings.
- Public moorings will be available for use at Moncks Head (please contact the Exmouth District on 9949 1676).

LICENSED TOURISM OPERATORS

- Existing Coral Bay licensed operators are eligible for a mooring site licence.
- Vessels need Department of Conservation and Land Management approval before mooring in the Maud Sanctuary Zone.
- Vessels that cannot moor in Bills Bay may moor at Moncks Head with approval.
- Passengers can be picked up and dropped off at the public Mediterranean moorings in southern Bills Bay.
- Boats may refuel from the public Mediterranean moorings in southern Bills Bay.
- Vessels needing to gain access to southern Bills Bay need an operational plan that has been approved by the Department.
- Vessels may anchor in the restricted area (see map) in emergencies but at no other time.
- Tenders may anchor on the beach at the designated area with approval from the Department.

COMMERCIAL FISHERS

- Approved vessels will require a permit to access the restricted area.
- Approved vessels will need Department of Conservation and Land Management approval before mooring in the Maud Sanctuary Zone.
- Approved commercial fishing vessels need to moor at Moncks Head or a site other than Bills Bay.
- Approved vessels that need to use southern Bills Bay should have an approved operational plan.
- Catches can be offloaded at the Mediterranean moorings in southern Bills Bay.
- Approved vessels can refuel at the Mediterranean moorings in southern Bills Bay.
- Anchoring or beach anchoring will not be permitted in the restricted area (see map) except in an emergency.
- Tenders may anchor on the beach at the designated area with approval from the Department.



DETAILS FOR ALL USERS...

- Access to the Maud Sanctuary Zone is restricted for vessels with a draught of 1.2 metres or greater unless there is approval from the Department of Conservation and Land Management.
- People will need to apply for approval from the Department to access Maud Sanctuary Zone if they have a vessel that has a draught of 1.2 metres or greater.
- Access conditions will state the times of day when boats are allowed in and out of the area so that the risk to swimmers or damage to the environment is minimised.
- Vessels with a draught of 1.2 metres or less can be launched from the southern Bills Bay access point in the restricted area (see map). Signs on the beach will identify the access point.
- Anchoring, mooring or beach anchoring isn't allowed in the restricted area unless approved by the Department, or unless there is an emergency. Penalties apply.
- Moorings in Ningaloo Marine Park need to be approved by the Department.
- There are environmental and safety standards for approved moorings.
- The number of licensed commercial vessels (11 fishing and tourism charters, and three commercial fishing vessels) with moorings and access to the restricted area in Maud Sanctuary Zone will remain the same.
- Penalties apply for cleaning, scaling, gutting or filleting fish in the restricted area.



DETAILS FOR RECREATIONAL USERS...

- Vessels with a draught of 1.2 metres or greater need a permit to access the restricted area (see map).
- Vessels with a draught of less than 1.2 metres may launch and retrieve their vessels on an as-use basis.
- Anchoring a vessel is not allowed in the restricted area, except in the case of an emergency.
- Anchoring a vessel by placing the anchor on a beach in the restricted area is not allowed.
- There are no private moorings in the Maud Sanctuary Zone's mooring control area.



DETAILS FOR COMMERCIAL FISHERS (LICENSED FISHING BOATS)

- Only approved commercial fishing boat licence holders may moor their vessels in the Maud Sanctuary Zone's mooring control area, outside southern Bills Bay, by way of a mooring site licence. Approved moorings need to meet environmental standards. There are no approved mooring sites in southern Bills Bay;
- The three commercial fishing vessels which have a licence require a permit to access the prescribed/ restricted area. Access is for unloading catches and refuelling and will depend on approved operational plans.
- Only approved commercial fishers can unload their catches and refuel at the Mediterranean moorings in southern Bills Bay, dependant upon the operational plans. Owners of dinghies used in association with commercial fishing activities need permission to beach anchor in the area designated for tenders.
- The number of commercial fishing boats allowed to access southern Bills Bay restricted area will remain at three, with mooring sites being allocated to these vessels. If commercial fishing vessels are licensed for fishing and tourism charters using the same vessel, one vessel is allowed access and mooring (similar to the commercial charter operators).

