

Steamer Channel, Grange Channel and Bunga Arm – Vessel Zoning and Operating Rules



Information Sheet and FAQs

Background

Gippsland Ports is undertaking a consultation process for a potential change to the Vessel Operating and Zoning Rules (VOZR) for Steamer Channel, Grange Channel and Bunga Arm in the Gippsland Lakes.

Over recent years, Gippsland Ports has received multiple feedback items regarding the impact of large boat wake in these locations. Large vessels transiting these areas are causing dangerous situations for smaller vessels, berthed vessels and pose a threat to significant and fragile seabird colonies.

Current Arrangements

- There is a 5 knot zone in the Grange Channel in the vicinity of Ocean Grange public jetty. The rest of the channel has an open speed limit subject to applicable state laws.
- Steamer Channel has an open speed limit subject to applicable state laws.
- The western section of Bunga Arm has an open speed limit subject to applicable state laws, with a 5 knot zone in force at the eastern end.

Gippsland Ports has heard numerous accounts of smaller vessels experiencing hazardous conditions caused by excessive boat wake in these areas.

Gippsland Ports has also received advice from Birdlife Australia relating to the impact excessive wake is having on vulnerable seabird colonies in the area.

Previous actions by Gippsland Ports to mitigate the wake problem through on water patrols and education activities has not met the objective of reducing the impact of wake.

Proposals:

Gippsland Ports is asking commercial and recreational boaters, berth holders, local area property owners and other community members to consider the two proposals listed below and provide feedback. Any other reasonable alternatives will be considered.

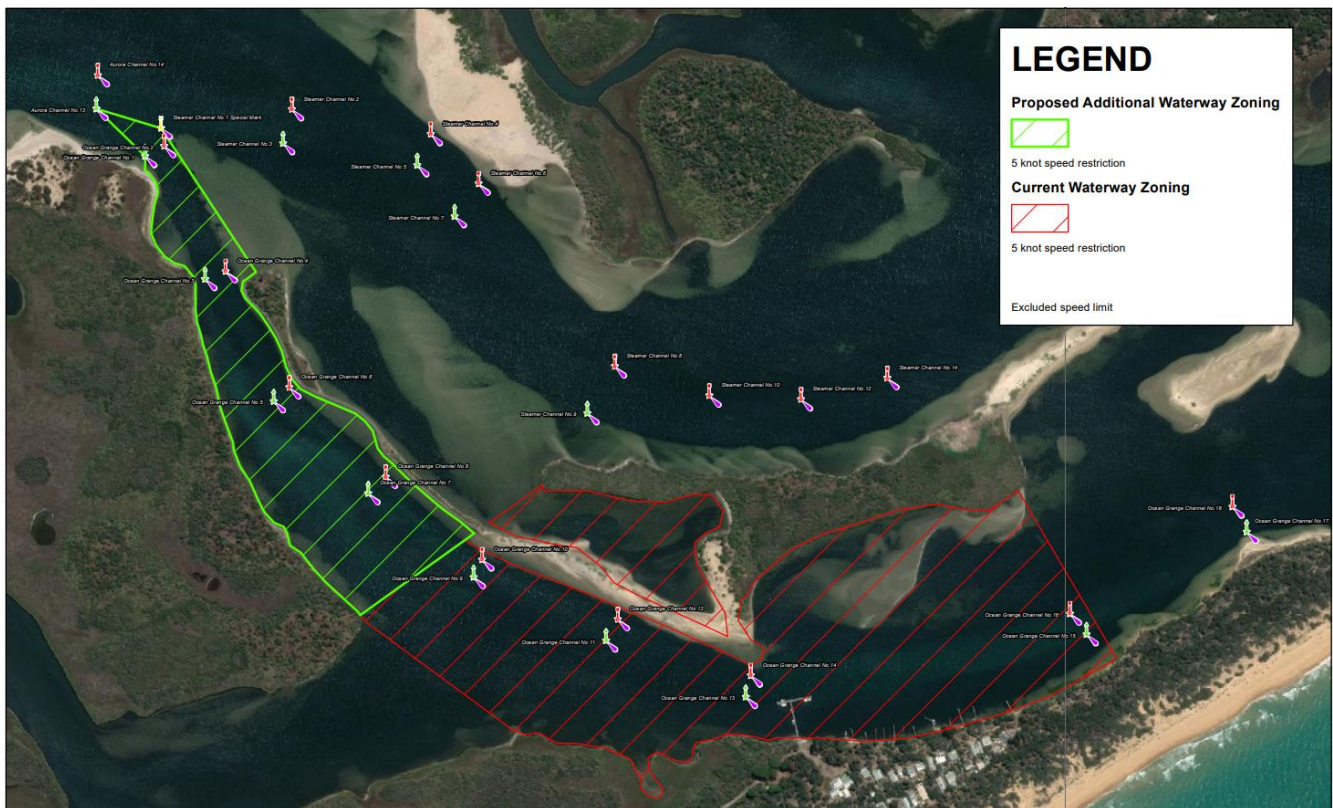
Proposal 1:

