

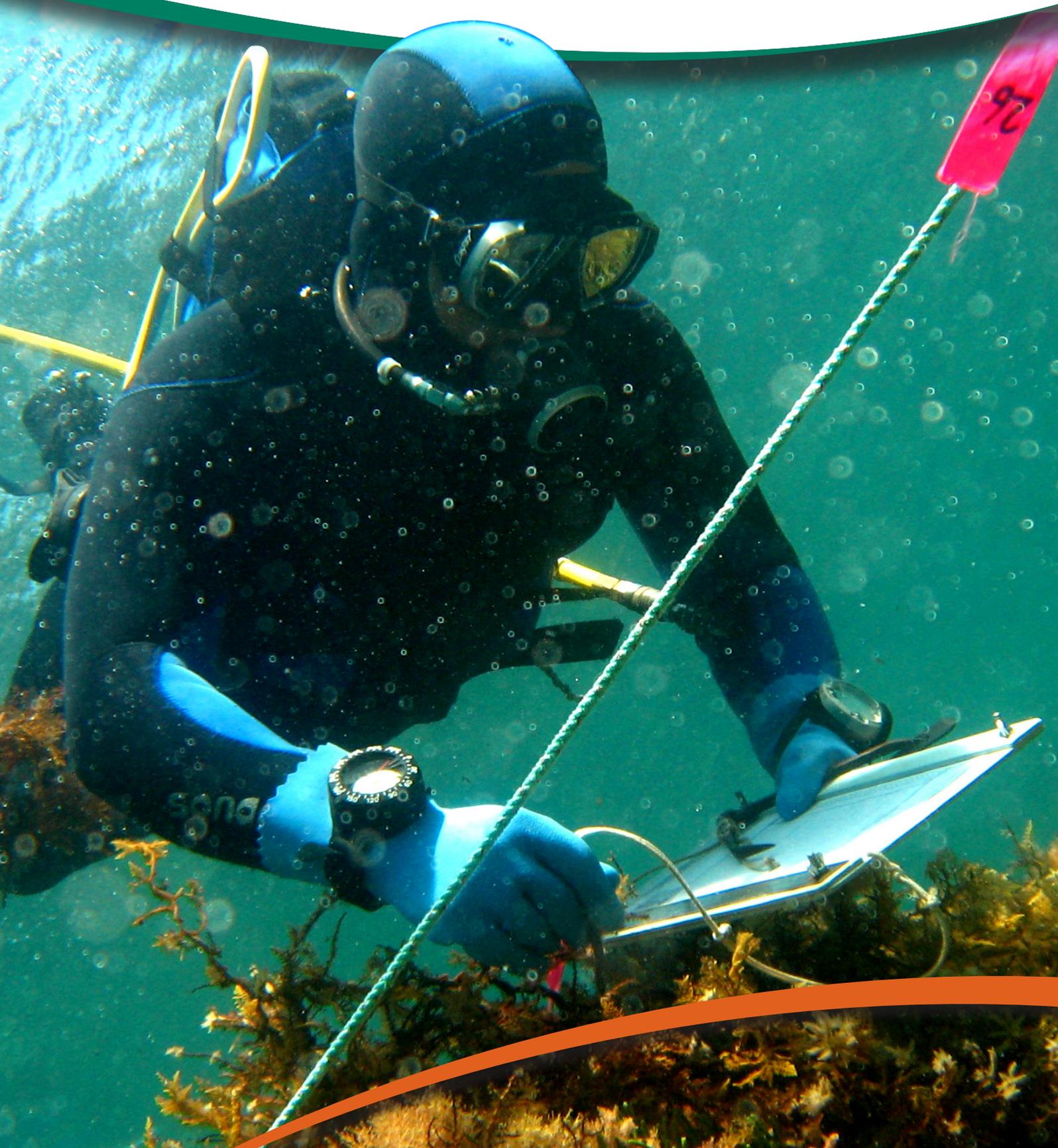


Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

*We're working for
Western Australia.*

Status reports of the fisheries and aquatic
resources of Western Australia **2019/20**

State of the fisheries





Department of
**Primary Industries and
Regional Development**

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

The *Status Reports of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of Western Australia (SRFAR)* provide an annual update on the state of the fish stocks and other aquatic resources of Western Australia (WA). These reports outline the most recent assessments of the cumulative risk status for each of the aquatic resources (assets) within WA's six Bioregions using an Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) approach. The 2019/20 financial year saw a continuation of the outstanding results achieved in fisheries management to ensure the continued sustainability of the State's aquatic resources.

The unique contribution that the state's fishing sectors and aquaculture industries make to Western Australia are acknowledged in the state's 2020 – 2024 Primary Industries Plan (the Plan). The Plan recognizes and responds to these times of significant disruptions to historical ways of doing business by providing a high-level roadmap to maintain and grow the primary industries of Western Australia. Importantly, the significant pressures associated with adapting climate change are recognized as active drivers of change.

The contributions of the many stakeholders that work with the Department to achieve sustainable fisheries, valuable industries and healthy ecosystems remain an invaluable part of the ongoing successful management of fisheries in Western Australia. This ongoing relationship will continue, with a key aspect of the implementation of the Plan being to actively engage and partner with industry, representative organisations and the community.

This year, 98% of our fish stocks were assessed as not being at risk or vulnerable through exploitation (fishing); this includes those classified as **sustainable - adequate**. Both the Shark Bay crab and Shark Bay scallop resources were classified as sustainable-adequate in 2017/18 as they were considered to have recovered after strong management actions to mitigate the impacts of the heat wave event^{1, 2}.

It also includes several resources that were classified as **sustainable – recovering**, indicating that management actions taken to date have resulted in these resources recovering at acceptable rates. These included Australian herring and southern garfish (supporting nearshore fisheries of the south and west coasts), Cockburn Sound crab stock, fishery resources

supporting the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Fishery (WCDSF), dusky and sandbar shark stocks that support the Temperate Demersal Gillnet Demersal Longline Fishery (TDGDLF) and the Wilson Inlet cobbler stock of the South Coast nearshore and estuarine fisheries.

Only two resources were classified as **inadequate** – the West Coast whitebait stock and the snapper stock of the Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Fishery – and both appear to be impacted by environmental changes (e.g. Heat wave events), at least in part. Management options have been implemented to address these issues.

Considerable work continues towards implementing the *Aquatic Resources Management Act 2016* (ARMA). This will be a once-in-a-generation change that will provide a modern, innovative framework that will create a sound basis for effective, efficient and integrated fisheries and aquatic resource management for decades to come. ARMA is based on the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD), and will provide the legal framework for improved governance. As part of preparation for implementation, it was identified that the Act requires some modifications to meet its intention. This has necessitated a delay in the timing of migration to the new Act.

A key feature of the ARMA is that it is based around aquatic resources, rather than the traditional approach based on a fishery or fishing activity. This enables an integrated approach to providing secure fishing access rights for all sectors, with resource sustainability at its core. The ARMA allows for existing management arrangements and resource access rights to remain effective for the State's commercial fishing and pearling industries, until each is migrated to the new legislative framework.

In 2017, the Western Rock Lobster Fishery (WRLF) was again recertified under the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard for sustainable fisheries. The other MSC certified fisheries in Western Australia are West Coast Deep Sea Crab, West and South Coast Abalone, Shark Bay prawn, Exmouth Gulf prawn, Peel-Harvey sea mullet and blue swimmer crab, Pearl Oyster, Octopus and sea cucumber. This results in more than 90% of the State's fishery value coming from independently certified sustainable fisheries.

¹ Pearce, A., Lenanton, R., Jackson, G., Moore, J., Feng, M. and Gaughan, D. 2011. The "marine heat wave" off Western Australia during the summer of 2010/11. Fisheries Research Report No. 222. Department of Fisheries, Western Australia. 40pp.

² Caputi, N., Jackson, G. and Pearce, A. 2014. The marine heat wave off Western Australia during the summer of 2010/11 – 2 years on. Fisheries Research Report No. 250. Department of Fisheries, Western Australia. 40pp.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The year in which this report has been compiled has been unique. Notwithstanding direct workplace disruptions due to the pandemic, fisheries science and management staff have also become increasingly involved with other activities within the primary industries and regional development portfolios. Examples include assisting with biosecurity and animal welfare incidents, and advising on potential opportunities for Aboriginal economic development. While such activities are now an ongoing part of our core business, ultimately any new activities, even if of short duration, will impact on what has traditionally been delivered to underpin the content of this annual state of the fisheries report series.

In response to these changing times my senior leadership team and I have taken the opportunity to pivot in regards to the production of this report. Stock assessment advice will continue to be delivered at a periodicity concomitant with the risk levels for particular resources or fisheries, but the intention is now to publish this report only every second year. A crucial consideration in making this decision is that the science staff have been finding it increasingly difficult to find the time for creative thinking, which is at the heart of innovation.

In my desire to lead a team of highly motivated, innovative scientists, I am encouraged that the Primary Industries Plan confirms the state government's commitment to maintaining scientific capability in disciplines that underpin core business activities, such as fisheries stock assessments.

I again thank the many staff at Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) who have contributed to the production of this report, along with the stakeholders who contributed to managing the state's aquatic resources. The ongoing involvement by our Indigenous, commercial, recreational and aquaculture stakeholders in specific research projects and monitoring programs remains critical. Logbook data, voluntary participation in recreational fishing surveys, provision of biological samples, and access to vessels and sharing of information are integral to aquatic resource management in this state. The input from other science groups located within WA plus those from other parts of Australia and internationally is also acknowledged.

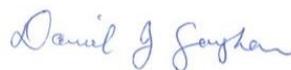
The summary table at the start of each chapter displays the stock and fishery performance levels, along with current performance and risk levels for each of the other Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) outcomes (e.g. bycatch, listed species, economics etc.). The Departments' risk based EBFM framework is the State government's basis for management of all Western Australia's aquatic resources.

The introductory section for each Bioregion outlines the key ecological resources (assets) and summarises their current overall (cumulative) risk status. Assets that are examined in each bioregion include each of the meso-scale ecosystems (as determined by the Integrated Marine and Coastal Regionalisation - IMCRA - process¹) plus key habitats, captured species and listed species categories. There is also a section for major external drivers, such as climate change, coastal development and introduced pests/diseases, which may impact the Department's ability to effectively manage WA's aquatic resources.

This volume provides the general public, fishers and other stakeholders with a starting reference source. This meets the reporting requirements of the Department, including the need to annually report to the WA Parliament on "*the state of fisheries and aquatic resources managed under this Act*"².

Key species can also be found in Status of Australian Fish Stocks (SAFS) reports at <http://fish.gov.au>.

This year's *Status Reports of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of Western Australia 2019/20* is directly accessible on the Department's website (www.fish.wa.gov.au), where users are encouraged to download relevant sections for personal use. If quoting from the document, please give appropriate acknowledgment using the citation format provided at the front of the report.



Dr DAN GAUGHAN
Director, Aquatic Science and Assessment
February 2021

¹ Commonwealth of Australia, 2006. A guide to the Integrated Marine and Coastal Regionalisation of Australia - version 4.0 June 2006 (IMCRA v4.0). <http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mbp/publications/imcra/pubs/imcra4.pdf>

² Section 266 Aquatic Resources Management Act, 2016. Government of Western Australia

HOW TO USE THIS VOLUME

To obtain full benefit from the information provided in this edition of the *Status Reports of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of Western Australia*, the following outlines the various terms and headings used in the text, the fishery status overview table (which also appears in the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's *Annual Report 2019/20 to Parliament*) and the ecological resource level reports.

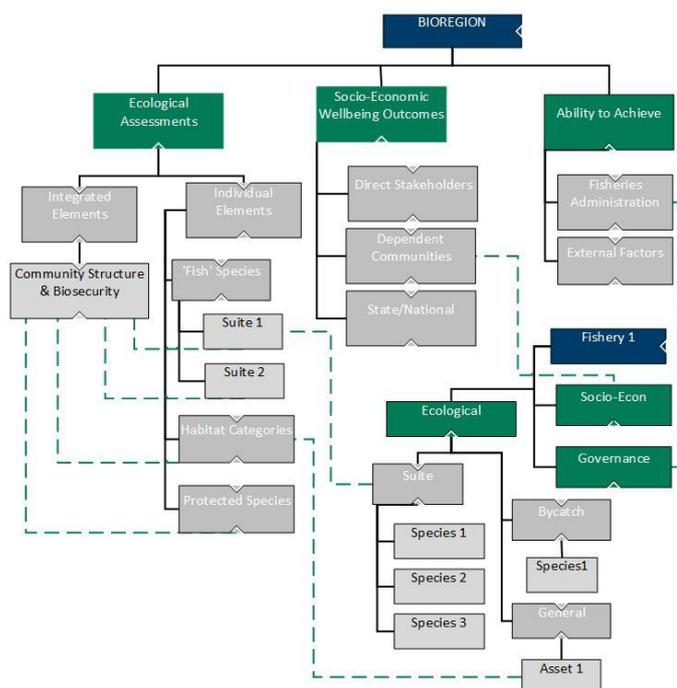
The terms and headings are a combination of the reporting structures first outlined in the National Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) reporting structure (Fletcher *et al.* 2002)¹, plus the Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) framework (Fletcher *et al.* 2010, 2012)² and the Resource Assessment Framework (DoF, 2011)³. The terminology used in reports has now been updated to be consistent with the MSC criteria, and where possible, that used within the national *Status of Key Australian Fish Stocks reports*⁴.

In addition to the explanations provided below, acronyms are expanded at their first occurrence in each section of the text. It also needs to be noted that references are only presented as footnotes once within each report.

ECOSYSTEM BASED FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

As outlined above the Department has fully adopted EBFM, which is a risk based management approach. EBFM recognises the social, economic and ecological values at a regional level and the links among individual exploited fish stocks, direct effects on habitats and protected species (which collectively form the broader marine ecosystem), to ensure the sustainable management of all fisheries resources into the future. EBFM provides a mechanism for assessing and reporting on the regional level risk status of all WA's aquatic resources and therefore the effectiveness of the aquatic resource management arrangements in delivering community outcomes.

Given the potential complexity we use a practical, step-wise, risk-based approach to integrate all the fishery level assessments and management systems into a form that can be used for aquatic resource management planning by the Department (Introduction Figure 1).



INTRODUCTION FIGURE 1.

The high level EBFM component tree framework showing how each of the fishery level issues are mapped into cumulative, regional-level individual assets and outcomes. Furthermore, the component tree shows how ecosystem elements are composed of the integrated set of individual elements.

1 Fletcher WJ, Chesson J, Fisher M, Sainsbury KJ, Hundloe T, Smith ADM, and Whitworth B. 2002. National ESD reporting framework for Australian fisheries: The 'how to' guide for wild capture fisheries. FRDC project 2000/145, Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra.

2 Fletcher WJ, Shaw J, Metcalf SJ, and Gaughan DJ. 2010. An Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management framework: the efficient, regional-level planning tool for management agencies. Marine Policy 34 (2010) 1226–1238

Fletcher WJ, Gaughan DJ, Metcalf SJ, and Shaw J. 2012. Using a regional level, risk-based framework to cost effectively implement Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management

(EBFM). In: Kruse *et al.* (eds). Global Progress on Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management. pp. 129-146. Alaska Sea Grant College Program. doi: 10.4027/gpebfm.2012.07.

3 Department of Fisheries. 2011. Resource Assessment Framework for Finfish Resources in Western Australia. Fisheries Occasional Publication. No. 85.

4 Flood *et al.* 2016. Status of Key Australian Fish Stocks. Fisheries Research & Development Corporation, Canberra. 420 pp.

HOW TO USE THIS VOLUME

Each set of Bioregional level risks is made up of individual ecological risks at a species or stock level and social and economic risks at a fishery level. The consolidation process into broader asset categories utilises the branch structure of the EBFM component trees. Each of these represents groups of 'like risks' that can be managed collectively. For example, the status of an entire suite (e.g. Demersal Finfish) is evaluated based on the risk status of several indicator species which have been chosen to be representative of the more vulnerable species within the suite.

A similar process is applied to consolidate the items across the other EBFM components. Furthermore, the assessment of ecosystem status recognises that community structure and biodiversity within an ecosystem can be effectively assessed as the 'integrated' sum of the status of the 'individual' ecological elements.

Finally, as we manage the set of ecological assets to generate economic and social benefits for the community, each of the ecological assets is used as the unit to integrate its associated ecological, social and economic values and risks using a simple multi-criteria function. The shifts in these priority scores among years for each of the 80

regional level ecological assets is integral for the annual planning cycle used for assigning priorities for all aquatic resource management related activities across the Department (see Fletcher *et al.*, 2010, 2012 for full details).

BIOREGIONS

With the adoption of the EBFM approach, a fully bioregional structure is used for the Annual Status Reports whereby a 'Bioregion' refers to a region defined by common oceanographic characteristics in its marine environment, or by climate/rainfall characteristics in its inland river systems.

Each individual Bioregion has a *general introduction* section outlining the main features of its aquatic environment plus the major commercial and recreational fisheries and aquaculture industries that operate in the area. Important cultural values and resources, whether exploited or not, will also be highlighted. This section also outlines the current cumulative risk status of each of the high-level, ecological resources/assets located within each Bioregion (see Introduction Figure 2).



INTRODUCTION FIGURE 2:

Map of WA showing the boundaries of the Bioregions and IMCRA ecosystems.

ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL LEVEL ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES (ASSETS) IN EACH BIOREGION

The ecological resources/assets in each Bioregion include the ecosystems and their constituent habitats, captured species and listed species.

Captured Fish: Captured fish species are subdivided into finfish, crustaceans and molluscs with each of these further divided into estuarine/embayments, nearshore, inshore/offshore demersal and pelagic (finfish only) suites (see DoF, 2011).

Listed (protected) species: This category, which includes Endangered, Threatened and Protected Species (ETPS) under State or Commonwealth Acts, was subdivided into listed 'fish' (e.g. white sharks, corals) and listed 'non-fish' (e.g. mammals) as defined in the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994*. ETPS are similarly defined under the new *Aquatic Resources Management Act 2016*.

Habitats: Habitat assets in each Bioregion are divided into estuarine and marine categories and again where necessary the latter category was further divided into nearshore and offshore components.

