



Closure of Port River Cockle Fishing Zone

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why is the Port River cockle fishing zone being closed?

The Port River cockle fishing zone is being closed as a result of sustainability concerns for the Port River Mud Cockle resource. It is necessary to close all fishing activity for Mud Cockles from the zone to give the Port River stocks every opportunity to recover. The closure will be in place from Friday 1 July 2011 until 30 June 2012.

Q. Why are stocks low?

It is believed that the current poor stock levels in the Port River cockle fishing zone is a culmination of three factors:

1. Excessive and unsustainable catch and effort for Mud Cockles prior to the introduction of quota in 2008/09;
2. Environmental conditions and disease causing mortality events; and
3. Low levels of recruitment in recent years.

Despite substantial reductions in the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC, also referred to as 'quota') for the Port River cockle fishing zone since 2008/09, it appears that these reductions have not been sufficient to arrest the decline in stock levels.

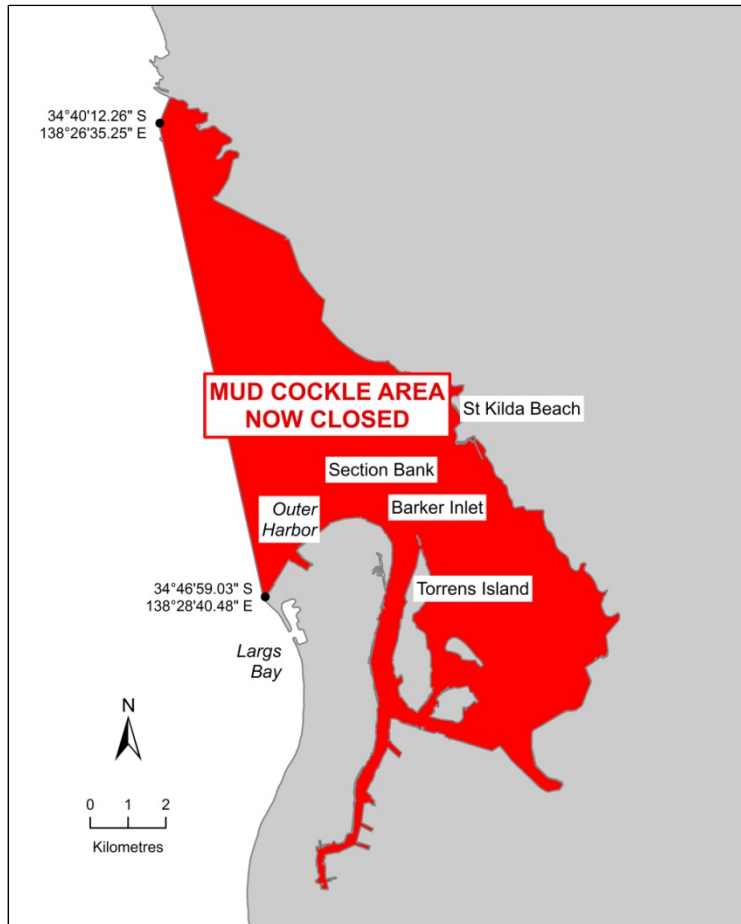
Q. Where is the closure?

The closure area encompasses the Port River and surrounding waters that are contained east of a line from the end of Port Gawler Rd to the tip of the Lefevre Peninsula near Outer Harbor.

The closure area is defined in *Fisheries Management (Marine Scalefish Fisheries) Regulations 2006* under the *Fisheries Management Act 2007* as:

"Port River cockle fishing zone means the waters of or near Port Gawler contained within and bounded by a line commencing at the line of Mean High Water Springs closest to 34°40'12.26" South, 138°26'35.25" East (end of Port Gawler road), then beginning easterly following the line of Mean High Water Springs to the location closest to 34°46'59.03" South, 138°28'40.48" East, then north-westerly to the point of commencement, but excluding any land or waters so encompassed that lie landward of the line of Mean High Water Springs."

Q. Do you have a map to show where the closure is?



Signs, which include the above map, have been installed at the four boat ramps in the Port River area to advise people of the closure:

1. Garden Island boat ramp, end of Garden Island Road;
2. Outer Harbor boat ramp, Outer Harbor;
3. North Haven boat ramp, end of Southern Myth Drive, North Haven; and
4. St.Kilda boat ramp, Cockle Street, St.Kilda

Q. What fishing activities does the closure apply to?

It is prohibited to take Mud Cockles from the Port River cockle fishing zone while it is closed. This is from 1 July 2011 until 30 June 2012.

