

12. Protecting the environment

All boaties can play an important role in looking after our state's waterway environments. This involves not only your own good practices, such as retaining rubbish on board and preventing fuel leaks and spills, but also protecting our waters and wildlife by watching out for the harmful or illegal actions of others.

Remember also that your vessel's wake and wash can impact on riverbanks and wildlife, as well as on other water users, so consider the effect of all of your actions on the environment

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Marine wildlife

Marine mammals

All marine mammals including whales, seals, sea lions and dolphins, are protected in South Australian waters and any person causing harm to a marine mammal can expect a heavy fine.

National Parks and Wildlife legislation (refer chapter 13, [Contact details & further information](#)) specifies minimum allowable distances from whales and dolphins for various types of boats and other water users. Some further restrictions may apply within the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary, located mainly within the Port Adelaide River.

You must reduce speed and change direction away from whales and dolphins to protect them and ensure your safety.



Reporting incidents

You are asked to report sightings of stranded, injured or dead marine mammals, or of anyone harassing a marine mammal contact the Department of Environment Water and Natural Resources (refer chapter 13, [Contact details & further information](#)).

The following details may be required in your report.

- When it was first observed, the location, type and number of animals
- Your name and contact details
- The nature of the incident.
- Identity or description of people involved (if any)
- The registration number of any boats (or vehicles) involved
- Accessibility by boat and/or vehicle.

Sightings of rare species

If you see marine life that's unusual in South Australian waters, including turtles, strange fish and sea snakes, please contact the South Australian Museum, (refer chapter 13, [Contact details & further information](#)).

Sightings of sharks

If you see a shark near swimmers or where it could otherwise harm humans, please report the location, description, distance to shore, and your contact details to one of the following:

- FISHWATCH, telephone: 1800 065 522
- SA Police, telephone: 131 444
- the local surf life saving club.

Aquatic reserves and marine parks

Aquatic reserves and marine parks safeguard important marine habitats, species of flora and fauna, significant natural features and cultural heritage.

Restrictions in aquatic reserves range from totally closed areas to areas allowing some recreational fishing. These are sometimes signposted; please check for details before you go boating (refer chapter 13, [Contact details & further information](#)).

Marine park sanctuary zones prohibit all forms of extractive activities, including fishing and collecting, mining, aquaculture and dredging. Maps and coordinates are available online at www.marineparks.sa.gov.au

Sanctuary zone boundaries are progressively being incorporated into navigational charts and other publications.

If you see a fishing offence in an aquatic reserve or marine park sanctuary zone, please contact FISHWATCH on 1800 065 522

If you use a chart of the area and a hand-held GPS receiver for navigation, you should take care; variances can occur both from GPS inaccuracy and from changing conditions since the chart was printed.

Avoiding pollution

Garbage, ship's waste and fuel spills from boats can be fatal to marine animals, as well as harmful to waterways.

Good environmental practices on the water include:

- retain all garbage on board until on shore
- avoiding refuelling on water where possible and ensure fuel lines and connections are tight
- don't discharge human waste overboard in harbours, or within three nautical miles of shore (a self-contained portable toilet is recommended for vessels that do not have a toilet installed—where space permits).

To report incidents of marine pollution (refer chapter 13, [Contact details & further information](#)). In your report, you'll be asked to provide:

- your name and address
- the registration number and name of the vessel involved, if known
- if possible, a description of the person responsible
- the location of the incident (if possible, latitude and longitude where clear landmarks are not available)
- details of the incident (what was discharged and how much)
- names and addresses of any witnesses
- details of any other boats nearby
- If possible take a photograph

Disposing of vessel waste

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has introduced a Code of Practice for vessel and facility management (marine and inland waters), which covers what must be done with black water (toilet waste) and grey water (water from dishwashing, laundry etc) when on the River Murray or on open water.

Noise

Because noise carries easily over water it should always be kept to a minimum. This includes engine noise, as well as that created by activities on board, such as with generators or loud music. This is particularly important along the River Murray and near coastal settlements, where your noise is more likely to disturb people—residents are entitled to reasonable consideration, especially early in the morning.

Historic shipwrecks

Vessel anchors are a major threat to historic shipwrecks. Anchors can tear the structure, disturb the site and destroy sensitive marine life. It's an offence to anchor on a historic shipwreck, so if you intend to visit a wreck site you must anchor away from the wreck itself.

The recommended anchoring procedure near an historic shipwreck is to:

- locate the wreck (generally using an echo sounder)
- mark the position of the wreck by dropping a buoy attached to a line and small weight (sufficient to resist any current, but light enough to avoid damaging the wreck)
- motor upwind or, if appropriate, up-current of the wreck
- drop a suitable anchor a little way off the wreck; if you drop enough line and have positioned the boat correctly, you'll drift back on the anchor line until the vessel is positioned near to or over the wreck (close to the marker buoy)
- if there is little wind or current the marker buoy can be left in place, otherwise retrieve it.

Some shipwreck sites are protected zones and can't be entered for any reason without a permit issued by the Department for Environment Water and Natural Resources (refer chapter 13).

Riverbank erosion

Riverbanks can be extremely sensitive to erosion and other soil effects.

'Slumping' is where a section of riverbank suddenly gives way, taking with it trees and whatever else is on the bank at the time. Slumping incidents have caused problems in some areas of the Murray in recent years.

Riverbank erosion can be caused or affected by natural actions like wind and wave action, heavy rain or soil cracking in the heat, but boating can also have an effect by raising wake and wash and stirring up sediments. You can do your bit by trying to minimise your vessel's wake and wash.

Some vessels have a larger wash at slow speeds and some at higher speed, so you need to be aware of your boat's behaviour to take the necessary action to reduce your impact on the river environment. Take care if waterskiing to cut down the amount of wash your skiing creates near the riverbanks (refer chapter 13, [Contact details & further information](#)).

New slumping incidents should be reported to the Riverbank Collapse hotline 1800 751 970.



Riverbank erosion

Watching our borders

Border Watch plays a vital role in protecting Australia's borders from the entry of illegal and harmful goods and unauthorised people. Counter-terrorism and improved quarantine intervention remain top priorities, as does intercepting illicit drugs and other potentially harmful items.

You can assist by reporting any unlawful or suspicious border (coastal) activities to the Border Watch (refer chapter 13). Callers may remain anonymous and all information is treated confidentially.

If you see something, it's important to act as soon as possible. Don't get involved—simply report what you see or hear—and try not to disturb or remove anything, as this could destroy vital evidence.

Chapter 12. Self-check questions

1) When is a vessel permitted to anchor on an historic shipwreck?

- A. With permission from DPI.
- B. Between sunset and sunrise.
- C. It's an offence to anchor on an historic shipwreck at anytime.

2) What basic restrictions apply to vessels operating near whales and dolphins in South Australian waters?

- A. All boats must stay away a minimum distance from whales and dolphins and, if a whale or dolphin approaches, must stop or move away from the animal.
- B. Sailboats can approach single whales or dolphins but must stay away from groups, for their and the animals' safety.
- C. Motor boats must never approach within 500 m of a dolphin, or within 800 m of a whale, within Gulf Waters.

3) What restrictions apply within South Australia's aquatic reserves and marine parks?

- A. No boating anytime.
- B. No fishing at any time.
- C. Different restrictions apply to different parks and reserves; you need to check before entering these areas.

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