Ecosystems: Within each Bioregion, one or more meso-scale ecosystems, as defined by the IMCRA process (Introduction Figure 2), were used as a starting point, but merging of these or further division into separate estuarine/embayment and marine components was undertaken where relevant.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The Department's objective is to manage the sustainability of the community's aquatic ecological resources and assets to generate economic and/or social outcomes. Risks associated with each individual ecological asset and community outcomes were therefore examined separately using qualitative risk assessments (Consequence x Likelihood) (Fletcher 2015)². This enables the analysis of risk (using a five-year time horizon) for objectives related to captured species, habitat and community structure/ecosystem sustainability, plus social and economic outcomes to be completed in a practical and consistent manner.

The internationally accepted definition of risk is "the uncertainty associated with achieving objectives" (ISO, 2009). Uncertainties are therefore explicitly incorporated into assessments to enable each risk assessment to be completed with whatever data are available. All risk scoring considers the current level of management activities and controls already in place or planned. The management and reporting implications for each of the different risk categories are defined (Introduction Table 1).

The various ecological, social and economic risks and values associated with ecological assets are integrated using a multi-criteria analysis to generate approximately 80 Departmental-level priorities across the six Bioregions.

INTRODUCTION TABLE 1

Links between the Risk Category and the likely reporting and management response

Risk Category	Description	Likely Reporting Requirement	Likely Management Response
Negligible	Not an issue	Minimal	Nil
Low	Acceptable; no specific control measures needed	Justification required	None specific
Moderate	Acceptable; with current risk control measures in place (no new management required)	Full performance report	Specific management and/or monitoring required
High	Not desirable; continue strong management actions OR new and/or further risk control measures to be introduced in near future	Full Performance Report – regular monitoring	Increases to management activities needed
Significant	Unacceptable; major changes required to management in immediate future	Recovery strategy (within a Harvest Strategy) and detailed monitoring	Increases to management activities needed urgently

¹ Under the FRMA and ARMA, fish include all aquatic organisms except birds, reptiles, mammals and amphibians.

² Fletcher WJ. 2015. Review and refinement of an existing qualitative risk assessment method for application within an ecosystem-based management framework. ICES Journal of Marine Research. 72:1043-1056pp.

SEASON REPORTED

Individual fishery production figures relate to the latest full year or season for which data were available. Therefore, statistics in this volume generally refer either to the 2018/19 financial year or the 2019 calendar year, whichever is more appropriate.

In contrast, sections on Departmental activities in the areas of fishery management, new compliance activities and research summaries may include information up to June 2020.

ECOLOGICAL ASSETS

Captured Fish

Commercial Fishing Estimates

There is a legislative requirement for information to be submitted by various sectors of the fishing industry including commercial fishers, fish processors, charter operators and aquaculture producers.

Monthly returns or daily/ trip returns are provided that include information on the composition, quantity and location of catches and fishing effort that was used. Monthly returns from fish processors request quantity and price paid for fish products.

Recreational Fishing Estimates

The WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) has implemented an integrated survey design to monitor recreational fisheries in a cost effective way¹. These surveys provide biennial estimates of recreational catch by boat-based recreational fishers at both state-wide and bioregional levels. These surveys utilise the Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence (RFBL) as the sampling frame to provide estimates of catch and effort and provide information to validate estimates by

enabling comparisons across the various methods.

The integrated surveys include three complementary components: (i) off-site phone surveys encompassing an initial Screening Survey, a 12-month Phone-Diary Survey, followed by post-enumeration surveys; (ii) on-site boat-ramp surveys (including a state-wide Biological Survey and a Perth metropolitan Validation Survey); and (iii) remote Camera Surveys. The most recent (third) survey was undertaken from 1 September 2015 to 31 August 2016.

Estimates of the recreational catch and effort range at state-wide and bioregional levels from the fourth survey presented in Ryan *et al.* (2019¹) provide the data for the catch and effort by the recreational sector throughout this report.

The state-wide survey of boat-based recreational fishing has been repeated biennially between 2011/12 and 2017/18. The next statewide survey will commence in mid-2020. Methods to cost effectively monitor shore-based recreational fishing as part of the integrated survey are currently under development.

Stock Assessment Methodologies

Each of the stock assessment reports now clearly identifies what type of assessment method(s) have been used to determine the status of stocks. The specific methods used for monitoring and assessment vary among resources and indicator species and is influenced by many factors including; the level of ecological risk; the biology and the population dynamics of the relevant indicator species; the type, size and value of the fishery exploiting the species; data availability and historical level of monitoring. The methods therefore vary from the relatively simple analysis of catch levels and catch rates, through to more sophisticated analyses that involve sampling of the catch (fishing mortality), direct surveys up to highly complex age and/or size structured simulation models. These are categorised into five levels (Introduction Table 2).

INTRODUCTION TABLE 2

Levels and descriptions of the categories of assessment methods

Level	Description
Level 1	Catch data and biological/fishing vulnerability.
Level 2	Level 1 plus fishery-dependent effort.
Level 3	Levels 1 and/or 2 plus fishery-dependent biological sampling of landed catch (e.g. average size; fishing mortality, etc. estimated from representative samples).
Level 4	Levels 1, 2 or 3 plus fishery-independent surveys of relative abundance, exploitation rate, recruitment; or standardised fishery-dependent relative abundance data.
Level 5	Levels 1 to 3 and/or 4 plus outputs from integrated simulation, stock assessment model.

¹ Ryan KL, Hall NG, Lai EK, Smallwood CB, Tate A, Taylor SM, Wise BS 2019. Statewide survey of boat-based recreational fishing in Western Australia 2017/18. Fisheries

Research Report No. 297, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia.

While there are five different categories of quantitative analysis methodologies, all stock assessments undertaken by the Department now take a Weight of Evidence (WoE), Risk-based approach (Fletcher, 2015). This requires specifically considering each available line of evidence both individually and collectively to generate the most appropriate overall assessment conclusion. The lines of evidence include outputs that are generated from each available quantitative method, plus any qualitative lines of evidence such as biological and fishery information that describe the productivity and vulnerability of the species/stock and information from fishers, stakeholders and other sources. The strength of the WoE risk-based approach is that it explicitly shows which lines of evidence are consistent or inconsistent with a specific consequence level and therefore where there are uncertainties, which assists in determining the overall risk level and areas of further research (see also Fletcher, 2015).

Breeding Stock Status

The assessments of breeding stock for captured species are undertaken using a number of techniques (see above) to determine if the stock is considered to be at an adequate level or not. Stock status levels are defined as:

Sustainable-Adequate: reflects levels and structure of parental biomass for a stock where annual variability in recruitment of new individuals (recruits) to the stock is considered to be mostly a function of environmental effects on recruit survival, not the level of the egg production.

Sustainable-Recovering: reflects situations where the egg production has previously been depleted to unacceptable levels by fishing or some other event (e.g. marine heatwave) but is now considered to be recovering at an acceptable rate due to the implementation of effective management actions and/or natural processes.

Inadequate: The indicator(s) reflects that the stock status is (are) below the threshold or limit level(s) and management actions to support recovery have not yet been implemented, or the management actions are not yet confirmed as operating effectively to reasonably assume that they are generating a sufficient rate of recovery. This outcome includes situations where excessive fishing pressure (catch), or in combination with

some external event, has led to the breeding stock biomass falling to levels where there is now a high risk of future recruitment levels being measurably reduced. This is equivalent to MSC's point of recruitment impairment.

Environmentally Limited: This indicates situations where the stock is at unacceptable levels due primarily to environmentally driven impacts (e.g. marine heat wave impacts), not from fishing activities.

By-Catch and Listed Species

These last two categories include those species caught during a fishing operation that are not retained by the fishing operation. This covers the potential impact on unwanted 'bycatch' species and also any captures or interactions with listed species, which includes Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) species. In each case, an explanation is provided of the situation and the level of risk to the stock from fishing operations. This section does not include release of target species for reasons such as under size, over bag limits. These issues are covered in individual assessments of retained species.

Habitat and Ecosystem Effects

These two categories refer to the potential indirect impacts generated by the direct physical interactions of fishing gear with the sea floor and by the removal of fish from the ecosystem (food chain effects). Each fishery or resource is considered in terms of its potential/relative effects on habitat and the food chain with an outline of the assessment of current ecological risk ('negligible', 'low', 'moderate', 'high' or 'significant') provided. More details on the information used within these risk assessments will become available in the Resource Assessment Reports (RARs) being developed.

Social Effects

The Department has categorised the different level of social amenity generated by each aquatic asset. Note, by definition, there is no asset that has no social amenity (Introduction Table 3).

INTRODUCTION TABLE 3

Levels and descriptions of the categories of social amenity.

Social Amenity	Description
Level 1	No recreational fishing for the asset and no specific broader community interests.
Level 2	Some caught recreationally &/or some interest to specific sections of the community.
Level 3	Locally important to recreational sector &/or it has some importance to the broader community.
Level 4	Major catch by recreational sector in the region &/or generates major interest for some of the general community.
Level 5	Primary recreational target across the region &/or iconic for general community.

Economic Effects

The Department has categorised the different levels of Gross Value of Product (GVP) for commercial fisheries into six levels to measure their relative economic importance (Introduction Table 4). This provides a mechanism for reporting on all fisheries including those where the small number of operators would not allow specific values to be provided. It also covers situations where specific GVP values may not be available.

INTRODUCTION TABLE 4

Levels of relative economic importance

Economic Value	Description
Level 0	Nil
Level 1	< \$1 million
Level 2	\$1 – 5 million
Level 3	\$5 -10 million
Level 4	\$10 - 20 million
Level 5	> \$20 million

Governance Systems

Harvest Strategy

A Harvest Strategy Policy (DoF, 2015) for the aquatic resources of WA provides the framework for developing harvest strategies for each resource. Each harvest strategy establishes clear and specifically articulated reference levels and associated management actions designed to achieve each of the agreed objectives, both for the resource and all relevant fishery sectors.

To ensure a holistic and integrated approach, the Harvest Strategy Policy for WA not only covers target species abundance, it incorporates social and economic considerations including sectoral allocations plus the management of unacceptable risks to other ecological resources.

Annual Catch (or Effort) Tolerance Range

To minimise management interventions and provide greater certainty for when management adjustments may be required, a target catch or

effort range has been determined for each of the major commercial fisheries. This indicator provides an assessment of the success of the Department’s management plans and regulatory activities in keeping fish catches at appropriate levels (including those in a recovery phase). This identifies if the stock is being subjected to overfishing or not.

To calculate this range, as outlined in the Harvest Strategy Policy, a tolerance level establishes for each fishery what range of deviations in annual catch or effort is considered acceptable to meet stock based objectives and/or to meet any sectoral allocations (e.g. as developed by IFM determinations). These annual tolerances take into account natural variations in recruitment to a fished stock. Examination of tolerances will determine when a review and/or intervention is required.

The catch or effort for each major fishery is assessed annually and if catch or effort remains inside an acceptable range it is defined as having acceptable performance. Where annual catch or effort for a fishery/sector falls outside a range and the rise or fall cannot be adequately explained (e.g. environmentally-induced fluctuations in recruitment levels; low market demand or prices), a management review or additional research to assess the underlying cause may be required.

Annual catch tolerance range: For many commercial and recreational fisheries in WA, management plans seek to directly control the amount of fishing effort applied to stocks, with the level of catch taken providing an indication of the effectiveness of a plan. Where a plan is operating effectively, the catch by a fishery should fall within a projected catch tolerance range.

Annual effort tolerance range: For quota-managed fisheries, the measure of success for management arrangements is firstly that the majority of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) is achieved, but additionally, that it has been possible to take this catch using an acceptable amount of fishing effort.

If an unusually large (or smaller) expenditure of effort was expended to achieve a TAC, or an industry fails to achieve a TAC by a significant margin (i.e. outside of tolerance levels), this may

indicate that the abundance of a stock is significantly lower (or higher) than was anticipated. For these reasons, appropriate tolerance ranges of fishing effort required to achieve a TAC has also been incorporated for assessing the performance of quota-managed fisheries.

External Audits

Many of the State's significant fisheries achieved environmental certification for more than a decade under the Commonwealth Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Where relevant, this report includes specific performance measures required to meet any EPBC Act requirements. Similarly, the majority of the State's

most valuable fisheries have achieved MSC certification. This report provides a valuable input to the annual audit process for these fisheries.

External Factors

This refers to known factors outside of the direct control of fishery legislation which impact on aquatic resources or activities. An understanding of these factors, which are typically environmental (cyclones, ocean currents, climate change, changes in rainfall) but which may also include other factors (e.g. market factors, coastal development), is also necessary to interpret changes in catch and/or effort to fully assess the performance of a fishery.

OVERVIEW OF THE STATUS OF KEY ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES (ASSETS) ECOLOGICAL ASSETS

Captured Species (Fisheries and Stocks)

Annual Weight of Evidence (WOE) stock assessments, including analyses of trends in catch and fishing activity, are used each year to determine the status of each of the State’s aquatic resources and fisheries and are presented in detail in the rest of this document. This section provides an overview of the outcomes of the Department’s management systems by collectively examining the status of all the

commercial and recreational fisheries and harvested fish stocks in WA (Overview Table 1). The material presented in this section is based on the analyses and text presented in the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) section of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) Annual Report to Parliament 2020¹.

OVERVIEW TABLE 1

Breeding stock status, catch and effort ranges for WA’s major commercial and recreational fisheries. The information underpins the four KPIs measuring the effectiveness of the department’s management plans and regulatory activities in:

- ensuring the sustainability status of the State’s aquatic resources
- the success of keeping fish catches (or effort) at appropriate levels for
 - commercial and
 - recreational fisheries and
- ensuring that sustainably managed commercial fisheries provide benefits to the State as a result of significant local sales and export earnings from fish and fish products.

The term ‘sustainable’ is given where the breeding stocks are considered adequate as well as breeding stocks that are recovering. Terms ‘inadequate’ or ‘environmentally limited’ include where additional actions need to be taken or confirmation is required to ensure the breeding stocks are either adequate or are now recovering. The term ‘overfished’ is only given where breeding stocks are inadequate due to exploitation (i.e. overfishing) that have been identified but for which definitive management actions have yet to be fully implemented.

An acceptable catch or effort range may be determined for each of the major commercial and recreational fisheries. Commercial ranges ‘under revision’ or ‘under development’ are not assessed. Recreational ranges ‘not developed’ or ‘under revision’ are not assessed however ‘not formal’ ranges are assessed.

Acronyms:

- NA – Not applicable
- Q – Quota management
- TAC – Total Allowable Catch
- TACC – Total Allowable Commercial Catch
- TARC – Total Allowable Recreational Catch
- MSC – Certified by Marine Stewardship Council
- CI – Confidence Interval
- SE – standard error.

Assessment level (and method):

- Level 1 – Catch data and biological/fishing vulnerability
- Level 2 – Level 1 plus fishery-dependent effort
- Level 3 – Levels 1 and/or 2 plus fishery-dependent biological sampling of landed catch (e.g. average size, fishing mortality, etc. estimated from representative samples)
- Level 4 – Levels 1, 2 or 3 plus fishery-independent surveys of relative abundance, exploitation rate, recruitment
- Level 5 – Levels 1 to 3 and/or 4 plus outputs from integrated simulation, assessment model

¹ <https://www.dpird.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/DPIRD%20Annual%20Report%202020%20-%20PDF.pdf>

Resource	Fishery	Assessment level	Breeding stock assessment	Catch (and effort) range	Catch, effort and catch rate for season reported ^{1,2}	Catch (or effort or catch rate) level acceptable and explanation if needed
West Coast Bioregion						
Western Rock Lobster	West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery (MSC)	Annual: Level 5	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 6300t Recreational: 490t (TARC)	Commercial: 6,400t Recreational: 380-510t	Acceptable Commercial: Catch within TACC plus 1.5% water loss i.e. 6400 t Recreational: Catch within acceptable range. Review of estimation methods for recreational catch underway.
Statewide Abalone	Abalone (Roe's) Managed Fishery (MSC)	Annual: Level 4	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 65t (Q) (530-640 days) Recreational: 18-22t Perth Metro area	Commercial: 47t (420 days) Recreational: 24-28t Perth Metro area; 14t Other	Acceptable Commercial: Catch was below TACC due to low catches in regional areas resulting from economic and accessibility issues. Recreational: Perth Metro catch range above the acceptable range due to larger size of abalone taken, favourable weather conditions and a recovering stock.
Statewide Cephalopod	Octopus Interim Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 2	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 200-500t Recreational: Not developed	Commercial: 453t Recreational: 1t	Acceptable Commercial: Catch within acceptable range. The commercial fishery is in a planned expansion phase. Recreational: Catch levels are not considered a risk to stocks.
South Coast and West Coast Scallop	Abrolhos Islands and Mid-West Trawl Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 4	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 95-1830t Recreational: NA	Commercial: 796t	Acceptable Commercial: Catch within acceptable range. Recruitment in the Abrolhos Islands continued to be more widespread.
West Coast Estuarine and Nearshore Scalefish and Invertebrates	Cockburn Sound Crab Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 4	Inadequate (environmentally limited)	Commercial: Under revision Recreational: Under revision	Commercial: 0t Recreational: 0t	NA Cockburn Sound fishery closed since 2014. In 2019 recruitment and egg production remained below limit reference levels. Decline is consistent with an environmentally limited stock.
West Coast Estuarine and Nearshore Scalefish and Invertebrates	West Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery (Area 1 Swan Canning, Area 2 Peel Harvey (MSC), Area 3 Hardy Inlet)	Annual: Levels 1 and 2 Periodic: Level 3 – Sea mullet Underway	Sustainable: Adequate – crabs/ Sea mullet	Commercial: 45-105t (Peel Harvey crab) 46-166t (Peel Harvey finfish) Recreational: Not developed	Commercial: 66t (Peel Harvey crab) 121t (Peel Harvey finfish) 35t (other West Coast estuaries, crabs and finfish) Recreational: NA	Acceptable Commercial: Catch and catch rates within acceptable ranges. Recreational: Catch levels are not considered a risk to stocks.

