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# FISHING WORLD

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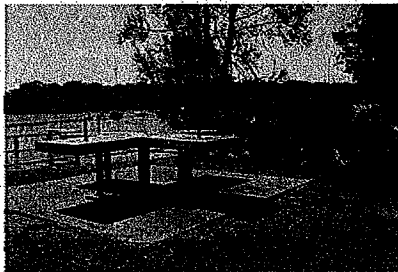
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## COMMENT: JBMP Zoning Review - not a bad result

By Jim Harnwell, Fishing World editor & publisher | 3 February 2011

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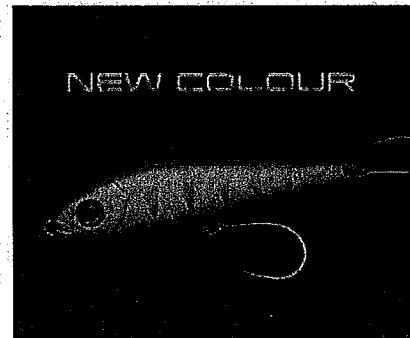
GENERAL consensus from local anglers about the recently announced rezoning of the Jervis Bay Marine Park is that while it could have been better, it could also have been a lot worse. The JBMP managers listened to what we had to say during the lengthy consultation period and they implemented most of what we wanted done to improve the park.

There is no doubt that the savejb.com campaign had a major influence on the end result. Hundreds of submissions flowed from this online campaign, established and managed by Coffs Harbour-based John Featherstone (who also organised a similar campaign for the Solitary Islands marine Park review - see separate comment piece). The savejb.com and savesol.com campaigns will no doubt form the blueprint for future fishing access battles. These innovative and highly effective social media campaigns definitely caught our anti-fishing opponents on the hop during the marine parks review period and also forced the NSW State Government to take our concerns more seriously.

The main win for fishos in Jervis Bay was that a proposed sanctuary zone to the south was not implemented. If this had gone through, it would have denied access to a prime snapper and kingie ground and would also have meant that large areas directly south and north of the bay's entrance would have been off limits to anglers. This was an unworkable situation.

The compromise plan, worked out by JBMP manager Matt Carr and a coalition of local anglers, was that the sanctuary zone starting at the southern tip of Point Perpendicular on the north side of the bay would be moved further northwards to encompass an area from Crocodile Head to the Drum & Drumsticks. This area, which is relatively hard to access from boat and land, includes deep reef areas that existing sanctuary zones in the park do not currently cover, and which the proposed new zone to the south did. The shifting of this northern zone will be a boon for small boat anglers, who otherwise had to exit the bay and travel northwards for some miles to access fishing grounds.

Anyone who has spent time in JB will know that the area to the immediate north of the bay can be extremely challenging and potentially dangerous - swell bounces off the cliffs, making for messy and confused seas, especially when the summer nor-easters are blowing. Reopening the area from Point Perpendicular northwards makes a lot of sense and the JBMP managers deserve credit for making what is without doubt the right decision.



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So the final outcome was, to all intents and purposes, a win-win. Anglers got to keep a productive and easily accessed area to the south of the bay and we also got back access to some great fishing directly to the north. And the marine parks people got to protect the deep reef they wanted. Obviously, the anti-fishing extremists aren't at all happy - they wanted massive closures which would have ruined JB as a fishery. Luckily, the JBMP refused to countenance their crazy and illogical demands.

Another positive of the new plans is the cessation of commercial trawling in the park. This will doubtless help improve fish sticks - especially of popular species like sand flathead, silver trevally and snapper.

While the main concerns facing local anglers were addressed satisfactorily, a few issues remain to be resolved. It is something of a joke that commercial beach hauling will continue in the JBMP. Having netters wipe out stocks of recreationally popular species like bream and whiting over the peak summer months doesn't seem to make sense, especially considering the tourism value of these common and relatively accessible species.

It's also disappointing to see that the JBMP didn't take onboard angler concerns over beach fishing closures, most notably the sanctuary zone on Warrain Beach. There is no scientific rationale for banning a benign activity like beach fishing - a 100m habitat zone should have been introduced in this area to allow locals and visitors to wet a line in search of migratory species such as salmon, bream, jewfish and whiting.

Also, it is a pity that ideas relating to artificial reefs haven't been given more credit. Being an area with large areas of relatively barren sand, JB is an ideal location to establish a series of reefs to provide habitat for a whole range of sportfishing species. Local anglers plan to keep pushing for the installation of artificial reefs and hopefully some good news will eventuate in the not too distant future.

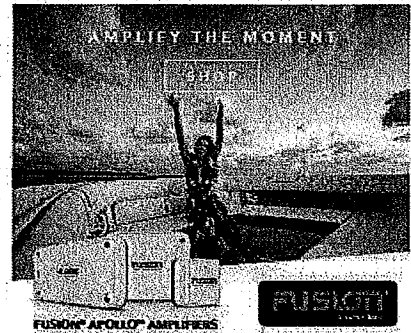
Another point raised by local anglers and ignored by the Marine Parks Authority was allowing anglers to troll through sanctuary zones. This fishing method causes no habitat destruction and targets only pelagic species, thus there is no scientific imperative dictating why this can't be allowed. The main problem the parks people have with it is to do with management - marine parks officers would have to spend more time checking fishos in sanctuary zones are actually trolling, not bottom or bait fishing. From an angling perspective, it seems obvious that would be pretty easy to tell if a boat is trolling - it would, by definition, be moving. So that argument from the MPA is not exactly water tight ... Again, this will be an issue that will doubtless be revisited and thrashed out.

All up though, the changes to JBMP are reasonable, responsible and environmentally sound. The flexibility shown by the local park managers, and their willingness to work with local anglers, is positive and bodes well for the future of the park.

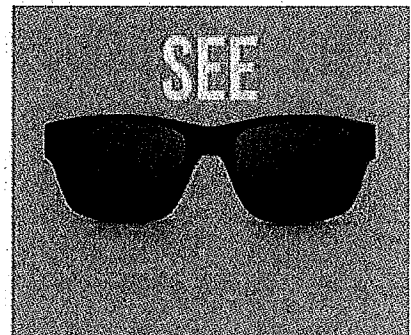
The new zoning rules for Jervis Bay Marine Park come into effect on March 1.

*Jim Harnwell has lived in, and fished around, the Jervis Bay area all his life. He was a founding member of the Jervis Bay Marine Park Advisory Committee and is actively involved with local campaigns to increase fishing opportunities in the area.*

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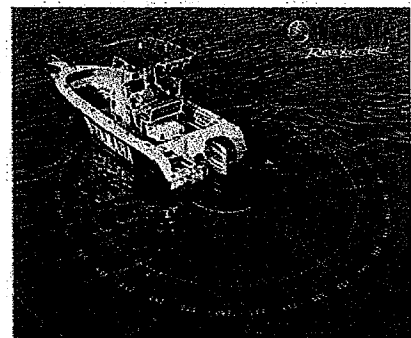
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