

12. REPORTS OF OFFICERS

12.1 EXECUTIVE SERVICES

12.1.1 SHIRE OF RAVENSTHORPE RESPONSE TO WA STATE GOVERNMENT PROPOSED SOUTH COAST MARINE PARK

File Reference:

Location:	Shire of Ravensthorpe
Applicant:	N/A
Author:	Chief Executive Officer
Authorising Officer	Chief Executive Officer
Date:	13 May 2024
Disclosure of Interest:	Nil
Attachments:	12.1.1 Confidential – Draft Shire response letter
Previous Reference:	N/A

PURPOSE

1. The WA State Government's proposed South Coast Marine Park (SCMP) is currently open for public comment.
2. The purpose of this report is to seek Council consideration for the Shire of Ravensthorpe draft response to the SCMP as detailed in the two draft management plans relevant to the Shire of Ravensthorpe region, namely;
 - a. *"Proposed Wudjari Marine Park indicative joint management plan 2024"*.
 - b. *"Proposed Mamang Maambakoort Marine Park indicative joint management plan 2024"*

BACKGROUND

3. The WA State Government is proposing the establishment of the South Coast Marine Park (SCMP) stretching from Bremer Bay to Eucla.
4. The SCMP forms part of the State Government's "Plan for Our Parks" initiative which aims to create 5 million hectares of new national and marine reserves across WA. The SCMP will add 801,350 hectares.
5. The SCMP is divided into 4 separate areas each with its own draft joint management plan. Joint management refers to the Department of Biodiversity Conservation & Attractions (DBCA) and the respective Traditional Owner groups.