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Resource	Fishery	Assessment level	Breeding stock assessment	Catch (and effort) range	Catch, effort and catch rate for season reported ^{1,2}	Catch (or effort or catch rate) level acceptable and explanation if needed
West Coast Estuarine and Nearshore Scalefish and Invertebrates	Cockburn Sound Fish Net Managed Fishery South West Beach Seine South West Coast Herring Managed Fishery	Annual: Levels 1 and 2 Periodic: Level 3 – Herring 2017	Sustainable: Adequate-Whiting/ Salmon/ Tailor Sustainable: Recovering–Herring Inadequate (environmentally limited) Whitebait/ Southern Garfish	Commercial: Under revision Recreational: Not developed	Commercial: 253t (Nearshore fisheries, total finfish) Recreational: 49-64t (95% CI, boat only in 17/18., top 10 species)	NA Metro Zone Garfish fishery closed in 2017. Declines in Garfish and Whitebait consistent with an environmentally limited stock. Review of acceptable catch ranges is required.
Statewide Small Pelagic Scalefish (Purse Seine)	West Coast Purse Seine Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 1	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 0–5700t (Q) Recreational: NA	Commercial: 527t (all species) Recreational: <1t	Acceptable Commercial: Catch was below quota
South Coast and West Coast Demersal Finfish	West Coast Demersal Scalefish Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 1 Periodic: Level 3 – 2017	Sustainable: Recovering	Commercial: ≤450t Recreational ≤250t	Commercial: 270t Recreational: 210–253t (95% CI, private boats in 17/18, top 15 species; 2017/18); charter 51t (2018/19)	Commercial: Acceptable Commercial: Demersal suite catch within range. Recreational: Not acceptable Recreational: Snapper and Balddchin groper catches were above recovery benchmarks. WA dhufish catches were at or above benchmarks.
Gascoyne Coast Bioregion						
Shark Bay Invertebrate	Shark Bay Prawn Managed Fishery (MSC)	Annual: Level 4	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 1350–2150t Recreational: NA	Commercial: 1214t	Acceptable Commercial: Brown tiger and western king prawn catches below the acceptable range due to lower recruitment levels. Additional management measures were implemented within the season to protect breeding stocks.
Northern Invertebrates	Exmouth Gulf Prawn Managed Fishery (MSC)	Annual: Level 4	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 471–1250t Recreational: NA	Commercial: 821t	Acceptable Commercial: All species were within their acceptable catch ranges.
Shark Bay Invertebrate	Shark Bay Scallop Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 4	Sustainable: Denham Sound: adequate Northern Shark Bay: inadequate (environmentally limited)	Commercial: Quota 1750t Recreational: NA	Commercial: 657t to end of December	Acceptable Quota season extended to 30 April. Commercial: Catch achieved to end of February from Denham Sound is estimated to be 1370t and that >90% of the total will be achieved. Northern Shark Bay closed to fishing due to recruitment below limit reference level. Decline is consistent with an environmentally limited stock and continues to be investigated.

Resource	Fishery	Assessment level	Breeding stock assessment	Catch (and effort) range	Catch, effort and catch rate for season reported ^{1,2}	Catch (or effort or catch rate) level acceptable and explanation if needed
Shark Bay Invertebrate	Shark Bay Crab Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 4	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 550t (Q) Recreational: Not developed	Commercial: 529t Recreational: 1–2t (95% CI, boat only in 17/18)	Acceptable Commercial: Catch within acceptable range. Spawning and recruitment levels have further increased under the current environmental conditions and harvest levels. Recreational: Catch levels are not considered a risk to stocks.
Gascoyne Nearshore Scalefish	Shark Bay Beach Seine and Mesh Net Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 2 Periodic: Level 3 Yellowfin whiting – 2014	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 235–335t Recreational: NA	Commercial: 175t	Acceptable Commercial: Catch below the acceptable range due to ongoing low levels of effort.
South Coast and West Coast Crustacean	West Coast Deep Sea Crustacean Managed Fishery (MSC)	Annual: Level 2	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: Class A: 154t (Q); Class B: 20t (Q); Class C: 1t (Q); 60,000–105,000 pot lifts Recreational: NA	Commercial: 155.7t Class A: 153t Class B: 2.2t Class C: 0.2t (86,000 pot lifts)	Acceptable Commercial: TAC achieved with effort within acceptable range. The standardised catch rate of retained legal crabs is within the acceptable range.
Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish	Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 2 Periodic: Level 5 Snapper – 2017	Sustainable: Recovering	Commercial: Snapper 51.4t (Q) Other demersals 227t (Q) Recreational: Not formal	Commercial: Snapper 33.2t Other demersals 139t Recreational: 82–110t (95% CI, boat only in 17/18, top 10 species)	Snapper: Acceptable Other demersals: Acceptable Snapper spawning biomass was around the limit level. Additional management action undertaken in 2018 including TACC reduction. Management for other demersals adequate.
Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish	Inner Shark Bay Demersal (Snapper)	Periodic: Level 5 2015	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 3.8t Eastern Gulf (EG), 3.8t Denham Sound (DS), 1.2t Freycinet Estuary (FE) Recreational: 11.2t EG, 11.2t DS, 3.8t FE	Commercial: 1t Charter: <1.t EG, 1.3t DS, 1.2t FE Recreational: 2.1t EG (95% CI 0.8–3.4t), 4.6t DS (95% CI 3.4–5.9t), 11.5t FE (95% CI 4.3–18.7t) (boat only, assumed same as in 2018)	Commercial: Incidental catch. Not considered a risk to stocks Recreational: Catch Not Acceptable in Freycinet.
North Coast Bioregion						
Northern Invertebrates	Onslow Prawn Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 1	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 60–180t Recreational: NA	Commercial: <60t	Acceptable Commercial: Low effort by one boat in 2019.
Northern Invertebrates	Nickol Bay Prawn Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 1	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 90–300t Recreational: NA	Commercial: 254t	Acceptable Commercial: Catch within acceptable range. Banana prawn catches higher than predicted.
Northern Invertebrates	Broome Prawn Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 1	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 55–260t Recreational: NA	Negligible	NA Commercial: Minimal fishing occurred in 2019.

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Resource	Fishery	Assessment level	Breeding stock assessment	Catch (and effort) range	Catch, effort and catch rate for season reported ^{1,2}	Catch (or effort or catch rate) level acceptable and explanation if needed
Northern Invertebrates	Kimberley Prawn Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 1	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 240–500t Recreational: NA	Commercial: 100t	Acceptable Commercial: Banana prawn catch well below acceptable and predicted range. Low effort in 2019.
Northern Estuarine and Nearshore Scalefish and Invertebrates	Kimberley Gillnet and Barramundi Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 2	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 33–44t (barramundi) Recreational: Not formal	Commercial: 47t (barramundi) 73t (total) Recreational: 15–26t (95% CI, boat only in 17/18, top 10 species)	Acceptable Commercial: Catch is above the acceptable range. The level of catch is lower than previous years, and is not considered a risk to stocks as the catch rate remains high. Recreational: Catch levels are not considered a risk to stocks.
Northern Demersal Scalefish	Northern Demersal Scalefish Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 2 Periodic: Level 5 – 2018	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 440–533t (goldband snapper) 121–154t (red emperor) Catch range review in progress Recreational: Not formal	Commercial: 1507t (total) 602t (goldband snapper – not including other jobfish) 192t (red emperor) Recreational: 63–88t (95% CI, boat only in 17/18, top 10 species)	Acceptable Commercial: Goldband snapper and red emperor catches are above their catch ranges. Catches will be monitored closely in 2020. See below for Pilbara Fish Trawl, and Pilbara Demersal Trap and Line catches. Recreational: Catch levels are not considered a risk to stocks. Recreational catches are combined for Kimberley and Pilbara.
Northern Demersal Scalefish	Pilbara Fish Trawl (Interim) Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 2, 3 Periodic: Level 5 – Underway	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: Sustainable (catch range review is ongoing as catches continue to increase following recent stock recovery) Recreational: NA	Commercial: 2142t	Acceptable Commercial: Catches are increasing as the demersal scalefish assemblage in the Pilbara region recovers following effort reductions.
Northern Demersal Scalefish	Pilbara Demersal Trap Managed Fishery and Pilbara Line Fishery	Annual: Level 2, 3 Periodic: Level 5 – Underway	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: Sustainable Catch range review is in progress following recent stock recovery Recreational: NA	Commercial: 680t (trap) 148t (line)	Acceptable Commercial: Catches are increasing as the demersal scalefish assemblage in the Pilbara region recovers following effort reductions.
Statewide Large Pelagic Scalefish	Mackerel Managed Fishery	Annual: Level 2	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 246–430t (Q, Spanish Mackerel) Recreational: Not formal	Commercial: 291t Recreational: 87–121t (95% CI, boat only in 17/18, top 10 species)	Acceptable Commercial: The Spanish mackerel catch is within tolerance range due to increased effort in 2019. Nominal catch rates declined in each area. Recreational: Catch levels are not considered a risk to stocks.

Resource	Fishery	Assessment level	Breeding stock assessment	Catch (and effort) range	Catch, effort and catch rate for season reported ^{1,2}	Catch (or effort or catch rate) level acceptable and explanation if needed
Northern Shark	Northern Shark Fishery	No assessment	NA	<20t (sandbar)	0	NA No fishing since 2008/09.
Pearl Oyster (P. maxima)	Pearl Oyster Wildstock Fishery	Annual: Level 4	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 694,640 oysters (Q) (14,071–20,551 dive hours) Recreational: NA	Commercial: 611,816 oysters (14,022 dive hours)	Acceptable Commercial: Catch below quota as MOP component was not fully utilised. Catch rates increased from 2018 to 2019. Abundance predicted to increase slightly in 2020.
Statewide Hand Collection	Western Australian Sea Cucumber Fishery	Annual: Level 2	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: Sandfish (Kimberley) 0–100t Sandfish (Pilbara) 0–80t Redfish 0–150t Recreational: NA	Commercial: Sandfish (Kimberley): 0t Sandfish (Pilbara): 2t Redfish: 5t	Acceptable Commercial: Catches within acceptable ranges. Limited fishing due to due to planned rotational harvest schedule by industry.
South Coast Bioregion						
South Coast and West Coast Crustacean	South Coast Crustacean Managed Fishery (includes old Windy Harbour, Augusta Fishery)	Annual: Level 2	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 50–80t (southern rock lobster) Recreational: NA	Commercial: 23t (southern rock lobster)	Not Acceptable Commercial: Catch below acceptable range. Southern rock lobster stock indicator is below in Zone 3 (Esperance) and above the threshold reference level Zone 4 (Bight). Both indicators are above the limit reference level. Recreational: Catch levels are not considered a risk to stocks.
Statewide Abalone	Abalone (Greenlip/Brownlip) Managed Fishery (MSC)	Annual: Level 3	Inadequate	Commercial: 62t (Q) (3440–5270 hours) Recreational: Not formal	Commercial: 50t (1970 hours) Recreational: 8t	Not Acceptable Commercial: Catch below TACC due to commercial industry decisions. Greenlip abalone stock indicator below threshold reference level for Area 2 and open regions of Area 3. TACC reduced to 54t and spatial closures in Area 3 for the 2020 season (Greenlip abalone TACC at 22% of long-term levels). Recreational: Catch levels are not considered a risk to stocks.

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Resource	Fishery	Assessment level	Breeding stock assessment	Catch (and effort) range	Catch, effort and catch rate for season reported ^{1,2}	Catch (or effort or catch rate) level acceptable and explanation if needed
South Coast Estuarine and Nearshore Scalefish and Invertebrates	South Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery South Coast Salmon Managed Fishery South Coast Nearshore Open Access Net Fishery	Annual: Levels 1 and 2. Periodic: Levels 3 and 4 Salmon – 2017 Cobbler – 2018	Sustainable: Recovering–Cobbler in Wilson Inlet Sustainable: Adequate – Salmon/ Mullet/ Bream	Commercial: Under revision Recreational: Not developed	Commercial: 213t (South Coast estuaries, total fish and crabs) 76t (South Coast nearshore, total fish and crabs) Recreational: finfish 17–35t (95% CI, boat only in 17/18, top 10 species)	NA Commercial: Wilson Inlet Cobbler catch under review. Low Salmon catch due to low effort from limited market demand. Recreational: Catch levels are not considered a risk to stocks.
Statewide Small Pelagic Scalefish (Purse Seine)	Albany/King George Sound Purse Seine	Annual: Level 1	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 2683t (Q) Recreational: NA	Commercial: 656t	Acceptable Commercial: Catch below conservatively set quota.
Statewide Small Pelagic Scalefish (Purse Seine)	Bremer Bay and Esperance Purse Seine	Annual: Level 1	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 3000t (Q) Combined Recreational: NA	Commercial: 407t	Acceptable Commercial: Catch below conservatively set quota.
South Coast and West Coast Demersal Finfish	Temperate Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Joint Authority Southern Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Fishery	Annual: Level 1 Periodic: Gummy and whisky: Level 5 – 2017 Dusky and sandbar: Level 4 – 2017	Sustainable: Adequate–Gummy and whisky Sustainable: Recovering–Dusky and sandbar	Commercial: shark 725–1095t Recreational: NA	Commercial: 712t (key species only) 838t (total sharks and rays)	Acceptable Commercial: Catch of the key shark species and the catch of the total shark and ray species is within acceptable catch ranges.
South Coast and West Coast Demersal Finfish	South Coast Demersal Scalefish	Annual: Level 1 Periodic: Level 3 – 2014	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: Under development Recreational: Not formal	Commercial: 224t Recreational: 59-77t (95% CI, boat only in 17/18, top 10 species)	Acceptable Current commercial and recreational catch levels are at acceptable levels.
Northern Inland Bioregion						
Northern Inland Freshwater Scalefish and Invertebrates	Lake Argyle Silver Cobbler Fishery	Annual: Level 1	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: 93–180t Recreational: NA	Commercial: 69t	Acceptable Commercial: Catch is below acceptable level due to reduced effort.
Southern Inland Bioregion						
South and West Coast Inland Freshwater Resource	South West Recreational Freshwater Angling Fishery Recreational Marron Fishery	Annual: Level 1	Sustainable: Adequate	Commercial: NA Recreational: 50,000–100,000 (marron) 50,000–120,000 (fish)	66,619 marron (± 4,972se) 89,174 fish (±7751se)	Acceptable Catch within acceptable range since 2003. Review of acceptable catch ranges is required.

1. Commercial and recreational catch figures supplied for latest year/ season available.

2. Where there are three or less licences operating in the fishery, annual catch levels are not reported due to confidentiality requirements.

The proportion of fish stocks identified as not being at risk or vulnerable through exploitation.

The Department undertakes annual stock assessments of fisheries that are subject to management. These assessments, together with trends in catch and fishing activity, have been used to determine the sustainability status of the State's most significant commercial and recreational fisheries

Performance is measured as the proportion of fisheries (that have sufficient data) for which the breeding stocks of each of the major target or indicator species are:

- being maintained at levels that ensure catches can be sustained at desirable levels given effort levels and normal environmental conditions; or
- recovering from a depleted state at an appropriate rate following management intervention.

The department's 2019/20 target for the proportion of fish stocks not at risk from fishing is 97%.

For the 2019/20 performance review, 48 resource and fishery combinations were reviewed. For the 48 reviewed, breeding stock assessments are available for 47 (98%) of these fisheries. For one fishery, northern shark, there is insufficient data to

make an assessment on the resource due to the fishery having not operated since 2009.

Within the group of 47 assessed, 38 were considered to have adequate breeding stock levels and a further 5 fisheries (the South West Coast Herring Managed Fishery, the South Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery, the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Fishery [WCDSF], the Temperate Demersal Gillnet Demersal Longline Fishery [TDGDLF] and the Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish) had breeding stocks considered to be recovering at acceptable rates. The WCDSF and TDGDLF target relatively long-lived species so recovery is expected to take decades to complete.

Of the 4 remaining fisheries, the Cockburn Sound Crab Managed Fishery, the West Coast Beach Bait Fishery and the Shark Bay Scallop Managed Fishery continue to be environmentally limited with stocks recovering from the 2010/11 marine heat wave. Therefore, only one fishery has a single stock that is considered inadequate as a result of exploitation (greenlip abalone in Abalone Managed Fishery) with management actions implemented to assist stock recovery.

Consequently, for the 2018/19 reporting period, the proportion of the 46 assessed groups identified as not being at risk or vulnerable through exploitation is 98%, which is above the target level (Overview tables 2 and 3). The Department considers it has met this performance indicator.

OVERVIEW TABLE 2:

Proportion of fish stocks identified as not being at risk or vulnerable through exploitation

	2019/20 Target (%)	2019/20 Actual (%)
Proportion of fish stocks identified as not being at risk or vulnerable through exploitation	97	98

OVERVIEW TABLE 3:

Historic data on the proportion of fish stocks identified as not being at risk or vulnerable through exploitation

Year	Target (%)	Actual (%)
2008/09	82	86
2009/10	85	89
2010/11	83	94
2011/12	86	94
2012/13	91	97
2013/14	94	97
2014/15	94	97
2015/16	97	95
2016/17	97	95
2017/18	97	97
2018/19	95	98

OVERVIEW

The proportion of commercial and recreational fisheries where acceptable catches (or effort levels) are achieved.

The Department is continuing to implement an Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) approach where the aggregate effects of all fishing sectors are taken into account. This involves the use of a framework in which decisions on optimum resource use (i.e. allocation and reallocation of fish resources) are determined and implemented within a total sustainable catch for each fishery or fished stock.

This indicator provides an assessment of the success of the department's management plans and regulatory activities in keeping fish catches at appropriate levels (including those in a recovery phase). Recreational and commercial catch values are for the latest year/season available.

An acceptable catch or effort range is being determined for each of the major recreational fisheries by the department since 2013/14. For most of the commercial fisheries in WA, each management plan seeks to directly control the amount of fishing effort applied to stocks, with the level of catch taken providing an indication of the effectiveness of the plan.

For quota-managed fisheries, the measure of success of management arrangements is that the majority of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) is achieved and that it has been possible to take this catch using an acceptable amount of fishing effort. If an unusually large expenditure of effort is needed to take the TAC, or fails to achieve the TAC by a significant margin, this may indicate that the abundance of the stock is significantly lower than anticipated.

For these reasons, an appropriate range of fishing effort to take a TAC has also been incorporated for assessing the performance of quota-managed fisheries.

Where management is operating effectively, annual catches by each fishery should vary within a projected range. The extent of this range reflects the degree to which normal environmental variations affect the recruitment of juveniles to the stock that cannot be 'controlled' by fishery management. Additional factors may result in ongoing changes to the amount of effort expended in a fishery, which will in turn influence the appropriateness of acceptable catch ranges for individual fisheries.