Q. What are the species that are prohibited under the closure?

It is prohibited to take any Mud Cockles (*Katelysia* species).

Q. Who will be affected by the closure?

All commercial and recreational fishers must abide by the closure.

Q. Will the closure be patrolled?

Yes. Fisheries Officers have authority to issue fines to people caught doing the wrong thing. People can also report suspected illegal fishing activity to FISHWATCH on 1800 065 533. Callers can choose to remain anonymous.

Q. Have the fishing sectors been consulted on the closure?

Yes. The closure has been endorsed by representative bodies for all fishing sectors that would normally have access to Mud Cockles in the Port River area. These are:

COMMERCIAL

1. The Marine Fishers' Association for Marine Scalefish Fishery licence holders (including quota holders);
2. The South Australian Rock Lobster Advisory Council for Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishery licence holders with access to marine scalefish species; and

RECREATIONAL

3. The South Australian Recreational Fishing Advisory Council for recreational fishers.

Q. What is the duration of the closure?

Initially the closure will be for 12 months, from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012. A decision on whether the closure will be re-opened or extended will be made after further information is received during the initial closure period regarding the level of stock recovery.

Q. How long do you expect it to take for stocks to recover?

It is difficult to know, as successful recovery of the stocks is reliant on successful spawning and recruitment, and this is quite variable from one year to the next. The closure will be re-assessed during the next 12 months.

Q. Where else can I collect Mud Cockles?

COMMERCIAL

If you are a fishery licence holder with access to Mud Cockles but do not have a cockle quota entitlement, you may take a personal daily bait limit of 10 kg from any other area of the State.

If you are a fishery licence holder with a cockle quota entitlement in another zone (Coffin Bay or West Coast), your individual quota is unaffected by the Port River closure.

RECREATIONAL

Mud Cockles can be collected from any other area within the State, as other areas are unaffected by the Port River closure. Other known areas for collection of Mud Cockles are Coffin Bay and in bays along the west coast (e.g. Smoky Bay, Streaky Bay, Venus Bay).

Q. Are there concerns regarding sustainability in the other Mud Cockle zones?

No. The TACC for the other zones (Coffin Bay and West Coast) is set at a small fraction (<7%) of the estimated harvestable biomass, which is determined every two years.

Q. What are the management arrangements for Mud Cockles across the State?

GENERAL

The minimum legal length for Mud Cockles is 30 mm in all waters of the State other than Coffin Bay.

The minimum legal length for Mud Cockles in Coffin Bay is 38 mm.

COMMERCIAL

Mud Cockles (*Katelysia* species) are a permitted species group within the Marine Scalefish Fishery. All licence holders with access to marine scalefish species (Marine Scalefish Fishery licence holders, Restricted Marine Scalefish Fishery licence holders, and some Northern and Southern Zone Rock Lobster Fishery licence holders) are entitled to some form of access to Mud Cockles.

Licence holders with a cockle quota entitlement are permitted to take their individual quota from the zone in which they hold the quota.

Licence holders without a cockle quota entitlement are permitted to take a maximum of 10 kg per day from any waters of the State for personal bait use only.

RECREATIONAL

The personal daily bag limit for Mud Cockles is 300.

Q. When was quota introduced for Mud Cockles?

2008/09.

Q. What were Mud Cackle catch levels prior to quota?

The total commercial catch of mud cockles increased from <20 tonnes in 1993/94 to almost 390 tonnes in 2005/06.

Q. What have been the TACCs for the cockle quota fishing zones since quota was introduced?

Zone	TACC			
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Port River	100	22.6*	11.3	0
Coffin Bay	70	56	48.1*	48.1
West Coast	25	15	21*	18

Note: Although best estimates were used to set initial TACCs for each of the three quota zones, a research program has been established by SARDI Aquatic Sciences to undertake biannual biomass surveys in each zone, from which TACC is calculated as a specific harvest fraction of the biomass (denoted by *asterisks in the table above).

Q. When was the last survey of Mud Cackle stocks?

The last biomass survey for the Port River cockle fishing zone was undertaken late in 2008/09 to help determine the TACC for the 2009/10 quota season.