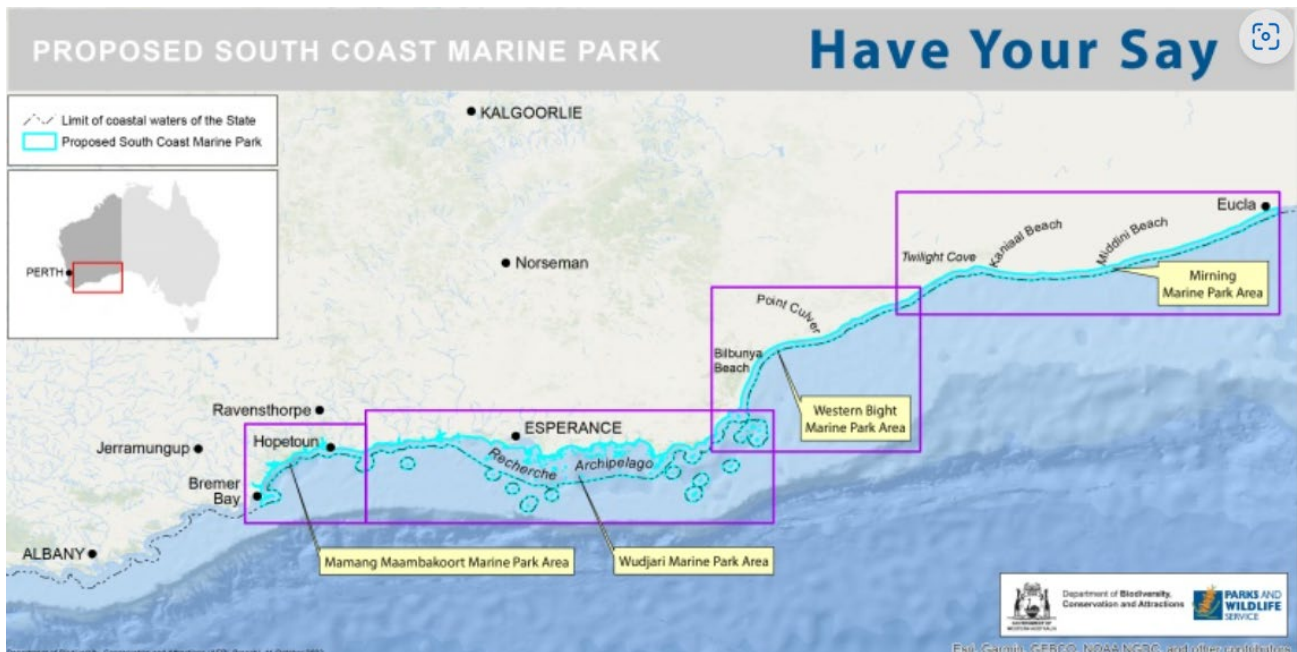


Figure 1 - Proposed SCMP areas - source DBCA

6. The SCMP areas impacting the Shire of Ravensthorpe include;
 - a. Mamang Maambakoort Marine Park Area (west area of the Shire of Ravensthorpe)
 - b. Wudjari Marine Park Area (east area of Shire of Ravensthorpe)
7. DBCA have opened for public comment on these plans for a four month period with the current deadline being Sunday 16 June 2024. Link to full copies of these plans can be found at www.dbca.wa.gov.au/pscmp
8. Online submissions from community are invited and can be made online via the following survey link; <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GPZNPCT7>
9. In addition to the above online survey, organisations such as the Shire of Ravensthorpe are able to make written submission via email to pscmp@dbca.wa.gov.au. The Shire officer recommendation is for Council to provide a written submission outlining its agreed position to the two plans via email.
10. The draft Shire response will remain confidential until submitted to the DBCA where upon receipt it will become a public document.

COMMENT

11. The two draft management plans that affect the Shire of Ravensthorpe are extensive documents and as stated in the plans, their purpose is to *"detail how the parks will be jointly managed to preserve, study, manage and promote culture and heritage, enhance nature conservation, and allow for ongoing sustainable recreational and commercial use."*

12. The proposed SCMP initiative has generated significant public debate with strong arguments presented from both those supporting the establishment of a marine park, and from those against the proposal.
13. Whilst the draft management plans are extensive and focus heavily on respective Traditional Owner matters and responsibilities, DBCA is seeking public comment largely around its proposed zoning schemes within the SCMP. In particular proposed "sanctuary zones" where no extractive activities will be permitted, and Special Purpose Zones for cultural protection or management. This is where greatest community focus and commentary has currently been drawn to date.
14. As a summary of the entire proposed SCMP area;
 - 31 Sanctuary Zones covering approximately 330k hectares or 25% of the entire SCMP,
 - 20 Special Purpose Zones (cultural protection/cultural management) covering approximately 172k hectares or 13% of the park,
 - 3 Special Purpose Zones (whale conservation) covering 76k hectares or 6% of the park,
 - 1 Special Purpose Zone (wildlife conservation) covering 3.3k hectares or less than 1% of the park, and
 - General Use in the remaining 724k hectares or 55% of the park
15. A summary of the Areas impacting the Shire of Ravensthorpe are as follows;
 - 7 Sanctuary Zones (SZ) totalling approximately 38,981 hectares (*see pages 92-93 of draft Mamang Maambakoort Marine Park Management Plan and page 95 of draft Wudjari Marine Park Management Plan for detailed descriptions and permitted uses*);
 1. Cheadanup SZ (Point Ann) 834 hectares
 2. Point Charles to Red Island SZ – 12,287 hectares
 3. Hamersley Inlet Offshore SZ – 2,930 hectares
 4. Hopetoun East SZ – 1,052 hectares
 5. Mason Bay and West Island Offshore SZ – 10,367 hectares
 6. Munglinup SZ – 5,489 hectares
 7. Investigator Island SZ – 6,022 hectares
 - 4 Special Purpose Zones (SPZ) (cultural protection/management)
 1. Hamersley Inlet SPZ - 444 hectares (protection)
 2. Coujinup Wardan SPZ (Starvation Bay/Lake Shaster) - 3,914 hectares (management)
 3. Munglinup Wardan SPZ (Mung/Oldfield Estuary) - 474 hectares (management)
 4. Coujinup Kubitj SPZ (Investigator Island) – 5,526 hectares (management)
16. The Management Plans impacting the Shire include references to the importance of tourism as well as identifying the risks to visitor safety that increased visitation and use of the marine based assets may trigger.

