



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

PG/2

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FURTHER CLOSURES FOR GREY NURSE SHARK SITES

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts Peter Garrett has announced a six-month extension of export approval for a New South Wales fishery subject to the state enacting further protection measures for the critically endangered grey nurse shark.

“I am very concerned about the impact of the NSW Ocean Trap and Line Fishery on the critically endangered grey nurse shark,” Mr Garrett said.

“I have agreed to allow an extension of export approval until June 30, but this is conditional upon NSW closing additional sensitive areas to fishing by May 2008.

“In particular, NSW must implement fishery closures of appropriate areas for grey nurse sharks at Fish Rock and Green Island, Manta Arch and the Steps/Anemone Bay.”

In July 2006, the OTLF received export approval under Commonwealth environment legislation – the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* – until 14 December this year. The approval was conditional upon the NSW Government implementing fishery closures around key aggregation sites. While significant progress has been made, Mr Garrett said he continued to be concerned about the level of protection for grey nurse sharks around the Solitary Islands, Fish Rock and Green Island.

“I have discussed the need for additional closures with the NSW Minister, Ian MacDonal, and he agrees to take action by May next year,” Mr Garrett said

“This decision is in the best interests of improving the ecological sustainability of this fishery and increasing of protection for grey nurse sharks.

“By the New South Wales Government’s own expert’s estimates, the east coast population of grey nurse sharks is between 460 and 760 individuals, following a period of severe decline over recent decades. My Department is conducting an independent population estimate in 2008.”

The Australian Government is also reviewing the adequacy of protection for the grey nurse shark in Commonwealth waters around the Cod Grounds Marine Reserve and Pimpernel Rock as a result of proceedings in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal earlier this year.