An acceptable catch or effort range has been determined for each of the major recreational and commercial fisheries. The Department's 2019/20 target is 90%.

For the purpose of this indicator, of the 48 resource and fishery combinations, comparisons between actual catches (or effort) with acceptable ranges have been undertaken for 30 commercial fisheries and an additional 16 have been identified as having a 'material' recreational catch share. There is still a relatively high number of fisheries not assessed due to a combination of ongoing environmentally induced stock issues in some regions (see above) or poor economic conditions with fisheries either closed or not having material levels of catches during this reporting period. Over time, the indicator may need to expand to include reference to fisheries or stocks for which there are other 'material' sectoral shares (e.g. customary fishing).

Of the 16 recreational fisheries, only six currently have formal acceptable catch ranges developed and another 10 were assessed based on current resource sustainability. Of these fisheries, the data from the 2017/18 statewide survey of boat-based recreational fishing had catch estimate levels for 14 that were within acceptable catch ranges and two that exceeded the acceptable catch range. These were baldchin groper and pink snapper which exceeded the acceptable catch range of the recreational sector within the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Fishery and pink snapper which exceeded the recreational catch range within Inner Shark Bay.

Of the 30 commercial fisheries, 12 were primarily catch-quota managed with 18 subject to effort-control management. Of the 12 individually transferable catch-quota managed fisheries, 4 operated within their acceptable effort/catch ranges and 7 were acceptably below the range. One was unacceptably below (greenlip abalone) its effort/catch range. In the 18 effort-controlled fisheries, 10 were within, 2 were above, 5 were acceptably below and 1 was unacceptably below (southern rock lobster in the South Coast Crustacean Managed Fishery) their catch ranges. Catch/effort above or below their acceptable ranges were determined acceptable due to adequate resource sustainability.

In summary, 14 of the 16 recreational fisheries and 28 of the 30 commercial fisheries or overall 42 of the 46 fisheries assessed were considered to have met their performance criteria. Consequently, for the 2019/20 reporting period, the percentage of fisheries where acceptable catches are achieved is 91%, which exceeds the target level (Overview tables 4 and 5). The department considers it has met this performance indicator.

OVERVIEW TABLE 4:

The proportion of commercial and recreational fisheries where catches or effort levels are achieved.

	2019/20 Target (%)	2019/20 Actual (%)
The proportion of commercial and recreational fisheries where catches (or effort levels) are acceptable	90	91

OVERVIEW TABLE 5

Historic data on the proportion of commercial and recreational fisheries where catches (or effort levels) are achieved

Year	Commercial Target (%)	Commercial Actual (%)	Recreational Target (%)	Recreational Actual (%)	Overall Target (%)	Overall Actual (%)
2008/09	85	96				
2009/10	90	93				
2010/11	90	94				
2011/12	94	100				
2012/13	88	97				
2013/14	92	89	80	77		
2014/15	95	89	80	85		
2015/16	95	90	80	100		
2016/17	95	93	85	100		
2017/18	95	93	85	92		
2018/19		100		88	90	96

Listed species

In accordance with EBFM principles, risk-based assessment of the impact of commercial and recreational fishing activities on listed fish and non-fish species is undertaken. Specific detail may again be found within each bioregional risk assessment of ecological assets. Risks associated with interactions with listed species were generally assessed as being negligible to low with the exception of risks to mammals (dolphins) resulting from the Pilbara trawl fishery. Dolphin exclusion devices have subsequently reduced the incidence to acceptable levels. Risks associated with birds and mammals (sea lions) in the South Coast Bioregion were also assessed as moderate and appropriate management measures continue to be undertaken to mitigate these risks. The level of entanglements of whales in pot ropes has successfully been reduced following completion of research that, in collaboration with industry, identified appropriate and practical mitigation techniques¹.

Ecosystems and Habitats

A range of monitoring tools is used to assess the condition of ecosystems and associated biodiversity within the context of Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management. Detailed

assessments of risk to the structure and benthic habitat of specific ecosystems can be found within each bioregional chapter. Across the marine bioregions, risks to benthic habitat and ecosystem structure and biodiversity have been generally assessed as ranging from negligible to moderate. The exceptions to this are the estuarine ecosystems of the West Coast Bioregion which are identified as being at significant risk due to pressures from external (non-fishing) pressures largely associated with deteriorating water quality.

EXTERNAL IMPACTS

Environmental fluctuations and perturbations can influence aquatic resource status. While beyond the control of fishery management, monitoring and analysing trends in environmental variables (e.g. temperature) and correlations with fish stock dynamics (e.g. recruitment) are important to the ongoing monitoring and assessment of fishery resources and advice to managers. Similarly, the effects of climate change on fishery resources are being investigated and monitored as part of the inputs to fishery management advice.

Monitoring and analysing environmental data is undertaken by DPIRD staff in collaborations with a

¹ How *et al.*, (2015) Effectiveness of mitigation measures to reduce interactions between commercial fishing gear and whales. FRDC Project 2013/037 Fisheries Research Report, WA. 267.

OVERVIEW

range of other research groups (e.g. Universities, CSIRO, etc.).

DPIRD is the lead State government agency responsible for the management of aquatic and terrestrial biosecurity in Western Australia. Aquatic biosecurity threats include disease outbreaks in wild and farmed fish and the

introduction of marine and freshwater pest species that are not native to WA. Statewide Biosecurity in marine and terrestrial systems is now managed under the Sustainability and Biosecurity Pillar in DPIRD. This Pillar is also responsible for coordinating the fish kill response program within the State.

WEST COAST BIOREGION

ABOUT THE BIOREGION

The marine environment of the West Coast Bioregion between Kalbarri and Augusta is predominantly a temperate oceanic zone. However, it is heavily influenced by the Leeuwin Current, which transports warm tropical water southward along the edge of the continental shelf. The Integrated Marine and Coastal Regionalisation for Australia (IMCRA V 4.0) scheme divides this Bioregion into three meso-scale regions: Abrolhos Islands, Central West Coast and Leeuwin-Naturaliste (West Coast Overview Figure 1).

Most of the fish stocks of the region are temperate, in keeping with the coastal water temperatures that range from 18° C to about 24° C. The Leeuwin Current is also responsible for the existence of the Abrolhos Islands coral reefs at latitude 29° S and the extended southward distribution of many tropical species along the West Coast and even into the South Coast. Some species have appeared to form self-sustaining populations in this Bioregion.

The Leeuwin Current system, which can be up to several hundred kilometres wide along the West Coast, flows most strongly in autumn/winter (April to August) and has its origins in ocean flows from the Pacific through the Indonesian archipelago. The current is variable in strength from year-to-year, typically flowing at speeds around 1 knot, but has been recorded at 3 knots on occasions. The annual variability in current strength is reflected in variations in Fremantle sea levels, and is related to *El Niño* or Southern Oscillation events in the Pacific Ocean.

Weaker counter-currents on the continental shelf (shoreward of the Leeuwin Current), such as the Capes Current that flows northward from Cape Leeuwin as far as Shark Bay, occur during summer and influence the distribution of many of the coastal finfish species.

The most significant impact of the clear, warm, low-nutrient waters of the Leeuwin Current is on the growth and distribution of the temperate

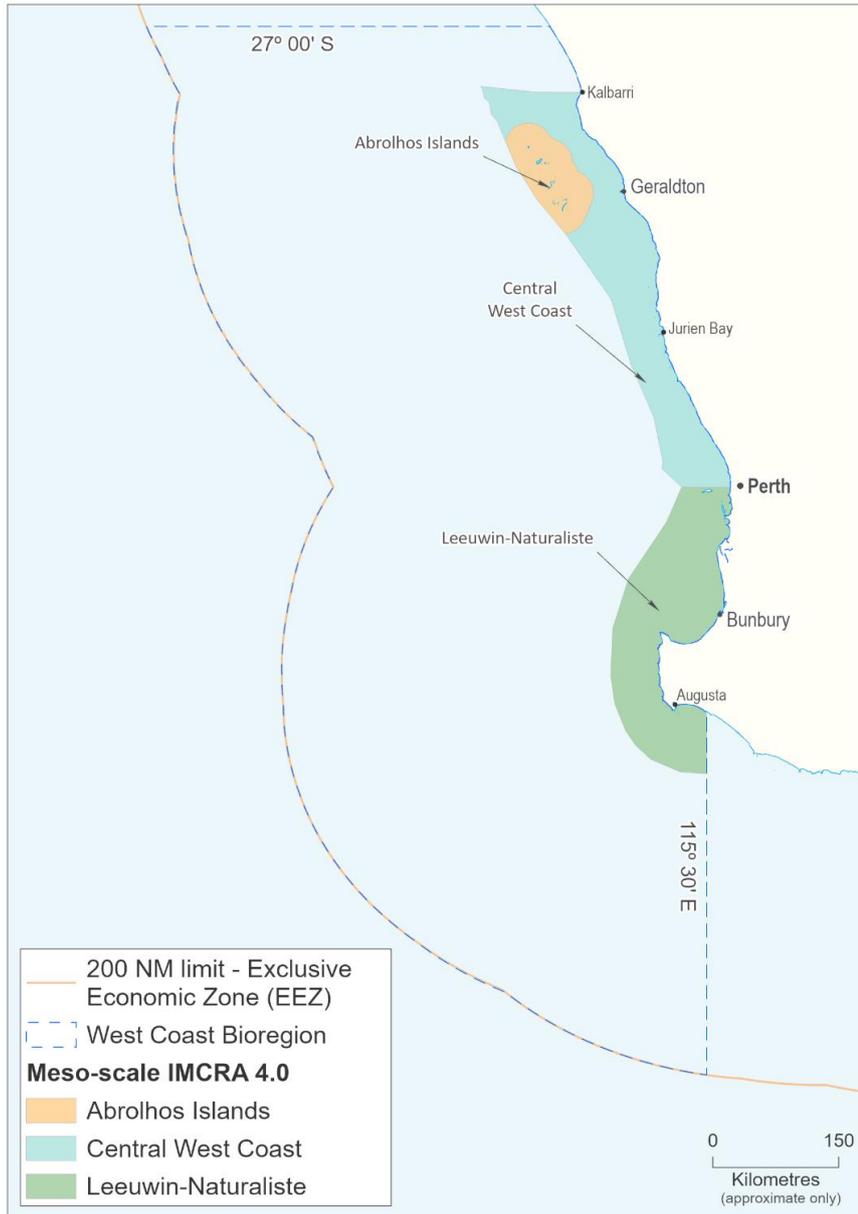
seagrasses. These form extensive meadows in protected coastal waters of the West Coast Bioregion, generally in depths of less than 20 m (but up to 30 m), and act as major nursery areas for many fish species and particularly for the western rock lobster stock.

The West Coast is characterised by exposed sandy beaches and a limestone reef system that creates surface reef lines, often about 5 kilometres off the coast. Further offshore, the continental shelf habitats are typically composed of coarse sand interspersed with low limestone reef associated with old shorelines. There are few areas of protected water along the west coast, the exceptions being within the Abrolhos Islands, the leeward sides of some small islands off the Midwest Coast, plus behind Rottnest and Garden Islands in the Perth metropolitan area.

The two significant marine embayments in the West Coast are Cockburn Sound and Geographe Bay. Along the West Coast, there are 4 significant estuarine systems – the Swan/Canning, Peel/Harvey and Leschenault estuaries and Hardy Inlet (Blackwood estuary). All of these are permanently open to the sea and form an extension of the marine environment except when freshwater run-off displaces the oceanic water for a short period in winter and spring.

Southward of Cape Naturaliste, the coastline changes from limestone to predominantly granite and becomes more exposed to the influences of the Southern Ocean.

The ecosystem boundaries as defined by IMCRA (V 4.0) in the bioregion are depicted in West Coast Overview Figure 1. The potential threats and risks to these ecosystems are often similar. For simplicity, risk ratings were allocated by grouping the ecosystems into two broad groups, estuarine or marine. However, if a particular ecosystem is unique and/or is exposed to different or significant threats, risk was allocated to these ecosystems separately.



WEST COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 1.
 Map showing the three main IMCRA (V4.0) ecosystems in the West Coast Bioregion: Abrolhos Is.; Central West Coast and the Leeuwin-Naturaliste.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES POTENTIALLY IMPACTING THE BIOREGION

Climate Change

Some of the key environmental trends that may be affecting ecosystems in WA include:

- Increasing frequency of El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events;
- More years with a weaker Leeuwin Current;
- Increases in water temperature off the west coast of WA, particularly the lower west coast;
- Increase in salinity, which includes some large annual fluctuations;

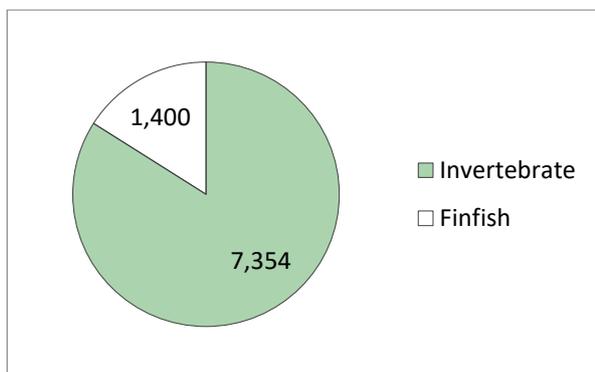
- Change in the frequency and location of storms (and rainfall) affecting the lower west coast; and
- Change in the frequency of cyclones (and summer rainfall) affecting the west coast.

The West Coast Bioregion is predicted to be at enhanced risk from the effects of climate given that it spans a transitional zone between tropical and temperate regions. The variables expected to drive climate change impacts include changes in water temperature, ocean currents, winds, rainfall, sea level, ocean chemistry and extreme weather conditions.

It is apparent that climate change will impact the biological, economic, and social aspects of many fisheries, and both positive and negative impacts are expected. Climate change can influence biological systems by modifying the timing of spawning, range and distribution, composition and interactions within communities, exotic species invasions and impacts, and the structure and dynamics of communities, including changes in productivity. Species distribution shifts are the most commonly reported changes and are often the easiest to recognise and measure. Changes in the distribution of key species are monitored in a national citizen-science program (www.redmap.org.au) in which the Department is a collaborator.

Commercial Fishing

The principal commercial fishery in this region is the western rock lobster fishery, which is Australia's most valuable single-species wild capture fishery. There are also significant commercial fisheries for other invertebrates including scallops, abalone, blue swimmer crabs and octopus that use trawl, diving and potting methods. Commercial fishers also take a range of finfish species including sharks, West Australian dhufish, snapper, baldchin groper and emperors using demersal line and net methods. Beach-based methods such as beach seining and near-shore gillnetting, and hand-hauled nets are used to capture whitebait, mullet and whiting in a very restricted number of locations.

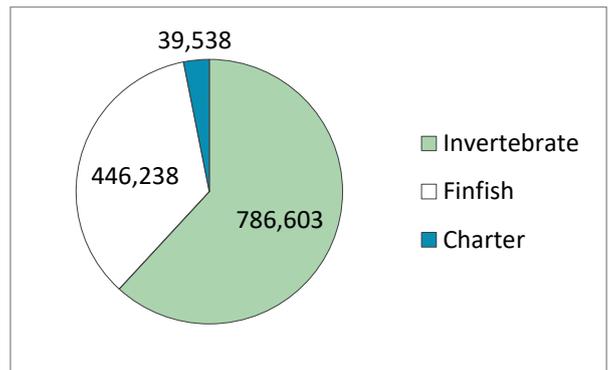


WEST COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 2

Contribution of finfish and invertebrates to the total commercial wild fishery catch originating from the West Coast Bioregion. Numbers represent total catch (in tonnes) based on all major assessed fisheries identified in the Overview section of this report (see Overview Table 7).

Recreational Fishing

The West Coast Bioregion, which contains the state's major population centres, is the most heavily used bioregion for recreational fishing (including charter based fishing). The range of recreational fishing opportunities includes estuarine fishing (both shore- and boat-based), beach fishing and boat fishing either in embayments or offshore for demersal and pelagic/game species often around islands and out to the edge of the continental shelf.



WEST COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 3

Recreational catches (by number) in the West Coast Bioregion. Finfish and invertebrate catches were as assessed in the statewide survey of boat-based recreational fishing in 2017/18¹. Charter boat catch is for the same period. Estimates of shore based recreational catch are unavailable.

Aquaculture

The principal aquaculture development activities in the West Coast Bioregion are the production of blue mussels (*Mytilus galloprovincialis*), marine algae (*Dunaliella salina*) for beta-carotene production and the emerging black pearl industry based on the production of *Pinctada margaritifera* at the Abrolhos Islands. The main mussel farming area is in southern Cockburn Sound, where conditions are sheltered and the nutrient and planktonic food levels are sufficient to promote good growth rates. Owing to the generally low productivity of the Western Australian coastline under the influence of the Leeuwin Current, areas outside embayments (where nutrient levels are enhanced) are unsuitable for bivalve aquaculture. Initiatives to expand the number of aquaculture sectors in this bioregion currently include those for octopus, live rock/coral and finfish. Further, the Department has established a Mid-West Aquaculture Development Zone which aims to provide a platform to stimulate aquaculture investment and development in the bioregion.

¹ Ryan KL, Hall NG, Lai EK, Smallwood CB, Tate A, Taylor SM, Wise BS 2019. Statewide survey of boat-based recreational fishing in Western Australia 2017/18. Fisheries

Research Report No. 297, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia.

Tourism

The State capital, Perth, is the principal gateway for more than two million visitors to Western Australia each year (normally) and a major international transit point for travellers arriving in Australia from Europe and Asia. The south-west of the state is also an important tourism destination for international and interstate visitors, as well as for Western Australian residents. Beach-going is among the most popular leisure activities for tourists in the West Coast Bioregion. Surfing, fishing, SCUBA diving and snorkelling, windsurfing, whale watching and other marine wildlife experiences are also popular tourist activities.

Shipping and Maritime Activity

The West Coast Bioregion contains several major port facilities, including the State's busiest general cargo port (Fremantle), as well as the Royal Australian Navy's largest base (HMAS Stirling) on Garden Island. In addition to handling most of Western Australia's container trade, significant quantities of non-containerised cargo pass through Fremantle, including: motor vehicles, steel and machinery imports, livestock exports and bulk commodities, such as petroleum, grain, alumina, iron ore, mineral sands, fertilisers and sulphur. Two other major commercial ports at Bunbury and Geraldton, primarily export iron ore, grain, mineral sands and alumina. In addition to commercial and naval shipping, international cruise ship visitations have increased to record levels in recent years and some cruise liners are now home-based in Fremantle.