17. A clear objective in the proposed creation of the SCMP is to maintain the current natural and cultural values whilst also fostering the activation of economic return.

“Tourism has become one of the most significant economic sectors on the south coast with popular tourism destinations including the region’s forests, coastline, national parks...

and

“It is estimated that 40% of domestic tourists visiting the south coast engage in some form of marine activity as part of their tourism experience...” (p61 – People on Country -Wudjari MP doc, p64 MM MP doc)

“Marine based tourism has the potential to make an important contribution to protection of the region’s ecosystem by fostering a greater understanding of the environment.....

and

“Management actions for tourism in the proposed MP will focus on both the management of activities consistent with protecting MP values and maintenance of a viable tourism product” (p64-65 MM MP doc).

18. Ravensthorpe Council and Shire executive management team workshopped the draft Shire response as detailed in Confidential Attachment 1 to this report at the 7 May Corporate Discussion meeting and is now seeking Council endorsement prior to submission.

CONSULTATION

19. Councillors and Executive Team

STATUTORY ENVIRONMENT

20. Nil

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

21. Nil

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

22. Nil

RISK MANAGEMENT

23. The following risks have been identified as part of this report;

Risk	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Analysis	Mitigation
Performance (operational) The opportunity to provide Shire feedback to the current proposed SCMP is not undertaken	Possible	Major	Medium	Council to consider and endorse Shire to submit to the current DBCA public comment period

ALTERNATE OPTIONS

24. Council may revise the draft Shire response as presented or decide not to submit a formal response.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

25. This item is relevant to the Councils approved Strategic Community Plan 2030 and Corporate Business Plan 2020-2024

Outcome 1: Economy - The population is growing, in tandem with a thriving, resilient local economy

Item	Objectives and Strategies
1.1	To grow business and employment

Outcome 2: Community - This is a safe and family-friendly community where people of all ages have access to services and facilities, and there is plenty to blow your socks off

Item	Objectives and Strategies
2.4	People have access to attractive community facilities, activities and events which support activity and health, community involvement and enjoyment of life
2.5	Young people, older people and people with disability feel valued and have access to resources which provide opportunities for their development and enjoyment

Outcome 3: Built Environment - The built environment is accessible, honours history and provides for the economic and social needs of residents, industry and visitors

Item	Objectives and Strategies
3.4	It is easy and safe to move around and in and out of the district
3.5	The Shire's heritage structures, heritage and cultural places are valued and protected, and are integrated into community life and economic activity.

Outcome 4: Natural Environment - Our unique world class biosphere is valued and protected for the enjoyment of current and future generations

Item	Objectives and Strategies
4.3	The Shire's valued natural areas and systems are protected and enhanced

Outcome 5: Governance and Leadership - The Shire of Ravensthorpe partners the community, and is an effective advocate and responsible steward

Item	Objectives and Strategies
5.1	The Shire's community is engaged and involved
5.2	The Council ensures its decisions are well informed and considered
5.3	The Council, with the support of the community, is an effective advocate for resources and facilities which support the vision for the future

VOTING REQUIREMENTS

26. Simple Majority

COUNCIL DECISION

Moved by Cr Richardson and seconded by Cr Leighton

AMENDED MOTION

To add a third point to the Council Resolution already provided to read as follows,

3. That the Confidential Attachment 1 becomes a public document once endorsed by Council.

Moved by Cr Major and seconded by Cr Gibson

Resolution 40/24

That Council;

- 1. ENDORSE the Shire of Ravensthorpe draft response letter to the WA Government proposed South Coast Marine Park as presented in Confidential Attachment 1 to this report, and**
- 2. APPROVE the Shire of Ravensthorpe CEO to submit this response before the public comment deadline of 16 June 2024.**
- 3. That the Confidential Attachment 1 becomes a public document once endorsed by Council.**

Carried 5/0



To the Ministers for Environment; Fisheries; and Mines and Petroleum.
Delivery via the prescribed email address
PSCMP@dbca.wa.gov.au

Dear Ministers,

Re Shire of Ravensthorpe response to the WA State Government proposed South Coast Marine Park

I write on behalf of Ravensthorpe Council as endorsed at the 21 May 2024 Ordinary Council Meeting via resolution number 40/24.

