



DEW 03/07

11 May 2007

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PROTECTS GREY NURSE SHARKS

A new marine reserve at the Cod Grounds in Commonwealth waters off the northern New South Wales coast will help the survival of the critically endangered grey nurse shark.

The Cod Grounds Commonwealth Marine Reserve, off the coast of Laurieton, has been established by the Australian Government. It has been proclaimed by the Governor-General and will come into effect on 28 May 2007.

The 300 hectare Reserve will protect prime habitat for grey nurse shark at this important aggregation site. The east coast population of the species is considered to be at a critically low level. The series of underwater pinnacles known as the Cod Grounds is one of its most important aggregation sites.

The *Recovery Plan for the Grey Nurse Shark*, prepared by the Department of the Environment and Water Resources, recommends the Cod Grounds be declared as a sanctuary zone as it provides critical habitat for the grey nurse shark for feeding and reproduction. The species is in decline and highly vulnerable to extinction due to its low reproduction rate as well as fishing-related mortality.

The Cod Grounds Commonwealth Marine Reserve has been declared as a strict nature reserve, and will be managed to ensure the undersea ecosystem and native species are protected. All commercial and recreational fishing will be prohibited in the reserve.

The Department of the Environment and Water Resources has made arrangements with the NSW Department of Primary Industries to carry out compliance and enforcement activities within the reserve.

The Australian Government is in the process of buying out the licences of several commercial fishermen who have a history of fishing at the Cod Grounds. Adjustment assistance will also be considered for fishing cooperatives impacted by the buy-out.

Notices will appear shortly in NSW central and north coast newspapers advising of the declaration. Further details of management arrangements, as well as maps and grid references, are available on the Department of the Environment and Water Resources website at:
www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mpa/cod-grounds/index.html

Print quality images and broadcast quality underwater footage of grey nurse sharks are available on request.

For further information please contact Richard Wilson (03) 6221 5020 or 0419 699 682.