Major shipbuilding, repair, maintenance and offshore construction support industries are also located at Henderson in the north-eastern corner of Cockburn Sound. Collectively, these enterprises directly employ over 2,000 people, indirectly support thousands of more jobs and generate significant economic activity.

There are a number of smaller ports (e.g. Augusta, Busselton) and a large number of public boat ramps and marinas in the Bioregion.

Other Activities

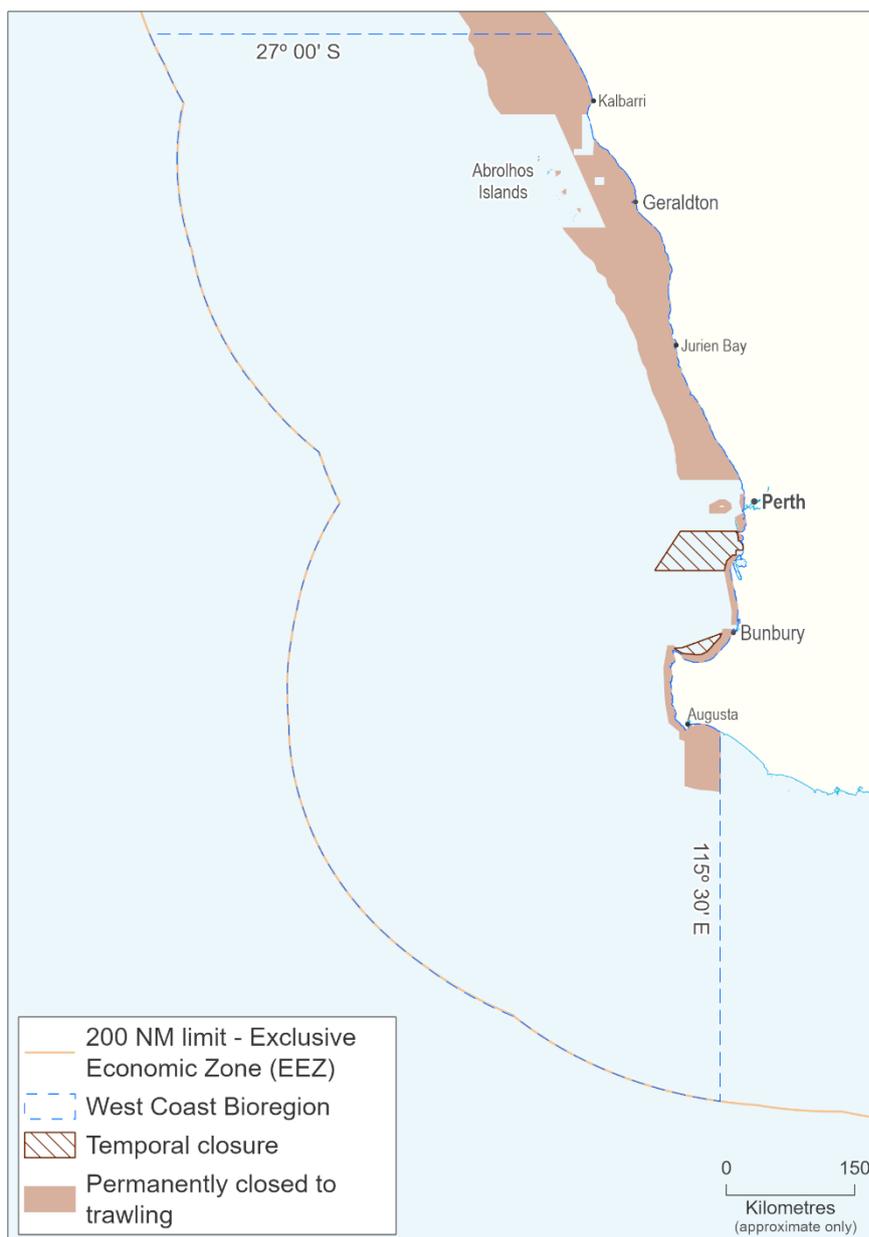
High rates of population growth and boat ownership in Western Australia have strained recreational boating facilities around major population centres, particularly in the Perth metropolitan region. New and upgraded marinas and boat launching facilities have been completed or are planned to accommodate this demand. In addition, major coastal infrastructure developments have been planned for an outer deep-water harbour at Fremantle and for a deep-water iron-ore port at Oakajee, 24 km north of Geraldton. Two large desalination plants at Kwinana and Binningup (22km North of Bunbury), which supply approximately half of Perth's freshwater requirements, also operate in the bioregion. Plans have commenced to develop two additional desalination plants in the metropolitan region, which may develop if population grows and water demands increase.

BIOREGIONAL SPECIFIC ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Within each Bioregion there are a range of management measures that have been implemented to manage the potential impact of activities. Management measures specific to the West Coast Bioregion include:

Spatial Closures

The marine benthic habitats and their associated biodiversity along most of the West Coast are largely protected from any physical impact of commercial fishing due to the extensive closures to trawling. These closures inside 200 m depth were introduced in the 1970s and 1980s, in recognition of the significance of extensive areas of seagrass and reef as fish habitat (West Coast Overview Figure 4). Demersal gillnet and longline fishing was also prohibited from waters inside the 250 m isobath between 31° and 33° South from November 2007. The extent of these areas means that most of the West Coast Bioregion inside 200 m depth can be classified as one of the marine protected area IUCN categories (West Coast Overview Table 1).



WEST COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 4

Map showing areas of permanent and extended seasonal closures to trawl fishing in the West Coast Bioregion. The areas permanently closed are consistent with IUCN marine protected area category IV.

WEST COAST OVERVIEW TABLE 1

The areas and proportions of the West Coast Bioregion making up State Waters and all continental shelf waters, out to 200 m depth, which meet the IUCN criteria for classification as marine protected areas. This table does not yet include the closures that may be implemented by the Commonwealth as part of their marine planning zones (see next Figure).

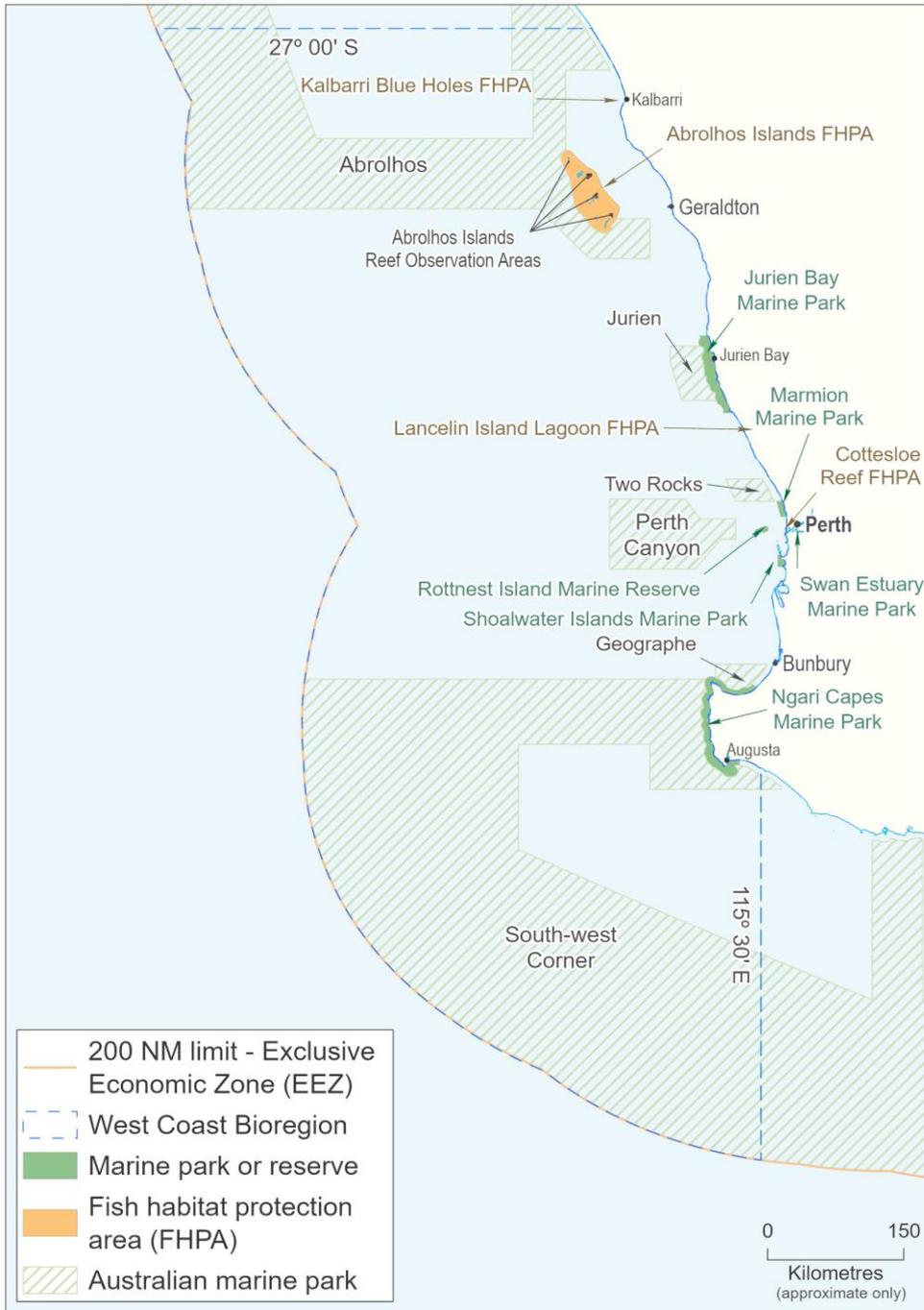
IUCN category or equivalent	State Waters only (10,088 km ²)		Existing MPA		All Waters (481,488 km ² (including State Waters))		Existing MPA	
	Fisheries km ²	%	km ²	%	Fisheries km ²	%	km ²	%
I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
II	1	< 1	171	2	1	< 1	171	< 1
III	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IV	4,500	44	1,900	19	33,600	7	1,900	< 1
V	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VI	3,400	34	116	1	445,700	93	116	< 1

WEST COAST BIOREGION

Protection of fish habitat and biodiversity is also provided by marine protected areas consistent with IUCN categories of I, II and III along the West Coast including: Fish Habitat Protection Areas (FHPAs) at the Abrolhos Islands, Lancelin Island Lagoon, Cottesloe Reef, and Kalbarri Blueholes; Reef Observation Areas within the Abrolhos Islands FHPA and closures to fishing under Section 43 of the *Fish Resources Management Act* 1994 at Yallingup Reef, Cowaramup Bay, the Busselton Underwater Observatory and around the wrecks of the *Saxon Ranger* (Shoalwater Bay), *HMAS Swan* (Geographe Bay) and *Lena* (Off Bunbury). In addition, marine conservation

areas proclaimed under the *Conservation and Land Management Act* 1984 exist at Jurien Bay, Marmion, Swan Estuary, Shoalwater Islands, and Ngari Capes Marine Park between Cape Leeuwin and Cape Naturaliste and the Rottneest Island Marine Reserve. (West Coast Overview Figure 5).

The Commonwealth Government has also implemented its Marine Bioregional Plans for Commonwealth waters between Kangaroo Island (South Australia) and Shark Bay, which includes a number of marine Protected Areas (West Coast Overview Figure 5).



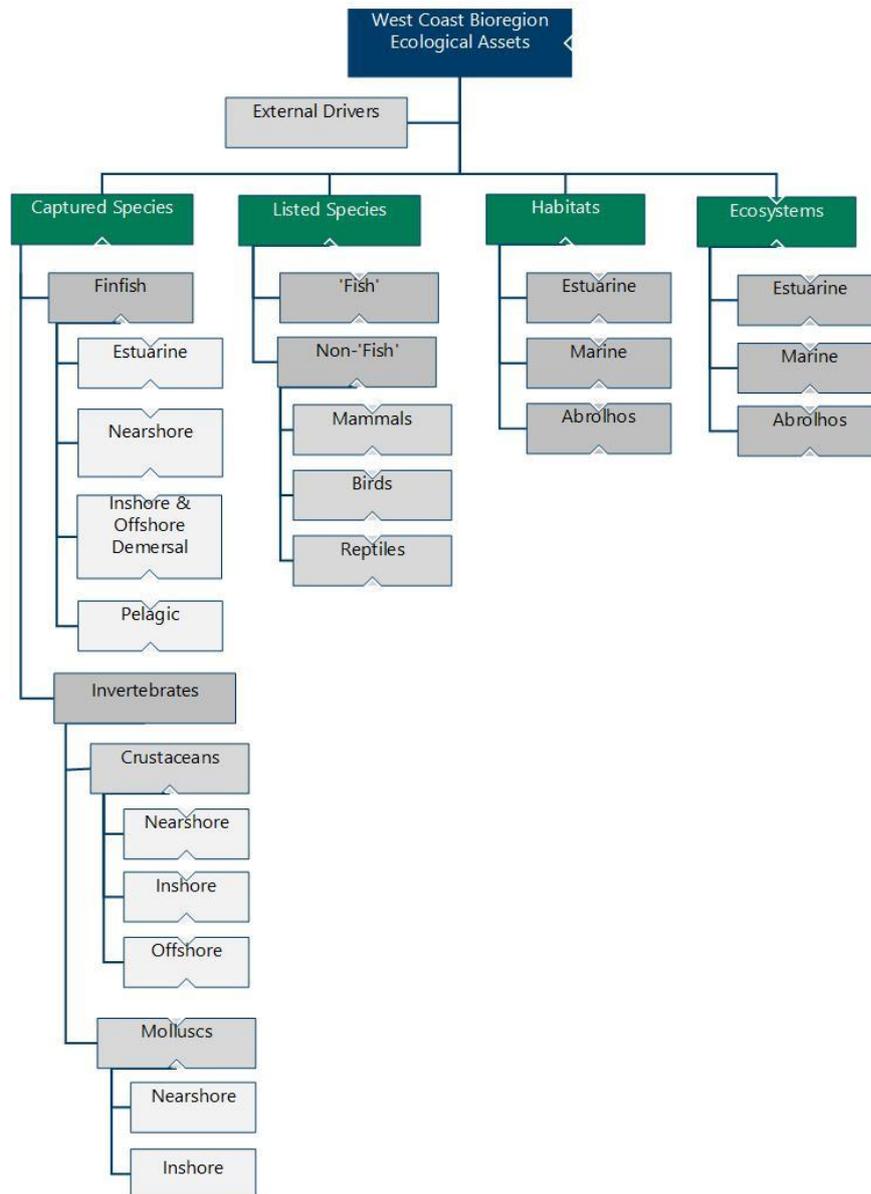
WEST COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 5

Map showing current and proposed formal marine protected areas in the West Coast Bioregion.

ECOSYSTEM MONITORING AND STATUS

In order to assess the adequacy of management arrangements aimed at ensuring sustainability of the ecological assets within the West Coast Bioregion, the Department must identify and monitor trends in the condition of these resources. This is achieved through application of an Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) framework (Fletcher *et al.*, 2010 – see How to use

this Volume for more information) to identify, in a hierarchical manner, the key ecological resources that require ongoing monitoring and assessment. These key ecological assets identified for the West Bioregion are identified in West Coast Ecosystem Management Figure 6 and their current risk status reported on in the following sections.



WEST COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 6

Component tree showing the ecological assets identified and separately assessed for the West Coast Bioregion.

External Drivers

External drivers include factors impacting at the bioregional-level that are likely to affect the ecosystem as a whole and may not fall within the direct control of Fishery legislation (e.g. climate change). An understanding of these factors, which are typically environmental (e.g. ocean currents),

is necessary to fully assess the performance of the ecological resource. The main external drivers identified with potential to affect the West Coast Bioregion include climate and introduced pests and diseases.

Climate

External Drivers	Current Risk Status
Climate	HIGH (long term)

The south west of Western Australia is predicted to be heavily influenced by the impacts of climate change (e.g. increasing sea temperatures, declines in rainfall). Some climate change information has been taken into account in the rock lobster stock assessment process and the effect of the marine heat wave in 2010/11^{1,2} on fisheries has been assessed but further information is required to examine potential impacts on this bioregion.

Captured Species

FINFISH

Estuarine

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Estuarine	HIGH (non-fishing)

Stock status is variable among species. There is concern for some fish stocks within estuaries in the West Coast Bioregion mainly due to external (non-fishing) factors (e.g. poor water quality, reduced water flows, water diversion, other environmental factors).

Peel-Harvey sea mullet holds MSC certification for the commercial fishery.

Nearshore

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Nearshore	HIGH

Concerns for status of a range of nearshore species including Australian herring, southern garfish and whitebait, have resulted in additional management actions being implemented, which remain in place.

Inshore and Offshore Demersal

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Inshore and Offshore Demersal	MODERATE

Following assessments of inshore demersal indicator species (West Australian dhufish, pink snapper, baldchin groper), management actions were implemented to reduce both the commercial and recreational catch levels by 50% of their 2005/06 levels. Based on assessments of indicator stocks this resource is considered to be in a recovery phase. While the deep-water indicator species are vulnerable to overfishing,

current catch levels are low and therefore the stocks are not at risk.

The risk rating for this asset is in part due to the high degree of social amenity these stocks provide for local recreational and commercial sectors and the resultant fishing pressure applied to them.

Pelagic

Captured species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Pelagic	LOW

There is minimal capture of pelagic fish in this bioregion, with most emphasis focussed on Samsonfish by recreational anglers.

INVERTEBRATES

Crustaceans

Captured species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Crustaceans (Crabs)	Estuarine/ Nearshore	MODERATE
Crustaceans (Lobsters)	Inshore	LOW

The stocks of crabs in Cockburn Sound are currently considered to be “Environmentally Limited”. Recruitment and breeding stock levels have improved in 2020, however they remain below the limit reference level of the harvest strategy and the fishery remains closed. It is unlikely that the stock will return to historical high levels, mainly as a result of changing environmental conditions (e.g. improvement in water quality and resulting decline in nutrients and primary production).

