



# Coastal and marine



Ongoing declines in all coastal and marine indicators show that these environments are increasingly at risk. This will continue as our population grows and our climate changes.

Coastal, estuarine and marine ecosystems are vital for biodiversity, providing habitat for countless species and playing a role as marine life nurseries.

For Aboriginal peoples, the marine environment is not just a resource, but a fundamental part of identity, culture and wellbeing.

The NSW coastline has incredible environmental, economic, social and cultural significance to Australians, with coastal towns and cities being home to roughly 85% of the NSW population.

## At a glance

### How NSW is tracking

- Most estuaries and coastal swimming sites have water quality that is suitable for swimming, but this varies, especially after heavy rainfall.
- Coastal vegetation and habitats (saltmarsh, mangroves and seagrass) continue to be threatened by coastal development and climate change. While in some locations they are declining, in others coverage has improved due to good management.
- Kelp forest cover declined at all six locations sampled between 2019 and 2023. Losses within the sampling period ranged from 25% to 62% of the 2019 baseline.
- Despite limited data for assessing statewide trends of coastal fish species, current monitoring of fisheries suggests fish stocks are stable, although some species are under threat.

### The big picture

This topic's indicators 'extent of estuarine macrophytes' and 'coastal fish stocks' both align to the 'biosphere integrity' planetary boundary. Globally, this boundary has been crossed.

### Quality of swimming sites

Swimming sites graded 'very good' or 'good' **declined to 73%** in 2022-23, down from 80% in 2021-22.



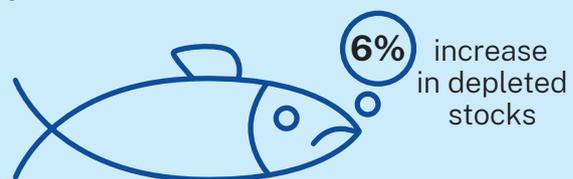
2021-22



2022-23

### Depleted fish stocks

Fish stocks listed as depleted have increased by **6%** since 2020.





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## Coastal and marine indicators

This report uses six indicators to assess the status and trends of coastal and marine environments in NSW.

Indicator	Environmental status	Environmental trend	Information reliability
Proportion of marine waters protected in marine parks or reserves	 <b>MODERATE</b>	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Good
Percentage of ocean and estuarine beaches with beach suitability grades for swimming of 'good' or better	 <b>GOOD</b>	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Good
Estuarine water quality (chlorophyll-a and turbidity)	 <b>MODERATE</b>	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Good
Extent of estuarine macrophytes	 <b>MODERATE</b>	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Reasonable
Levels of estuarine catchment disturbance	 <b>UNKNOWN</b>	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Limited
Coastal fish stocks	 <b>MODERATE</b>	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Reasonable

### Indicator table scales

- **Environmental status:** Good, moderate, poor, unknown
- **Environmental trend:** Getting worse, stable, getting better, unknown
- **Information reliability:**  Good  Reasonable  Limited

### Indicator definitions

**Estuarine water quality (chlorophyll-a and turbidity)** – measures estuarine water quality by algae (chlorophyll-a) and water clarity (turbidity).