The current 5 knot zone in the vicinity of Ocean Grange jetty is marked in red hatching on the diagram below. Gippsland Ports propose to extend the existing 5 knot zone to the north west, indicated by green hatching.

The area encompassed by the green hatching is subject to shoaling and fragile bird habitats can be found along the shoreline.

The extended 5 knot zone is intended to:

1. Reduce the chances of vessels running aground due to shoaling in the area
2. Eliminate hazards to vessels and their occupants associated with large wake in confined areas
3. Reduce the impact of vessel wake on local seabird colonies



Proposal 2:

Gippsland Ports are proposing to introduce a 5 knot speed restriction for **vessels 8 metres and over**, in Aurora Channel, Steamer Channel and extending to the existing 5 knot zone at the eastern end of Bunga Arm (see attached diagram).

Gippsland Ports have received feedback regarding dangerous wake emanating from large vessels operating at speed, impacting smaller vessels, fragile seabird colonies and designated camp sites along Bunga Arm.

A 5 knot zone for vessels 8m and over will reduce the impact created by large wake, but will not impact on smaller vessels transiting the area and engaging in towed water sports, which are popular in sections of Bunga Arm.





Have Your Say

Gippsland Ports would like to hear your views regarding the options before making a final decision.

Any change to the Vessel Zoning and Operating Rules requires the approval of Marine Safety Victoria and must take account of community views.

You can have your say by e-mailing Gippsland Ports at: feedback@gippslandports.vic.gov.au

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why are these waterway zoning rules being reviewed?

A. Gippsland Ports is receiving feedback and recording events about excessive boat wake and there have been incidents where vessels have been damaged, and passengers' safety placed at risk.

Q. Why not introduce a "No Wake" zone?

A. “No Wake” zones are difficult to enforce as most vessels will create a wake at any speed. “No Wake” zones are generally applied in other states, in conjunction with speed restrictions.

Q. How would a new 5 knot zone be enforced?

A. The Vessel Zoning and Operating Rules would make it an offence for specified vessels to exceed 5 knots in the Zoned areas, enabling Water Police to issue warnings or infringements.

Q. Who is being consulted?

A. Any interested resident, boat-owner, community member or organisation can provide input.

Q. How do I have my say?

A. You can e-mail Gippsland Ports directly at the feedback address below to provide your views.

Q. Will my views be taken into account?

A. Yes. Gippsland Ports will consider the results of the consultation before deciding on a preferred option. If any change is proposed, Marine Safety Victoria approval is required, and they will ask for the results of the community consultation before making a decision.

Q. How do I get more information?

A. You can contact Gippsland Ports via email or phone and we will contact you to speak with you and answer any questions if requested.

Q. When does the consultation period end?

A. 31/12/2021

For further information, please contact Gippsland Ports:

feedback@gippslandports.vic.gov.au

or 5150 0500