Assessment of other crab stocks in this region (e.g. Peel/Harvey) has been completed and all are considered to be in an adequate state and fishing levels are acceptable. Both the commercial and recreational sectors of the Peel-Harvey crab fishery are MSC certified. The stock levels of western rock lobster are currently at appropriate levels. Ongoing strong management that was applied to the rock lobster fishery has ensured that the lobster spawning stock is currently at record high levels. The Western Rock Lobster fishery has maintained MSC certification since 2000.

Molluscs

Captured species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Molluscs (Abalone)	Nearshore	MODERATE
Molluscs (Scallops)	Inshore	MODERATE

The stocks of abalone are conservatively managed with strong management controls on

1 Pearce, A., Lenanton, R., Jackson, G., Moore, J., Feng, M. and Gaughan, D. 2011. The “marine heat wave” off Western Australia during the summer of 2010/11. Fisheries Research Report No. 222. Department of Fisheries, Western Australia. 40pp.

2 Caputi, N., Jackson, G. and Pearce, A. 2014. The marine heat wave off Western Australia during the summer of 2010/11 – 2 years on. Fisheries Research Report No. 250. Department of Fisheries, Western Australia. 40pp.

both commercial and recreational fishers. However, the marine heat wave in 2010/11 caused the almost total loss of Roes abalone in the Kalbarri region and that region has consequently been closed since 2011/12.

The stock of scallops is considered sustainable with pre-season surveys showing a further improvement in the distribution of scallop abundances over the historical fishing grounds.

Listed species

A variety of endangered, threatened and protected¹ (ETP) species can be found within the West Coast Bioregion, including cetaceans, pinnipeds, elasmobranchs, seahorses and pipefish and sea/shore birds. These species are protected by various international agreements and national and state legislation. Primary pieces of legislation include the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the *Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, and the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994*.

Fish

Listed species	Ecological Risk
Fish	MODERATE

Grey nurse shark (*Carcharias taurus*) is protected under State and Commonwealth legislation throughout this and all bioregions. Blue groper (Rottnest Island) and baldchin groper (Abrolhos Islands FHPA between 1 November and 31 January) cannot be landed by commercial or recreational fishers in the particular areas and periods.

Non-Fish

Listed species	Ecological Risk
Mammals	LOW
Birds and Reptiles	LOW

The only identified risk to bird species was to little penguins from boat strikes and non-fishing activities such as a reduction in their main food source i.e. whitebait.

The West Coast Bioregion lies to the south of most marine turtles' distributions and, thus, there are minimal risks to turtles from fishing activities within this bioregion. The trawl fishery that operates around the Abrolhos Islands uses bycatch reduction devices, which are effective at minimising the capture of turtles.

Sea lion exclusion devices (SLEDs) have now been implemented for rock lobster pots near Australian sea lion breeding colonies. Demersal

gillnet fishing effort in the West Coast Bioregion, which has historically been responsible for a very small number sea lion captures, is now less than 10% of its peak level of the late 1980s.

Regulated modifications to rock lobster fishing gear configuration during humpback and southern right whales' northerly winter migration have successfully reduced entanglement rates by more than 65% in recent years. Thus, risks to mammals from fishing activities in the West Coast Bioregion have decreased in recent years but are not yet considered to be low due to the social value (and therefore risk) around whales.

Habitats and Ecosystems

Due to the counter-acting Leeuwin and Capes Currents, the West Coast Bioregion has the unique characteristic of containing tropical, sub-tropical and temperate ecosystems. The key habitats occurring in depths of less than 40 m (where the vast majority of relevant fisheries resources are located and fishing activities are undertaken in this bioregion) include:

Algae: Along the WCB, algae attach to intertidal and subtidal rocky substrata and in turn, are habitat to a variety of organisms. Algal assemblages contribute to marine nutrient and carbon cycling are also an important as a food source, nursery grounds and shelter for a variety of organisms. Along the WCB, there is a gradual transition from a subtropical flora of the Abrolhos Islands and north of Geraldton to a cold-temperate flora found along the southwest corner and south coast of WA. Macroalgae along the southwestern and southern coasts of Australia are very diverse, with a high level of endemism.

Sand: The majority of seabed of the WCB is composed of soft, unconsolidated sediments. These sediments provide an important habitat for microalgae and benthic infauna.

Seagrasses: In temperate WA, seagrasses occupy approx. 20 000 km² of shallow coastal waters and grow predominantly on sand from 1 – 35 m depth, but also on deep rock to over 50 m deep. Seagrasses provide habitat for many fish and crustacean species, stabilise coastal sediments and prevent coastal erosion. In addition, seagrasses are also important for primary production, CO₂ uptake and nutrient cycling. The diversity of seagrasses in temperate south-western Australia is the highest for any temperate region, with 17 species within WCB and SCB combined.

Corals: Due to the cool temperate waters corals are not common in the WCB with the exception of the Abrolhos Islands, which are located offshore and are more exposed to the warm Leeuwin

¹ Note that listed species does not automatically indicate that a species is either threatened or endangered.

WEST COAST BIOREGION

Current. The Abrolhos Islands are well-known for their high species diversity, coral reefs and unique mixture of temperate and tropical species. Currently there are 184 known coral species at the Abrolhos. Elsewhere in the WCB corals occur in patches around offshore islands, usually comprised of only a few species.

Sponges: In southwestern Australia, sponges are found in areas where algae are less dominant, which includes areas deeper than 30 m and caves. As they are sessile filter-feeders, sponges flourish in areas of high current, although large sponges are also found in calmer deeper waters. In areas with an absence of reef-building corals, sponges function as large epibenthos that form the three-dimensional structure of subtidal reefs providing shelter for other organisms, such as worms, crustaceans, echinoderms, molluscs and fish.

Habitats

Habitats	Aquatic zone	Current Risk Status
West Coast Habitat	Estuarine	HIGH (non-fishing)
West Coast Habitat	Marine	LOW
Abrolhos Islands	Marine	MODERATE

The West Coast is a micro-tidal, relatively high-energy area, with clear water and few rivers. The coastline is characterised by long beaches with occasional limestone cliffs and headlands, with offshore limestone islands and reef complexes. There are numerous protected marine areas in the West Coast (West Coast Overview Figure 5). Spatial zoning restricts activities within these areas, including preventing trawling.

Peel-Harvey Estuary habitats are under pressure due to poor water quality as a result of farming, canal development and urbanisation in the surrounding catchment. A benthic habitat monitoring program is underway to quantify impacts of recreational crabbing as a part of the MSC assessment process. Cockburn Sound, which contains large areas of seagrass, has been mined for shell sand since 1972. The permitted areas for mining have been increasingly restricted and regulated since the commencement of mining operations.

The main fisheries in the Central West Coast involve fishing gear which has minimal impacts to the benthic habitats. These include: western rock lobster which uses traps, Roes abalone which are hand collected and several finfish fisheries that mainly use lines.

Due to the unique diversity of tropical and temperate habitats, the Abrolhos Islands were gazetted as WA's first Fish Habitat Protection

Area (FHPA) and have been placed on the National Estate Register. Due to this, the risks to Abrolhos Islands habitats are assessed separately to the bioregion as a whole.

The main activities at the Abrolhos are commercial rock lobster potting and line fishing and recreational fishing and diving. The Department has a long term coral reef monitoring program at the Abrolhos to detect potential impacts from human use and natural influences.

There are 45 public moorings installed at the Abrolhos Islands, distributed around the different island groups, to minimise impacts of anchoring to the benthic habitats. The commercial scallop fishery also operates away from coral reef habitats, predominately in areas of sand. Projected development of the tourism industry in the area may have effects on the habitats and will be monitored.

Ecosystems

Ecosystem	Aquatic zone	Current Risk Status
West Coast	Estuarine	HIGH (non-fishing)
West Coast	Marine	MODERATE
Abrolhos Islands	Marine	MODERATE

The estuarine ecosystems within this bioregion have been identified as being at significant risk, due to external factors (water quality issues due to high nutrient runoff from surrounding catchment, reduced rainfall) which have the potential to affect fish and other communities. Fish mortality events have been periodically reported from within the Peel-Harvey and Swan-Canning estuaries and in Cockburn Sound.

An assessment of the community structure and trophic level of all commercially caught fish species over the past 30 years found no evidence of systematic changes that could be evidence of an unacceptable impact on this ecosystem (Hall and Wise, 2011)¹. Continued monitoring of a deep water closed area will allow evaluation of potential ecosystem impacts of lobster fishing in deeper water ecosystems.

The Abrolhos Islands are protected within a 'Fish Habitat Protection Area', and are not considered to be at unacceptable risk from fisheries related activities. A significant coral bleaching event was observed during the marine heat wave event in 2011 (Abdo *et al.* 2012)². The impact of this event is being monitored as part of an ongoing monitoring program run by the Department. The program also includes monitoring of the community structure of finfish within and outside of non-fishing areas.

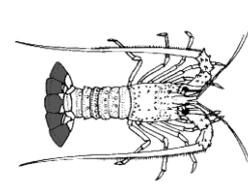
¹ Hall NG, and Wise BS. 2011. Development of an ecosystem approach to the monitoring and management of Western Australian fisheries. FRDC Report – Project 2005/063. Fisheries Research Report, No. 215. Department of Fisheries, Western Australia. 112 pp.

² Abdo DA, Bellchambers LM, Evans SN. 2012. Turning up the Heat: Increasing Temperature and Coral Bleaching at the High Latitude Coral Reefs of the Houtman Abrolhos Islands. PLoS ONE 7(8): e43878.

FISHERIES

WEST COAST ROCK LOBSTER RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

S. de Lestang, M. Rossbach, Laura Orme and Graeme Baudains.



OVERVIEW

The West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery (WCRLMF) targets the western rock lobster (*Panulirus cygnus*), on the west coast of Western Australia between Shark Bay and Cape Leeuwin. Lobsters are taken throughout their range by both the commercial and recreational sector and each sector operates to formal resource allocations.

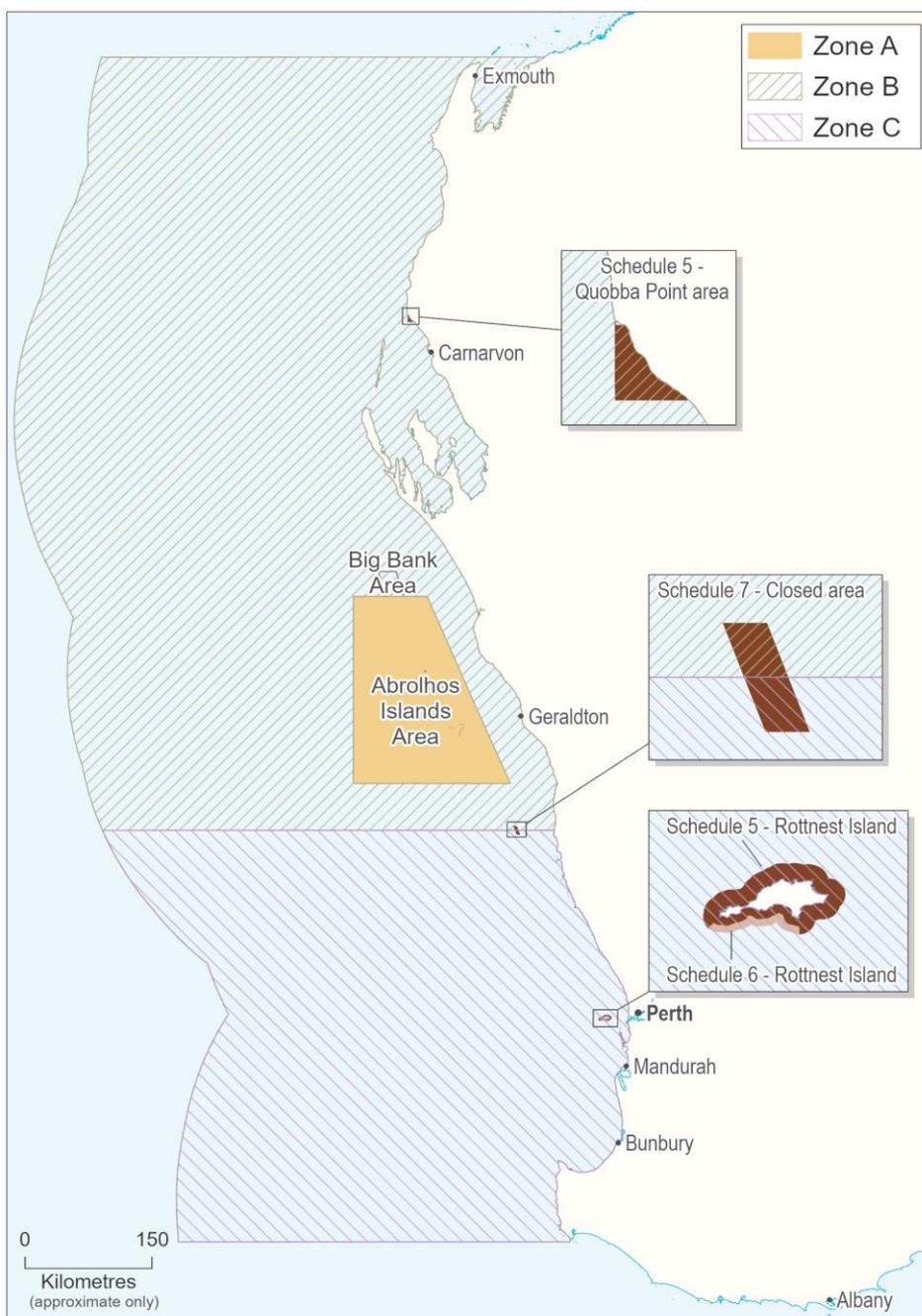
The WCRLMF was one of the first limited entry fisheries in the world and for over 20 years utilised an Individual Transferrable Effort system based on the number of allowable baited pots. In 2010/11 the WCRLMF began the transition to an Individually Transferable Quota (ITQ) fishery and now has a harvest strategy that uses maximum economic yield as its management target (DoF, 2014). The WCRLMF has historically been Australia's most valuable single species wild capture fishery and, in 2000, became the first

fishery in the world to achieve Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Certification. In 2017 it was the first fishery globally to be certified by MSC for the fourth time, (see de Lestang *et al.*, 2016 for further details on the assessment and management of this fishery; www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/wamsc_reports/wamsc_report_no_9.pdf).

The commercial fishing season begins on 15 January each year and runs 12 months. The recreational fishery also now runs 12 months state-wide, whereas the season previously extended from 15 October each year until 30 June the following year. Licenced recreational fishers are allowed to take lobsters using a maximum of two baited pots or by hand collection when diving to collect legal sized lobsters up to bag and/or boat limits.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (6,300 + 1.5% t)	Total Catch 2019: 6,397 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (490 t)	Total Catch 2019: 343 - 459 t	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Western Rock Lobster	Low Risk: Above biomass threshold	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Low Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$417 m)	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
Social (high amenity)	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Low Risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	High Risk (climate)	Acceptable

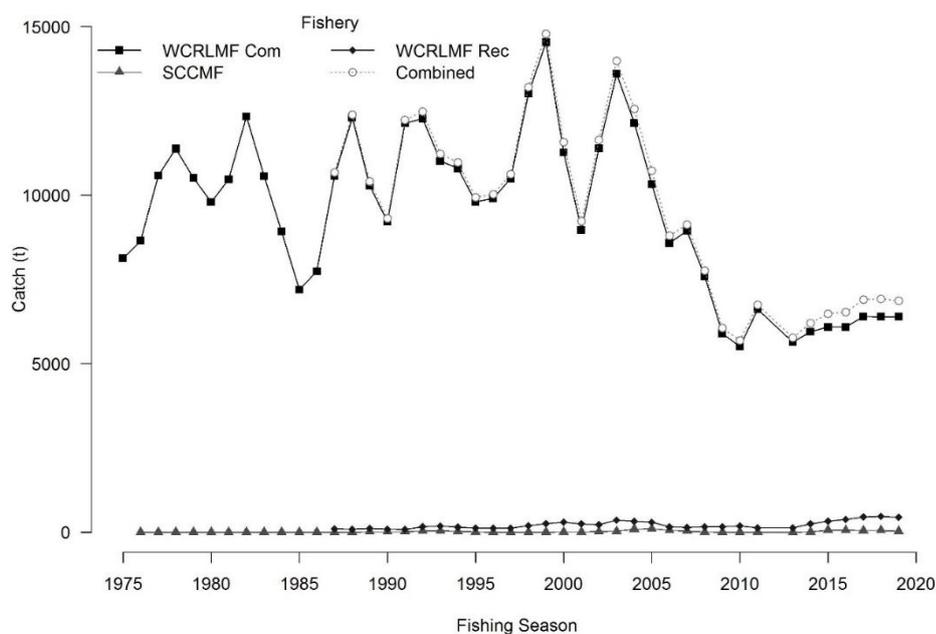


WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER FIGURE 1.
Map showing boundaries of the West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

The total commercial landings of western rock lobster in 2019 from the WCRLMF were 6,397 t plus 11.5 t of “additional” domestic quota from the Local Lobster Program. The total allowable commercial catch (TACC) was 6,395 t (6,300 t

plus a 1.5% drip loss factor). The median estimate of the recreational catch was 401 t (range: 343 - 459 t) compared to the Total Allowable Recreational Catch (TARC) of 490 t (Western Rock Lobster Figure 2).



WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER FIGURE 2.