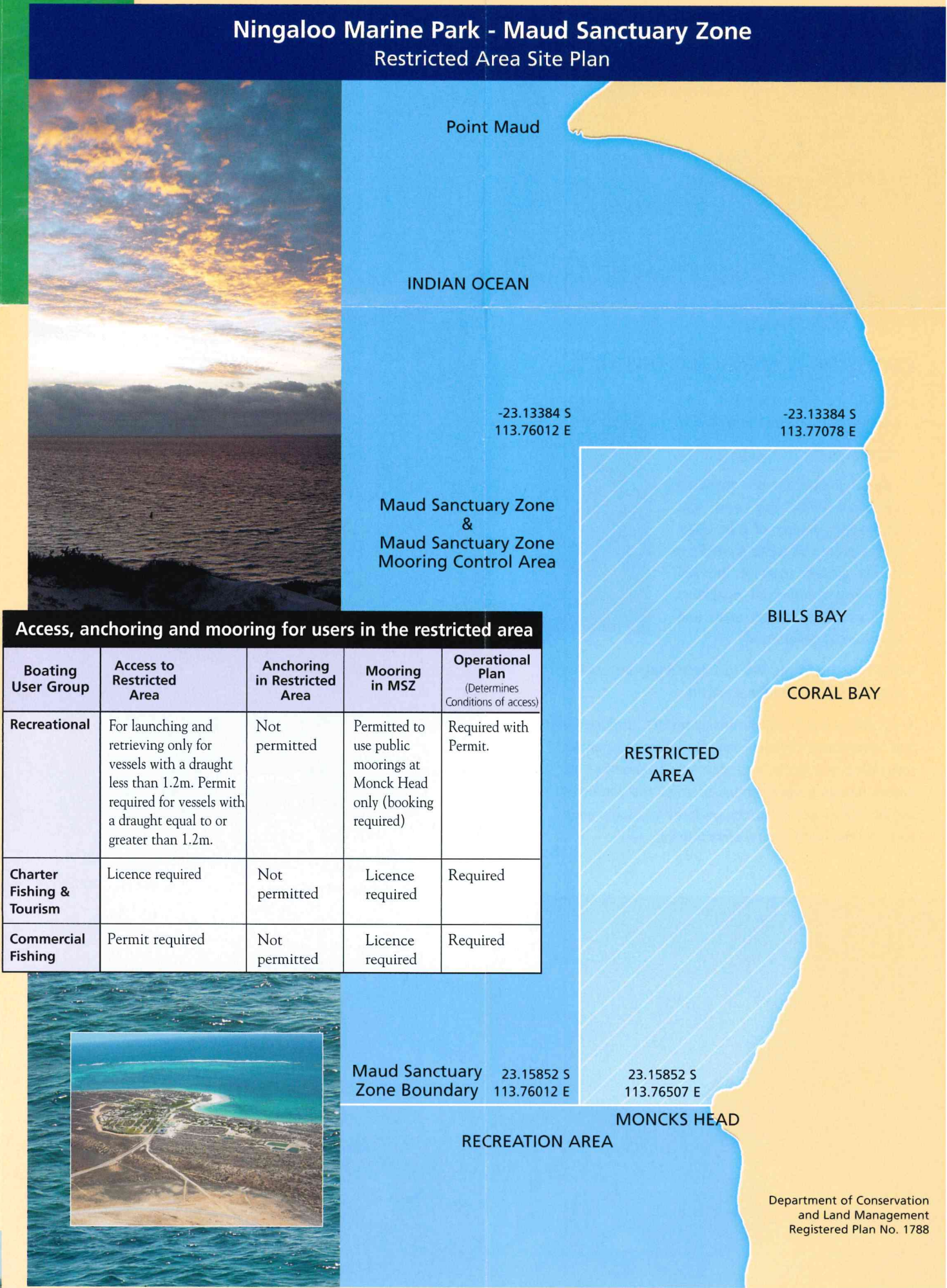


DETAILS FOR COMMERCIAL TOURISM AND FISHING CHARTERS...

- Nine restricted E class licence holders using vessels with draughts of 1.2 metres or less will be allowed to moor in southern Bills Bay, by way of a mooring site licence.
- Two restricted E class licence holders using vessels with draughts of 1.2 metres or greater may moor outside southern Bills Bay, by way of a mooring site licence.
- If existing restricted E class licence holders want to replace their vessel with a bigger boat with a draught greater than 1.2 metres or length greater than the design of the mooring's maximum length, the replacement boat will have to moor outside southern Bills Bay.
- Approved operational plans will determine conditions of access to southern Bills Bay for all vessels.
- Loading and unloading of passengers and refuelling in southern Bills Bay, will only be permitted at the Mediterranean moorings, unless operators choose to use tenders to transport passengers to the vessels.
- Non-restricted T class commercial tourism operators may be allowed to access southern Bills Bay with a tender only.
- The number of commercial fishing and charter operators and vessels permitted to operate from Coral Bay will not increase from the current level of usage. This also applies to the number of mooring sites associated with these vessels. Operators who are licensed by the Department of Fisheries and the Department of Conservation and Land Management, and who use the same vessel for fishing and tourism charters, will be allowed to continue their current operations with the one vessel i.e. one vessel, one mooring for all of these licences (similar to the commercial fishing vessels). There are currently 11 licensed charter operators permitted access to the restricted area.



Ningaloo Marine Park - Maud Sanctuary Zone
Restricted Area Site Plan



Access, anchoring and mooring for users in the restricted area				
Boating User Group	Access to Restricted Area	Anchoring in Restricted Area	Mooring in MSZ	Operational Plan (Determines Conditions of access)
Recreational	For launching and retrieving only for vessels with a draught less than 1.2m. Permit required for vessels with a draught equal to or greater than 1.2m.	Not permitted	Permitted to use public moorings at Monck Head only (booking required)	Required with Permit.
Charter Fishing & Tourism	Licence required	Not permitted	Licence required	Required
Commercial Fishing	Permit required	Not permitted	Licence required	Required