



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Fisheries**

*Fish for the future*

# **Integrated Fisheries Management**

## **Government Policy**

**2009**

## **General**

1. The Government is committed to the implementation of an integrated management system for the sustainable management of Western Australia's fisheries.
2. The integrated management system will be open and transparent, accessible, inclusive and flexible.

## **Information requirements**

3. The development and funding of an appropriate research and monitoring program encompassing all sectors is essential to provide the necessary information for sustainability and allocation issues to be addressed under an integrated policy. This policy will continue to be progressively developed and phased-in over a number of years.
4. The Department of Fisheries will, in consultation with sectors, investigate options for standardising catch information between sectors, noting that the scale for data collection and reporting must be appropriate for each particular fishery.

## **Guiding principles for management**

5. The following principles will be adopted (by incorporating them into either legislation, Ministerial Policy Guidelines or Government policy as appropriate) as the basis for integrated fisheries management policy.
  - i) Fish resources are a common property resource managed by the Government for the benefit of present and future generations.
  - ii) Sustainability is paramount and ecological impacts must be considered in the determination of appropriate harvest levels.
  - iii) Decisions must be made on best available information and where this information is uncertain, unreliable, inadequate or not available, a precautionary approach adopted to manage risk to fish stocks, marine communities and the environment. The absence of, or any uncertainty in, information should not be used as a reason for delaying or failing to make a decision.
  - iv) A harvest level, that as far as possible includes the total mortality consequent upon the fishing activity of each sector, should be set for each fishery<sup>1</sup> and the allocation designated for use by the commercial sector, the recreational sector, the customary sector, and the aquaculture sector, should be made explicit.

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<sup>1</sup> Fishery is defined under the *Fish Resources Management Act, 1994* (the Act) as one or more stocks or parts of stocks of fish that can be treated as a unit for the purposes of conservation or management; and a class of fishing activities in respect of those stocks or parts of stocks of fish.

- v) The total harvest across all sectors should not exceed the allowable harvest level. If this occurs, steps consistent with the impacts of each sector should be taken to reduce the take to a level that does not compromise future sustainability.
- vi) Appropriate management structures and processes should be introduced to manage each sector within their prescribed allocation. These should incorporate pre-determined actions that are invoked if that group's catch increases above its allocation.
- vii) Allocation decisions should aim to achieve the optimal benefit to the Western Australian community from the use of fish stocks and take account of economic, social, cultural and environmental factors. Realistically, this will take time to achieve and the implementation of these objectives is likely to be incremental over time.
- viii) It should remain open to government policy to determine the priority use of fish resources where there is a clear case to do so.
- ix) Management arrangements must provide sectors with the opportunity to access their allocation. There should be a limited capacity for transferring allocations unutilised by a sector for that sector's use in future years, provided the outcome does not affect resource sustainability.

More specific principles to provide further guidance around allocation decisions may also be established for individual fisheries.

## **Harvest levels**

6. A sustainability report will be prepared for each fishery to be considered under the IFM Policy in accordance with the 'Policy for the implementation of ecologically sustainable development for fisheries and aquaculture in Western Australia'.
7. The Chief Executive Officer, Department of Fisheries, will approve a sustainability report for each fishery, which provides advice on appropriate harvest level(s), taking into account sustainability and other objectives, such as stock rebuilding, maximising economic yields and amenity values.

## **Effective management of each sector**

8. The Government is committed to introducing more effective management across all fisheries. The implementation of more effective sectoral management in which the catch of a sector can be contained is an essential first step in the introduction of a new integrated management system within which allocation issues may be addressed. In the interim, each sector will continue to be managed responsibly within current catch ranges and should the catch of a sector alter disproportionately to that of other sectors, the Minister will take appropriate management action to address this.

9. It is important to formalise existing shares not only as a basis for future allocation discussions, but as a basis for insuring the safe harvest level. These will be formalised on the basis of proportional catch shares using the best information available at the time the Integrated Fisheries Allocation Advisory Committee starts its process (see below).

## **Allocation processes**

10. An Integrated Fisheries Allocation Advisory Committee has been established under s42 of the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994* (the Act) to investigate resource allocation issues and make recommendations on optimal resource use to the Minister for Fisheries including:
  - i) allocations between sectors, now and into the future;
  - ii) strategies to overcome allocation and access issues arising from temporal and spatial competition at a local/regional level;
  - iii) allocation issues within a sector as referred by the Minister for Fisheries;
  - iv) more specific principles to provide further guidance around allocation and reallocation decisions for individual fisheries; and
  - v) other matters concerning the integrated management of fisheries as referred by the Minister for Fisheries.
11. The Minister will be responsible for determining the process and timeframes for resolving allocation issues in each fishery based on advice from the CEO of the Department of Fisheries and the Integrated Fisheries Allocation Advisory Committee.
12. The Minister will provide a statement of decision on announcement of his determination in an allocation matter.

The Minister may make public the Committee's report at the same time his statement of decision is released.

## **Compensation**

13. Where a reallocation of resources from one sector to another results in demonstrable financial loss to a licensed commercial fisherman or licensed aquaculture operator, in principle there should be consideration of compensation.
14. Cases for compensation should be assessed on their merits.
15. Priority will be given to investigating the potential development of market based systems to achieve reallocations, along with due consideration of social equity considerations, as soon as practical. Clearly, consideration of any market-based system will be based on its merit.

16. No compensation should be payable where adjustments are made for sustainability reasons.

## **Funding**

17. The Government will consider seeking contributions from all sectors over time corresponding to the cost of managing the resource and providing access for each sector.