Total landings by fishery including the South Coast Crustacean fishery (SCCMF) (and combined) for western rock lobster.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

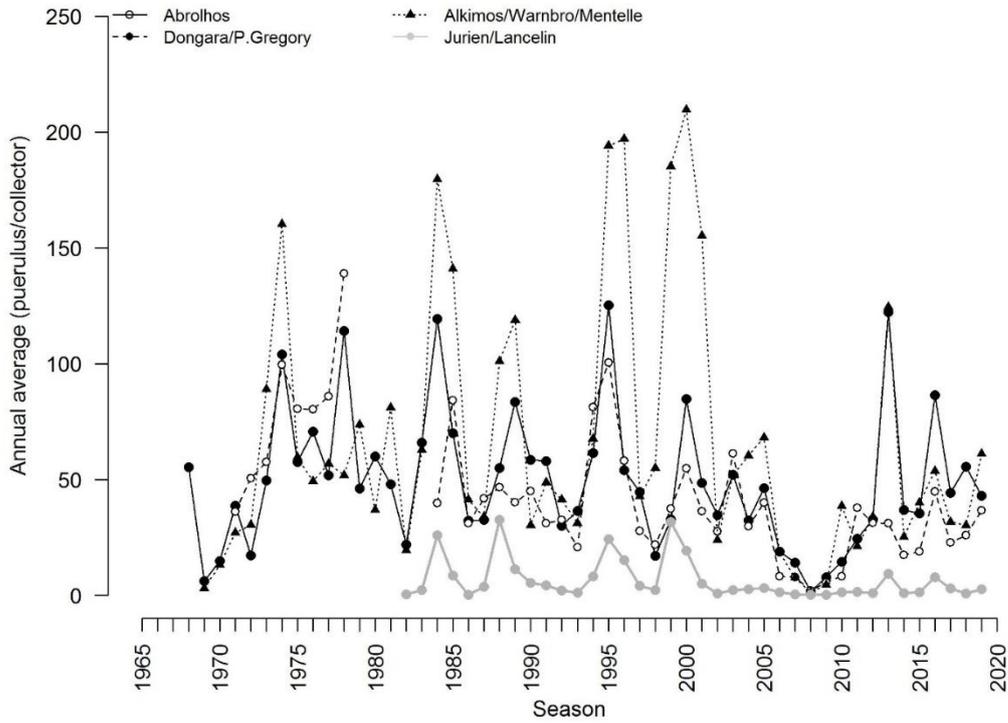
Western rock lobster - (Sustainable-Adequate)

Commercial and recreational catch rates have been maintained near their record-high levels. Fishery-independent egg production indices at all sites are well above both threshold and long-term levels indicating that the biomass and egg production in all locations of the WCRLMF are at record-high levels since surveys began in the mid-1990s. The breeding stock is therefore considered **sustainable-adequate**.

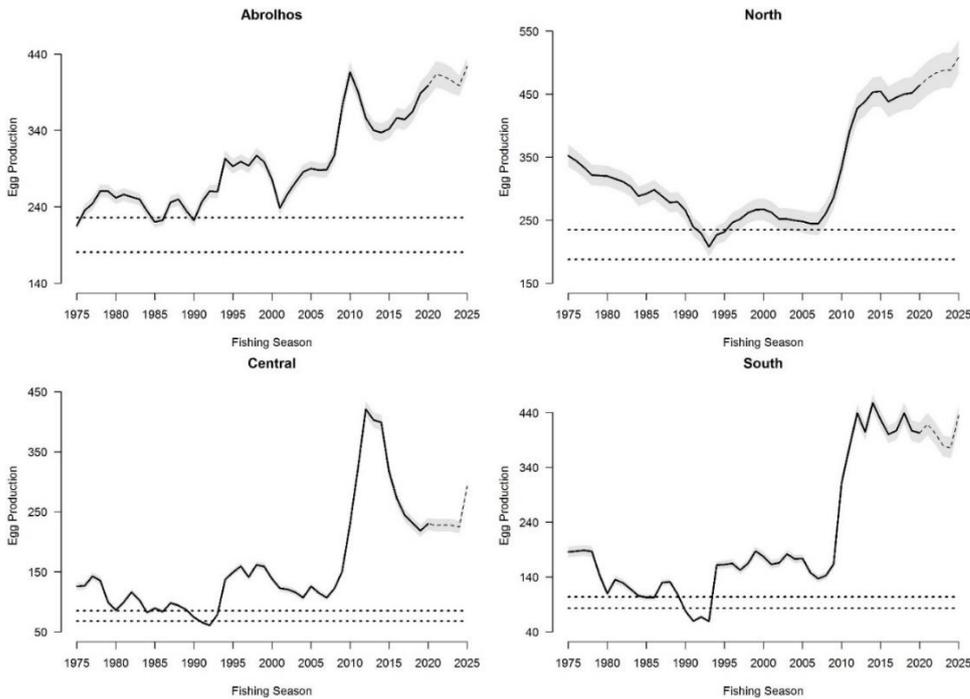
Fishery-independent recruitment (puerulus) monitoring indicates that the puerulus settlement was average in all areas during 2019/20 and similar to that in 2018/19 (Western Rock Lobster Figure 3).

A review of the WCRLMF stock assessment was conducted by a team of international scientists in June 2018 (de Lestang *et al.* 2019). Outcomes included that the science process was considered appropriate to be used with confidence to assess the stock and produce reliable advice for setting the annual TAC.

The integrated population model indicates that a continuation of fishing at similar or slightly higher TACCs (e.g. 6,500 t) over the coming five-year period will continue to result in increasing legal and spawning biomass and catch rates and reduced harvest rates (see de Lestang *et al.*, 2016 section 9.3.14 and Western Rock Lobster Figure 4).



WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER FIGURE 3.
Levels of puerulus settlement in four regions of the WCRLMF from 1968.



WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER FIGURE 4.
Modelled estimates (black) and projections (dotted line) of egg production for the four breeding stock management areas based on a TACC of 6,500 t. 75% CI is denoted in grey. Horizontal lines represent the threshold (upper grey dotted) and limit (lower grey dashed) reference points for breeding stock levels in each breeding stock management area.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

The main bycatch species landed in the WCRLMF are octopus, champagne crabs (CC) and baldchin grouper (BG). Octopus contributed most to the

total bycatch landings with 15.0 t in 2019 and only incidental landings of the other species being recorded (2.9 t and 2.1 t for CC and BG, respectively). See Octopus, Deep Sea Crab and West Coast Demersal Scalefish reports for further information.

The WCRLMF may interact with a number of protected species with substantial improvements having been achieved during the past decade (see Bellchambers *et al.* (2017) section 4).

To mitigate the risk to juvenile Australian sea lions (ASL) all pots fished within designated sea lion areas are now fitted with devices to stop the accidental drowning of ASL. Since their implementation there have been no records of drowned ASL.

During the whale migration season (May – October inclusive) all pots must comply with mitigation measures aimed at reducing the entanglement of migrating whales (see Bellchambers *et al.* (2017) section 4). This has resulted in a significant (~60%) reduction in reported whale entanglements. There were seven entanglements in lobster gear reported in 2019.

Turtles can also get caught in the float rigs of lobster pots. In 2019 no turtles were reported to have been entangled in lobster fishing gear.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

While WRL may use a range of habitats throughout their life-cycle, including shallow water reefs and adjacent seagrass beds as juveniles, or un-vegetated areas during their migratory phase ('whites'), the algal covered limestone reefs form the habitat for the majority of the population.

WRL are an omnivorous generalist feeder, with a diet that consists of a variety of invertebrate, algae, carrion and bait. Results from monitoring in areas closed and open to WRL fishing, established to examine the potential ecosystem effects of WRL removal, suggest that lobsters do not play a keystone role in ecosystem functioning (see section 6.2 in Bellchambers *et al.* (2017)).

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

The WCRLMF is important for regional employment with 235 commercial vessels operating in 2019 with most of the catch handled by four main processing establishments. The rock lobster fishery is also a major recreational activity and provides a significant social benefit to the Western Australian community with over 60,000 recreational fishers holding rock lobster licences in 2019. At current high stock levels there is a **moderate risk** to this valuable social amenity.

Economic

The estimated average price across all processors and all zones of the WCRLMF

received by commercial fishers for the western rock lobster in 2019 was \$65.23/kg. This was down slightly from that paid in 2018 (\$66.31/kg). The slightly lower beach price with the same TACC resulted in the overall value of the WCRLMF dropping slightly to \$417 million. As the majority of landed lobsters are exported to a single market (China) this represents a **moderate risk**.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The Harvest Strategy and Control Rules 2014-2019 (HSCR) (DoF, 2014) was used to set catch limits for both commercial and recreational sectors on an annual basis. The HSCR have a primary sustainability objective to maintain egg production at sustainable levels and a secondary economic objective to target maximising the profitability of the WCRLMF i.e. at Maximum Economic Yield (MEY) levels. The upper limit of the MEY assessment is currently used to determine the upper limit of the annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC) as this is the basis of setting the TARC.

Modelled future projections of the WCRLMF and MEY analysis indicates that a small (5 %) increase in TACC will move the WCRLMF towards MEY and maintain healthy levels of egg production.

Allowable Catch Tolerance Levels

The landed commercial catch of 6,397 t was close to the TACC of 6,395 t (including 1.5% for water loss) and therefore the catch level was **acceptable**. The average of the estimate of recreational catch (401 t) was below the TARC of 490 t for the 2019 season and was therefore also considered **acceptable**. The harvest control rules surrounding recreational catch are based on a five-year moving average (FYMA).

Compliance

The majority of enforcement effort is applied to ensure that fishers' catches are within their quota entitlement. There is also at-sea compliance to check that rock lobster gear is compliant with ASL and whale mitigation devices/measures.

Consultation

Consultation occurs between the Department and the commercial sector either through the Western Rock Lobster Council or the Annual Management Meetings convened by the Department through the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council. Consultation with Recfishwest and other interested stakeholders is conducted through specific meetings and the Department's website.

WEST COAST BIOREGION

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

In September 2020 a series of amendments were made to the management settings for the commercial fishery.

After consultation with industry, a COVID-19 response was implemented in order to minimise the economic impact of the pandemic on the fishery, given the significant reduction in demand for lobster in China in early 2020. The management response included extending the 2020/21 commercial season by 5.5 months, to now end 30 June 2021; adjustment to the catch associated with the extended season, and introduction of a new mechanism for fishers to undertake 'back-of-boat sales'.

In addition, a series of administrative and operational amendments were also introduced, including implementation of additional arrangements to minimise whale interactions with rock lobster gear.

settlement 3-4 year previously. Catches are also dependent upon the environmental conditions at the time of fishing. Investigation into the puerulus downturn in 2007-2009 have identified that when the spawning started early (water temperature driven) and was coupled with low numbers of winter storms during the larval phase, the puerulus settlement was significantly lower.

In 2011 and to some extent 2012 and 2013, abnormally warm water temperatures were recorded throughout the northern half of the western rock lobster fishery. Preliminary analysis indicates that this event negatively impacted the puerulus to juvenile relationship in the northern region of the fishery (e.g. Kalbarri). As of mid-2020 there are strong signs that this area may be recovering towards its historical pattern.

At a longer time scale, WRL have been rated a **high risk** to the effects of climate change as many aspects of its life history are highly sensitive to environmental conditions (Caputi *et al.*, 2010).

The economic performance of the WCRLMF is strongly affected by the value of the Australian dollar (affecting the price of lobsters), fuel and labour costs and status of the Chinese economy as China imports nearly all of the WRL.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

The variations in WRL recruitment to the fishery are largely a result of variable levels of puerulus

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WEST COAST ROE'S ABALONE RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

L. Strain, J. Brown and R. Jones



OVERVIEW

The Roe's abalone (*Haliotis roei*) resource is accessed by both commercial and recreational sectors, and is a dive and wade fishery operating in shallow coastal waters along WA's western and southern coasts. The commercial Roe's abalone fishery is managed primarily through Total Allowable Commercial Catches (TACCs), which are set annually for each of the six management areas (Roe's Abalone Figure 1) and allocated as Individually Transferable Quotas (ITQs).

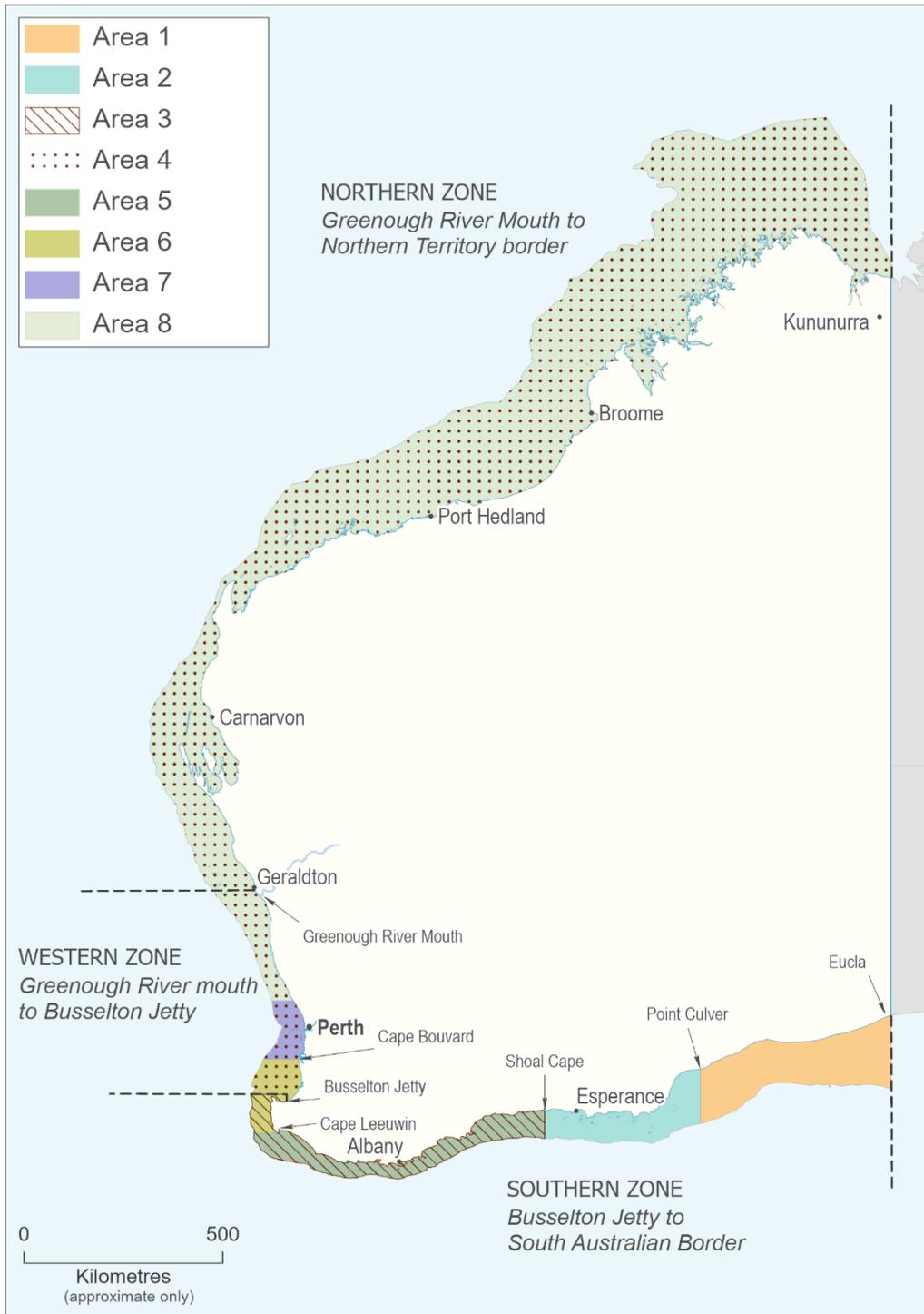
The recreational fishery is divided into three zones (Roe's Abalone Figure 1): Zone 1 (Western Zone - including Perth metropolitan area), Zone 2 (Northern Zone) and Zone 3 (Southern Zone).

Management arrangements include a specific abalone recreational fishing licence, size limits, daily bag and possession limits, temporal and spatial closures, and a Total Allowable Recreational Catch (TARC) in the Western Zone.

Further information on the fishery can be sourced from Hart *et al.* (2017) and Strain *et al.* (2020) at www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/wamsc_reports/wamsc_report_no_8.pdf. and http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/wamsc_reports/wamsc_report_no_8_addendum_3.pdf.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (65 t)	Total Catch 2019: 47 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (18-22 t Perth Metro Fishery)	Total Catch 2019: 24–28 t Perth Metro Fishery; 14 t Other	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Roe's abalone (<i>Haliotis roei</i>)	Above Target (excluding closed Area 8/Northern Zone)	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Negligible risk	Adequate
Habitat	Negligible risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Negligible risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$1.32 m)	High risk	Acceptable
Social (Amenity - Significant)	High risk	Acceptable
Governance	Low risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	Significant risk	Management Action



ROE’S ABALONE FIGURE 1.

Map showing the boundaries of the management areas in the commercial Abalone Managed Fishery in Western Australia. The Roe’s Abalone fishery operates in Areas 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8, other areas are associated with the Greenlip/Brownlip Abalone Fishery. Also showing the boundaries of the three zones within the Western Australian Recreational Abalone Fishery; the Western Zone, the Northern Zone and the Southern Zone.

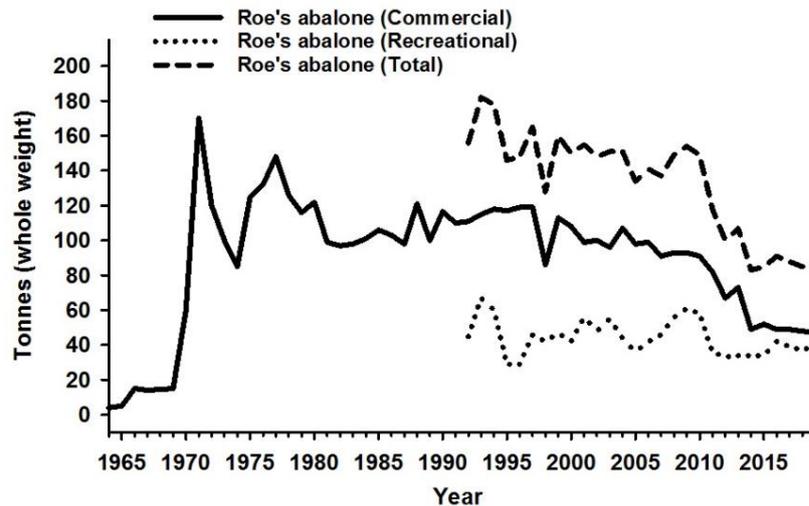
CATCH AND LANDINGS

In 2019 the total commercial catch was 47 t whole weight, which was within 2 t of the catch from each of the last 3 seasons and only 73% of the 65 t whole weight TACC (Roe’s Abalone Figure 2). The commercial catch was less than the TACC in Area 1 (0% caught), Area 5 (40% caught) and Area 6 (54% caught), which was primarily driven

by economic reasons (low value of catch and few viable markets), high cost of accessing these areas and prevailing weather conditions (Area 6). In 2019 the TACC was reduced in Area 6 (by 4.5 t) due to the Ngari Capes Marine Park being implemented on the 10th April 2019 (Hesp *et al.* 2008). The TACC was increased in Area 5 (by

1.2 t), while a commercial fishing Exemption in Area 7 allowed an additional 2.4 t of catch to be taken from within the Ocean Reef Marina development envelope. In Area 7, the entire 24 t TACC was caught, which was in line with the Department and Stakeholder Agreement of 2016 and the allocation models for the Perth Metropolitan Roe's Abalone Fishery (DoF 2017).

