IMPORTANT CHANGES:

Sea Lion Exclusion Devices (SLEDs) must be fitted in all rock lobster pots (commercial and recreational) used in the identified SLED zones for the 2011/12 fishing season and following seasons.
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Australian sea lion populations that live along the West Australian coastline and surrounding islands overlap with fishing grounds for the western rock lobster, and interactions between sea lions and rock lobster pots have occurred over many years. In the past, there have been recorded deaths of small sea lion pups that have become trapped in the pots and drowned.

Australian sea lions are listed as ‘vulnerable’ under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and ‘specially protected’ under the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950. Consequently, there is an obligation for the West Coast Rock Lobster Fishery and its managers to address this fishing related mortality issue.

An effective SLED that did not reduce the catch of legal size rock lobster and at the same time prevented sea lions from entering rock lobster pots was successfully developed.
Following extensive trials and consultation with industry, two SLED designs were approved. The mandatory use of SLEDs in the West Coast Rock Lobster Fishery was implemented for the 2006/07 season in the Mid-West region, in waters less than 20 metres deep. Two new SLED zones for the Abrolhos Islands have been introduced. It will be mandatory for all commercial and recreational rock lobster fishers to have SLEDs in all their pots within the SLED zones from the 2011/12 rock lobster season and beyond.
All rock lobster pots (commercial and recreational) used in the zones below must have an approved SLED fitted.
Abrolhos Islands – NEW SLED ZONES

SLEDs are now mandatory in two areas of the Houtman Abrolhos Islands, the Pelsaert and the Easter groups of islands. See the following maps:
A SLED is fitted by fixing a piece of rigid, non-flexible material across the top of the neck that ensures that the gap from the edge of the external SLED to either side of the top of the neck is no greater than 132 mm.

Alternatively a SLED can be fitted by the fixing of a rigid, non-flexible piece of material rising vertically from the base of the pot to a height that ensures the diagonal distance to the neck from the top centre of the internal SLED is no greater than 132 mm. The diagonal distance is to be measured to the edge of the neck in any direction in a round neck pot, and to the midpoint of the four sides in a square or rectangular neck pot.
Dimensions of internal SLED

The internal SLED must be a minimum of 10 mm in diameter and the top of the internal SLED must be a minimum of 10 mm and a maximum of 30 mm in diameter.
The Department has developed a free SLED gauge to help fishers check their own gear and ensure that it complies with SLED rules. Fisheries and Marine Officers will also be using these gauges in their normal surveillance activities.

The gauge is a moulded/stamped ball of 132 mm diameter which tests the distance from the internal SLED to the bottom of the neck.

- Measurement of round neck pots is by unforced use of the ball to check the diagonal SLED neck distance.
• Measurement of square necks (finger neck pots) is by unforced use of the ball to check the diagonal distance at each of the four midpoints of the neck.

• Measurement of a pot fitted with a SLED (batten across the neck) will be with the 132 mm ball, such that it does not exceed that measurement.

Rock lobster fishers fishing in the identified area can get their free SLED gauge and SLED from participating Mid West fishing tackle stores and Department of Fisheries regional offices.
FURTHER INFORMATION
Visit the Department website at www.fish.wa.gov.au
or contact:

DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES
– HEAD OFFICE
3rd floor, The Atrium,
168 St George’s Terrace,
Perth 6000
Ph: (08) 9482 7333
Fax: (08) 9482 7389
e-mail: headoffice@fish.wa.gov.au
ABN: 55 689 794 771

MIDWEST REGIONAL OFFICE &
GERALDTON DISTRICT OFFICE
69-75 Connell Rd
Geraldton WA 6530
Ph: (08) 9921 6800
Fax: (08) 9921 3617

DONGARA DISTRICT OFFICE
Fishing Boat Harbour
McIntyre Cove
Dongara WA 6525
Ph: (08) 9927 1187
Fax: (08) 9927 2019

JURIEN BAY DISTRICT OFFICE
Boat Harbour
Office Complex
Jurien Harbour
Jurien WA 6516
Ph: (08) 9652 1048
Fax: (08) 9652 1408

LANCELIN DISTRICT OFFICE
Gingin Road
Lancelin WA 6044
Ph: (08) 9655 1111
Fax: (08) 9655 1734