The Ravensthorpe Shire is a remote, yet important regional community located 536 kms to the south east of Perth, boasting approximately 200 kms of spectacular coastline half way between Albany and Esperance. Home to 2,085 permanent residents, Ravensthorpe attracts those who want to live within an extraordinary natural environment and enjoy the freedoms the region offers. Set within the Fitzgerald Biosphere (WA's only UNESCO recognised biosphere reserve with five listed in Australia and recognised for being the most significant flora region in the world) the Shire includes some 1.3m hectares of high biodiversity values, including the Fitzgerald River National Park from Point Ann to Munglinup in the east. Much of this bushland is highly prized and boasts unique biodiversity values found nowhere else in the world.

The Ravensthorpe district relies heavily upon mining for local employment and this also underwrites local small business activity and vibrancy. Mining in precious metals including Lithium and Nickel generated an estimated \$1.6B in mineral wealth extracted from the Ravensthorpe local government area in 2022 and ranked the Shire in the top 10 WA local government authorities in terms of mineral value output (source DMIRS). The recent downturn in global Nickel and Lithium prices has reinforced the need for the local community to broaden its employment base and tourism has been identified by the community as an industry sector to leverage the region's unique natural attractions.

Level of Community Support for the SCMP

The proposed South Coast Marine Park (SCMP) has generated discussion amongst our local community with strong views both for and against the concept and/or elements proposed within.

Those supporting the SCMP believe its establishment is essential for long term sustainable management of this coastal strip, and are advocating for Sanctuary Zone areas, offering the highest level of protection from current extractive activities, to be increased in both number and size.

Those against the SCMP range from total rejection of the Marine Park concept citing lack of scientific research and ecological justification, through to those simply concerned around not being able to undertake recreational activities currently enjoyed. For some, the proposed SCMP is acceptable as presented however there also remain deep suspicions that zone boundaries, permitted access and uses and conditions may be changed in the future.

A common viewpoint to all however is that our natural environment (both land and marine) within the Shire of Ravensthorpe needs to be responsibly managed to ensure its long term sustainability.

The Ravensthorpe Council has not surveyed the level of local community support for the proposed SCMP and does not attempt to make comment on either the scientific or cultural justifications underlying the SCMP as we believe this is beyond the expertise and responsibility of local government. Rather, this Council feedback relates to identified future socio-economic impacts and potential access and usage issues that may eventuate from what is being currently proposed.

Potential Socio-economic impacts

The guiding document for the Shire of Ravensthorpe is its Strategic Community Plan (SCP) 2020-2030. Within this strategy the *“natural environment/coast/parks/beaches”* was rated as the most special thing about the Shire and *“maintaining and preserving the environment”* was rated as one of the key activities to focus on in the future. A strong economic development and tourism focus also strongly shaped our community’s SCP vision and related priorities;

“Vision; A growing community, thriving and resilient, sharing our natural wonderland with the world

Priority 4; Natural Environment: Our unique world class biosphere is valued and protected for the enjoyment of current and future generations.”

Source: Shire of Ravensthorpe Strategic Community Plan 2020-2030

More recently Ravensthorpe Council endorsed the Shire’s Economic Growth Strategy (EGS) 2023 including our vision for a *“resilient and thriving economy that contributes directly and fairly to the local community; underpinning the long term vibrancy and liveability of the region”*.

