

Case study 4: Experiencing Marine Sanctuaries

Background

Providing opportunities for public appreciation, involvement, education, understanding and enjoyment of marine environments is central to the success of South Australia's marine parks network, and is integral to the implementation of marine park management plans. To help achieve this, marine parks supports the non-government organisation known as Experiencing Marine Sanctuaries Inc. (EMS). EMS provides safe and supervised snorkelling experiences in South Australia's marine parks. EMS is an incorporated, not-for-profit, non-government organisation run by a management committee of volunteers with diving, marine biology and community engagement backgrounds. EMS is based on (with permission) the highly successful New Zealand program Experiencing Marine Reserves, which has been running for over 13 years.

EMS is supported by the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges and Natural Resources Eyre Peninsula. EMS also receives in-kind and monetary support from other organisations.

EMS provides an experiential program for school students and community members to help achieve better protection of the marine environment through education and advocacy. An important component of this work is to give students and their parents a safe and professionally supervised experience in the marine environment. Whenever possible, this includes experiencing both unprotected marine environments and marine sanctuary zones, with particular emphasis on comparing the diversity and abundance of organisms in each location. Having a ratio of one adult to two students assists with supervision, ensures a strong connection with the community, and also builds intergenerational links.



Snorkelling with cuttlefish in the Cuttlefish Coast Sanctuary Zone



EMS experiences

Snorkelling experiences include:

- Swimming with cuttlefish in Upper Spencer Gulf Marine Park (About 400 participants since 2016)
- Visiting various sites in Encounter Marine Park including Port Noarlunga Reef Sanctuary Zone, Second Valley, Victor Harbor, Port Willunga and Rapid Bay Jetty (Over 1200 participants since 2015)
- Snorkelling at Tumby Bay Jetty in Sir Joseph Banks Group Marine Park (100 participants since 2016) and other sites across Eyre Peninsula including Streaky Bay and Smooth Pool.

Future opportunities

Citizen science - In future, participants may collect fish abundance and diversity data while participating in a snorkel experience using the Reef Watch Fish Survey method. Fish sightings are recorded directly on a waterproof fish slate.

School education - EMS and Natural Resources Management Education will work together to provide professional development opportunities, curriculum links and access to existing marine science resources for teachers.

Fun in the summer - EMS will work closely with summer school holiday programs, NaturePlay SA, DEWNR's Park of the month program and Reef Watch to run community snorkel experiences.

Management plan strategies

Strategies addressed

5	6	7	8	11
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The EMS program addresses a number of management plan strategies. The program provides public education, appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the marine parks, as well as opportunities for nature based tourism. It achieves this through partnerships with stakeholders and community members in the day to day management and monitoring of the marine parks.

Socio-economic outcomes

Specific evaluation questions addressed:

- ✓ Has coastal recreation changed due to marine park management plans?
- ✓ Has tourism changed due to marine parks?

The EMS program provides inexperienced snorkelers with a safe and educational outlet to learn and enjoy more about marine parks. There is potential for this type of activity to make positive contributions to local economies. For example about 240 snorkelers joined EMS to see the giant Australian cuttlefish in Upper Spencer Gulf Marine Park, near Whyalla, in July 2017. An economic assessment of the event using the RISE model indicated that the event contributed an estimated A\$24,000–\$36,000 to gross regional product and supported between 0.19 and 0.28 FTE jobs.

Participants' feedback (from EMS Facebook site)

Thanks to everyone at EMS for a brilliant session snorkelling amongst the giant cuttlefish! A long-dreamed of, truly magical experience that I'm sure I will return for-and want to share with more of my friends. Love your work! 8 July 2017

Very well organised, guides and shore volunteers are all so passionate and knowledgeable about the marine sanctuaries. Equipment provided is good quality too. Excellent! 2 May 2017

Wonderful experience - very friendly professional people running the tours, so happy we were provided with all the gear. We felt very safe and had amazing time. Kids did not want to get out of water. Thank you! 1 February 2017

Well organised. Safety is paramount. Get to appreciate our stunning marine environment with expert guides. Very patient and supportive of those snorkeling for the first time. 11 January 2017.



EMS participants at Port Noarlunga



EMS participants at Port Noarlunga



Cuttlefish aggregate and spawn in the Cuttlefish Coast Sanctuary Zone