The table below reviews the potential impacts of the South Coast Marine Park to the four key strategic themes developed within the EGS as follows;

Shire Economic Growth Strategy 2023 key themes	Proposed South Coast Marine Park (SCMP) alignment and implications
<p>01 Fit for Future Infrastructure; ensure that the infrastructure within the region unlocks full economic potential.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The SCMP will require significant State Government investment in infrastructure to improve beach, coastal and waterways access if tourism and recreational economic benefits as suggested within the draft management plans are to be realised for our local community. - The Shire’s Tourism Strategy 2023 identifies the creation of the SCMP as a strategic opportunity to establish new tourism products, specifically marine life explorer boat tour operators in the coastal waters of the Fitzgerald Coast. - The Tourism Strategy identifies the following essential infrastructure upgrades; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hopetoun boat ramp and groyne (Dept of Transport) upgrade as a critical requirement in order to attract these tourism tour operations. - Upgrades to pedestrian beach access, car parks, coastal trails network and boat launching facilities (Shire). - Without WA Government support and investment to improve existing infrastructure there will be very little economic benefit realised through nature based tourism opportunities along the Shire’s coastal areas.
<p>02 Growing with Industry Partners;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is important that the SCMP once established, will enable strategic and meaningful collaboration opportunities between the Shire and respective Traditional Owner

<p>increase the economic wealth of the community.</p>	<p>groups namely the Wagyl Kaip Southern Noongar Aboriginal Corporation, and the Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Shire will focus on growing tourism and natural environment based opportunities with the DBCA, Tourism WA, Australia’s Golden Outback, and private tourism industry operators to achieve its tourism vision of becoming the “go-to destination” for travellers seeking nature based experiences along the south coast. - The Tourism Strategy 2023 recommended the implementation of a Fitzgerald Coast destination marketing campaign and the creation of the SCMP should form a key attractor in these promotions with the aim to grow the local tourism industry into servicing a higher yield, premium nature based travel destination.
<p>03 A more vibrant and liveable region; grow the attractiveness of the Shire as a place to live, work, visit and run a business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Ravensthorpe community values highly its coastal and marine assets and enjoy the recreational experiences and freedoms these offer. For many this is a lifestyle choice and one of the key attractions to reside in the area. The proposed sanctuary zones detailed in the two draft management plans will prohibit extractive activities including recreational fishing that is currently enjoyed. - The major challenge for the community will be to achieve the right balance between responsible management and maintaining the appropriate levels of recreational access and rights, in particular to proposed Sanctuary Zones where current extractive activities are prohibited. - The number, size and location of proposed Sanctuary Zones (SZ) as detailed in the two relevant Management Plans (Proposed Wudjai Marine Park indicative joint management plan 2024 and Proposed Mamang Maambakoort Marine Park indicative joint management plan 2024) affecting the Shire of Ravensthorpe appears reasonable in the context of the overall SCMP concept. There are 31 SZs totalling 330,000 hectares representing 25% of the total area within the proposed SCMP. - For the areas impacting the Shire of Ravensthorpe there are 7 proposed SZs totalling 38,981 hectares. These are; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cheadanup SZ (Point Ann) 834 hectares 2. Point Charles to red Island SZ – 12,287 hectares 3. Hamersley Inlet Offshore SZ – 2,930 hectares 4. Hopetoun East SZ – 1,052 hectares 5. Mason Bay and West Island Offshore SZ – 10,367 hectares 6. Munghlinup SZ – 5,489 hectares 7. Investigator Island SZ – 6,022 hectares - The 7 Sanctuary Zones listed above and within the MPs detail the ecological reasoning for each. Whilst the Shire does not possess the technical expertise to make comment on these assessments it relies on the expertise of the managing agency DBCA to have appropriately undertaken these assessments. - The SCMP also proposes the creation of 24 Special Purpose Zones (20 of these nominated for cultural protection/management, 3 of these for whale conservation, and 1 for wildlife conservation).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For the areas impacting the Shire of Ravensthorpe there are 4 proposed Special Purpose Zones for nominated cultural protection/management; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hamersley Inlet SPZ - 444 hectares (protection) 2. Coujinup Wardan SPZ (Starvation Bay/Lake Shaster) - 3,914 hectares (management) 3. Munmlinup Wardan SPZ (Mung/Oldfield Estuary) - 474 hectares (management) 4. Coujinup Kubitj SPZ (Investigator Island) – 5,526 hectares (management) - Whilst the respective Management Plans detail the ecological reasoning for each of the 7 Sanctuary Zones listed, there are only generic statements re maintaining cultural values made about the 4 special purpose zones listed above. The Shire requests to seek more detail around what cultural protection and/or management meanings for the 4 areas listed above under SPZs. In particular clarity is sought on what, if any restrictions may be imposed from these SPZs to the current access and usage of these areas. Hamersley Inlet and beach area has a long history as a popular recreational area for local community and the Shire holds a management order over a large footprint in this nominated SPZ. What also are the implications that cultural protection/management has to the current land managers (Shire where applicable) of these nominated areas? - 200m from high water mark boundary. 4WD beach access and recreational beach fishing are popular community and visitor activities and attractors. Some proposed Sanctuary Zone boundaries include the mainland high water mark which may impact access and fishing from and close to the shore. Council’s strong position is to seek moving of all SCMP boundaries (in particular sanctuary zones) 200 metres towards the ocean from the mainland high water mark to allow for fishing from and close to the shore.
<p>04 A diversified economy; increase the percentage contribution to Gross Regional Product from tourism and new industries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The region boasts significant and in some instances unique natural environment qualities which are currently not fully leveraged for economic and social benefit to the local Ravensthorpe communities. Both the Shire’s Economic Growth and Tourism strategies clearly identify the significant opportunity to grow the local tourism industry sector with the goal to create a world class visitor experience based around land based hiking trails, unique flora, and highly memorable coastal and marine experiences that attract and cater to high yield traveller types. - Both of the SCMP Management Plans affecting Ravensthorpe include references to the importance of tourism opportunities as well as identifying the risks to visitor safety that increased visitation and use of the marine based assets may trigger. - A clear objective in the creation of the SCMP is to maintain the current natural and cultural values whilst also fostering the activation of economic return. Ravensthorpe Council strongly support these objectives as these are closely aligned to the Shire’s endorsed SCP, EGS and Tourism plans. - There is strong justification within the SCMP Management Plans for the support to infrastructure upgrades and program funding as advocated by the Shire as listed below; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upgrades to Hopetoun groyne, boat launching and foreshore precinct

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- WA Government grant funding for planning and physical works for Shire Coastal trails network (both the potential Fitzgerald River National Park – Bremer to Hopetoun coastal trail, plus a Shire of Ravensthorpe - Hopetoun to Starvation Bay (Esperance) coastal trail opportunities).- Joint funding (WA Government, Shire, industry) for implementation of Shire Tourism Plan 2023 recommendations relating to coastal infrastructure (access upgrades etc)- Upgrades to Shire boat ramps, town beach, Mason, Starvation Bays (funding already secured to undertake planning works), upgrades to coastal access and visitor infrastructure (car parks, pathways, stairs, etc)- Attract marine based tourism operators that cater to high yield traveller types (subject to Hopetoun marina facility upgrades) <p>- Council’s strong position is that WA Government support should not just be focused on Esperance and Bremer Bay if the SCMP is to deliver any economic benefits to the Ravensthorpe community. Government investment in infrastructure upgrades and funding support in the Ravensthorpe (Fitzgerald Coast) region as outlined above will provide an important linkage between the coastal towns and would strengthen the tourism appeal of the south coast and SCMP.</p>
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Ministers, thank you again for the opportunity for the Shire of Ravensthorpe to present its feedback on the proposed South Coast Marine Park and respective draft Management Plans.

Please contact the undersigned if any aspect requires further clarification and we look forward to be included in further discussions regarding this WA Government initiative.

Yours sincerely



Matthew Bird
Chief Executive Officer

22 May 2024