The recreational catch of Roe's abalone in 2019 was 40 t whole weight, which represents 46% of the total Roe's abalone catch (Roe's Abalone Figure 2). The recreational catch includes 24–28 t (26 t) from the Perth metropolitan stocks, and an estimate of 14 t for the rest of the state (Western Zone excluding the Perth metropolitan stocks and Southern Zone) derived from a 2007 phone diary survey.



ROE'S ABALONE FIGURE 2.

Roe's abalone commercial and recreational catch (t, whole weight) by season as recorded against the nearest calendar year.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Roe's abalone (Sustainable – Adequate)

The stock status is assessed using commercial and recreational catch and effort statistics, and fishery-independent sampling. Trends in stock indicators were used to determine the 2019 TACC for each management area, and the TARC for Zone 1 of the recreational fishery.

Area 1 (near WA/SA border): There was no catch taken in 2019 of the 5 t TACC. This area is a marginal part of the fishery in a remote location making it economically difficult for fishers given current market conditions.

Area 2 (Esperance): The catch in 2019 was 13 t whole weight of the 13.2 t TACC. The SCPUE declined between 2010 and 2015, increased in 2016 and has declined slightly since but is still above the target reference level.

Area 5 (Albany): The catch in 2019 was 6 t whole weight of the 15 t TACC. The SCPUE has been slightly lower than the historical average between 2013 and 2018 but remained stable during this period. In 2019 the SCPUE increased back to the historical average and is above the target reference level.

Area 6 (Capes): The catch in 2019 was 4 t whole weight of the 7.5 t TACC. The SCPUE in 2019

was above the target reference level and within the historical range, but due to the prevailing weather conditions resulting in low catch there is a degree of uncertainty around the SCPUE estimate.

Area 8 (Kalbarri): Closed since the 2011/12 season due to catastrophic mortality following the 2011 marine heatwave. With no evidence of natural recovery, a restocking project has been successful on a trial-scale, but it has yet to be implemented on a commercial scale to determine if restocking would recover the entire stock in the longer term (Strain *et al.* 2019).

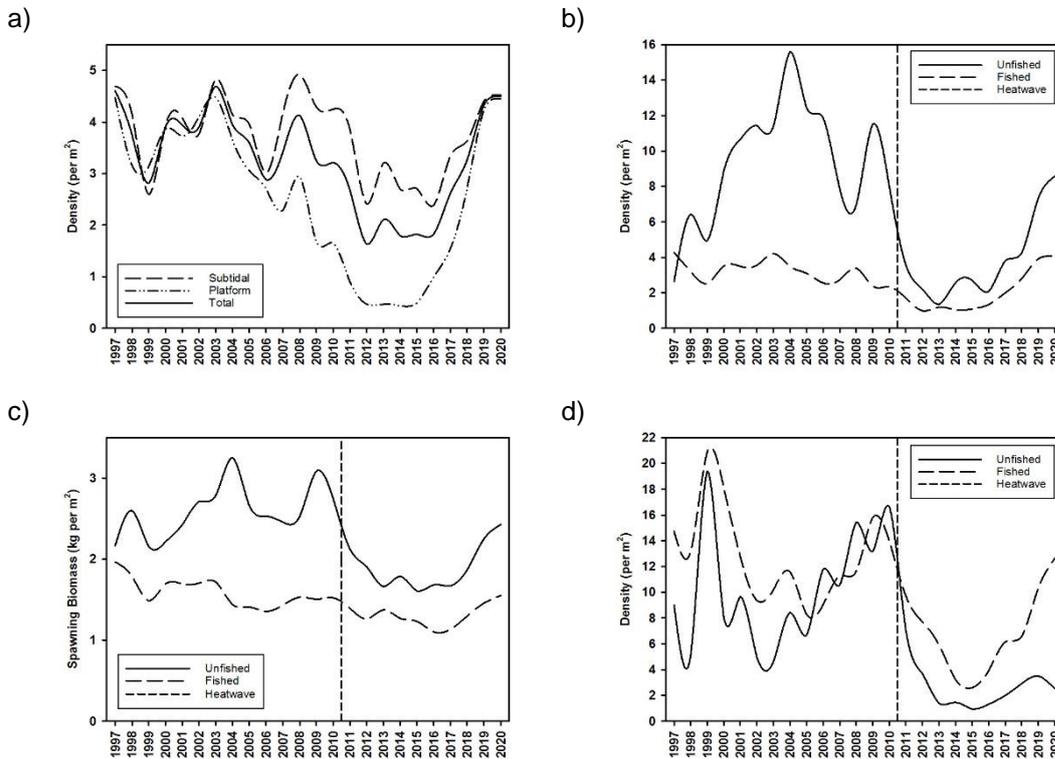
Perth Metropolitan Roe's Abalone Fishery (Area 7 / Zone 1): The commercial catch in 2019 was 24 t of the 24 t TACC. The SCPUE in Area 7 steadily declined between 2005 and 2014, but has now increased in each of the last five years. The SCPUE is above the target reference level and the TACC was set using the stock prediction model based on the juvenile abundance and an environmental factor. The recreational catch estimate was 24–28 t (26 t) whole weight and has been managed to the 20 t (± 2 t) TARC for the last 9 years. The Perth metropolitan catch range is above the acceptable range due to larger size of abalone taken, favourable weather conditions and a recovering stock.

WEST COAST BIOREGION

Fishery-independent surveys indicate that the density of harvest-sized Roe’s abalone in both the subtidal and platform habitats, and across both fished and unfished areas experienced substantial declines between 2003 and 2012 (Roe’s Abalone Figure 4a and b). Density of harvest-sized animals then increased from record-low levels during 2012-2016, and in 2020 were near record-high levels in both the platform and subtidal habitats (Roe’s Abalone Figure 3a). Importantly, this increase in density has continued in unfished stocks with the fished stock density equal to record-high levels (Roe’s Abalone Figure 3b). Spawning biomass also increased in 2020 with fished areas having now reached, and unfished areas approaching, pre-marine heatwave levels

(Roe’s Abalone Figure 3c). Age 1+ (17 – 32 mm) animals have also shown an increase in density over the last five years, after the juvenile recruitment density declined by 80% between 2010 and 2013 (post marine heatwave), with 2015 being the lowest year on record (Roe’s Abalone Figure 3d).

Recovery of the Perth Metropolitan Roe’s Abalone Fishery from historically low levels is considered complete. Stock indicators (harvest-size animals, spawning biomass and recruitment) have returned to pre-marine heatwave levels. The recovery of these indicators has been aided by a marine cold spell occurring during 2016-2019.



ROE’S ABALONE FIGURE 3.

Density and spawning biomass of Roe’s abalone in the Perth Metropolitan Fishery (Area 7/Zone 1) from fishery-independent surveys. a) Density of Roe’s abalone (71 mm+) in the subtidal and platform fished areas, b) Density of Roe’s abalone (71 mm+) in the fished and unfished areas, c) Spawning biomass (kg per m² of <40 mm abalone) of Roe’s abalone in the fished and unfished areas, d) Density of Roe’s Age 1+ abalone (17 – 32 mm) in the fished and unfished areas.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Divers have the ability to target abalone of choice (species, sizes and quality of abalone) and do not inadvertently harvest bycatch in their normal fishing activities. The only potential listed species interaction is with the white shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*), with some divers adopting the ‘shark shield’ technology. **Negligible** risk.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

The fishing activity makes minimal contact with the habitat, which typically consists of hard rock surfaces in a high wave energy environment. As abalone feed on drift algae, their removal is unlikely to result in any changes to the algal growth cover in fished areas, and hence it is considered unlikely that the fishery has any significant effect on the food chain in the region. **Negligible** risk.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

There are 21 vessels commercially fishing for Roe's abalone, employing approximately 40 people across WA. The dispersed nature of the Roe's abalone fishery means that small coastal towns from Perth to Eucla receive income from the activity of divers. The recreational fishery provides a major social benefit to those members of the community that appreciate the abalone as a delicacy, and 16,385 licences were issued that would have allowed fishers to participate in the recreational abalone fishery. **High risk.**

Economic

Estimated annual value (to commercial fishers) for 2019 was \$1.32 million, based on the estimated average price for Roe's abalone of \$27.86/kg whole weight. The price of Roe's abalone has dropped by 50% since 2000, when it was \$55/kg whole weight. This is due to the value of the Australian dollar and wild caught Roe's abalone being in direct market competition with aquaculture produced abalone. **High risk.**

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy (Formal)

The harvest strategy (DoF 2017) uses SCPUE as a proxy for biomass and the 3-year mean of SCPUE as the key performance indicator, which is assessed against specified biological reference levels for each management area. The Perth Metropolitan Fishery (Area 7 / Zone 1) is managed using a stock prediction model with an environment factor (DoF 2017). The predicted harvest-sized density is used to set the Total Allowable Catch (TAC), with the habitat biomass and sectoral patterns of usage separating the TAC into TACC and TARC. The TACCs (whole weight) have been set for the 2020/21 season, they are 5 t in Area 1, 13.2 t in Area 2, 15 t in Area 5, 7.5 t in Area 6, 26.5 t in Area 7 and 0 t in Area 8, totalling 67.2 t. The Area 7 TACC and Western Zone TARC may be varied following a mid-year review.

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels

Commercial – Acceptable: 65 t (TACC) (530 - 640 fishing days)

Recreational – Acceptable: 18–22 t (TARC) Perth metropolitan fishery only (Zone 1).

Commercial catch was below TACC due to low catches in regional areas resulting from economic and accessibility issues. The commercial fishing effort (420 days) was also below the expected

range. Area 8 is still closed due to the catastrophic mortality following a marine heatwave. The recreational catch range in the Perth Metropolitan Fishery was above the acceptable range due to larger size of abalone taken, favourable weather conditions and a recovering stock.

Compliance

The Department conducts regular inspections of commercial catch at both the point of landing and processing facilities to ensure the commercial industry is adhering to governing legislation. The recreational fishery, particularly the Perth Metropolitan Fishery, has a high level of enforcement given its high participation rate combined with restrictive TARC, season length and bag limit.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with the Abalone Industry Association of Western Australia (AIAWA), West Coast Abalone Divers Association (WCADA), the Southern Seafood Producers Association WA (SSPA) and licensees on operational issues. The Department convenes Annual Management Meetings through the Industry Consultation Unit at the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who are also responsible for undertaking statutory management plan consultation under a Service Level Agreement. Recreational consultation processes are facilitated by Recfishwest under a Service Level Agreement, although the Department undertakes direct consultation with the community on specific issues. Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

In 2019, the Department continued the management arrangements for the Western Zone (Zone 1) of the recreational abalone fishery that were reviewed and implemented in 2017 to improve fisher safety and stock sustainability.

The commercial Roe's abalone fishery has undergone full MSC assessment and achieved certification in 2017, with the 2nd surveillance audit completed during 2019 (<https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/western-australia-abalone-fishery/@@view>).

The Department will review the Harvest Strategy for the Western Australian Abalone Resource in 2020/21.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

During the summer of 2010/11, the West Coast experienced a marine heatwave such that in the area north of Kalbarri (Area 8) mortalities on

WEST COAST BIOREGION

Roe's abalone were estimated at 99.9% (Strain *et al.* 2019). A complete closure of the commercial and recreational fisheries was then implemented. The heatwave also affected the Perth metropolitan stock but to a lesser extent (Hart *et al.* 2018). The recovery of the stock has been assisted by a marine cold spell during 2016-2019. Roe's abalone has been assessed as a significant risk to climate change effects.

Weather conditions during the time of fishing have a significant effect on catch rates and total catch of recreational fishers.

The small size of Roe's abalone results in its direct competition with aquaculture-produced abalone and therefore, there has been a decline in beach price and overall economic value during the last decade.

The Ocean Reef Marina development to be located within the Perth Metropolitan Fishery poses significant risk to the Roe's abalone stock and subsequently the commercial and recreational fishery's. **Significant** risk.

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WEST COAST BLUE SWIMMER CRAB RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

D. Johnston, D. Yeoh and N. Blay



Overview

Blue swimmer crabs (*Portunus armatus*) are found in waters less than 50 m depth along the entire Western Australian coast. The commercial crab fisheries within the West Coast Bioregion are the Cockburn Sound Crab Managed Fishery, the Warnbro Sound Crab Managed Fishery, Area 1 (Swan-Canning Estuary), Area 2 (Peel-Harvey Estuary) and Area 3 (Hardy Inlet) of the West Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery and Area 1 (Comet Bay) and Area 2 (Mandurah to Bunbury) of the Mandurah to Bunbury Developing Crab Fishery. Commercial crab fishers currently use purpose-designed crab traps and gill nets.

Blue swimmer crabs represent the most important recreationally-fished nearshore species in the southwest of WA in terms of participation rate (Ryan *et al.* 2019). Recreational crab fisheries are centred largely on the estuaries and coastal embayments from Geographe Bay to the Swan River and Cockburn Sound. Recreational fishers use either baited drop nets, scoop nets or diving. Management arrangements for the commercial

and recreational fisheries include minimum size, protection of breeding females and seasonal closures with effort controls in place for the commercial fishery.

For more detailed descriptions of blue swimmer crab biology and the West Coast crab fisheries see the Resource Assessment Reports (Johnston *et al.*, 2020a, b).

www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/research_reports/frr307.pdf

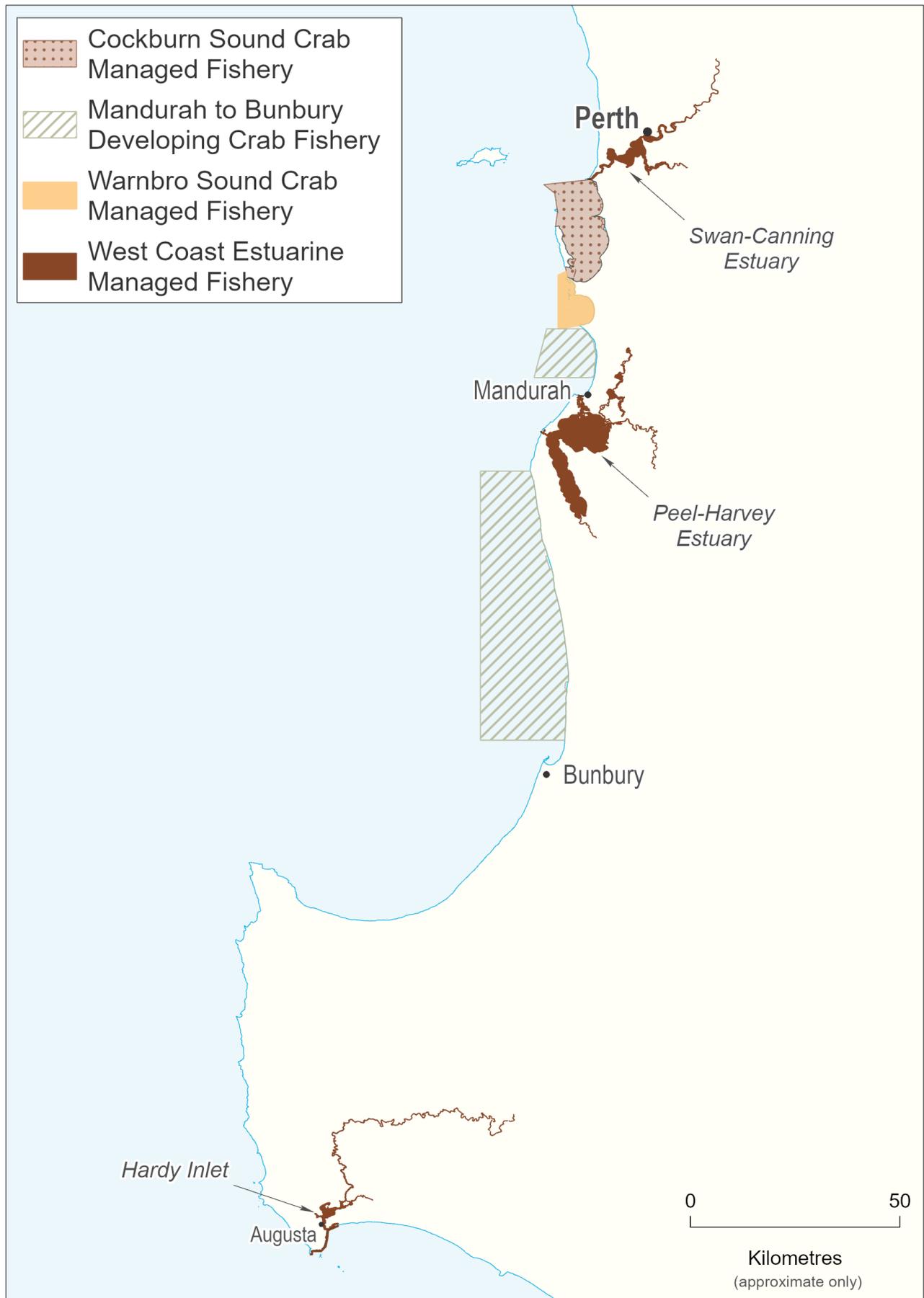
www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/research_reports/frr309.pdf

Both the commercial and recreational Peel-Harvey crab fisheries attained Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Certification in 2016 (see Johnston *et al.*, 2015 for full details).

www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/wamsc_reports/wamsc_report_no_3.pdf

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery	Total Catch 2019: 91.9 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery	Total Catch 2017/18: 61.1 t (boat-based only)	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Cockburn Sound	Below limit	Environmentally limited
Peel-Harvey	Above threshold	Adequate
Other SW	Above threshold	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Low Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP <\$1 m)	Moderate-High risk	Acceptable
Social (high amenity)	Moderate-High Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Moderate-High Risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	High Risk	



WEST COAST BLUE SWIMMER CRAB FIGURE 1.

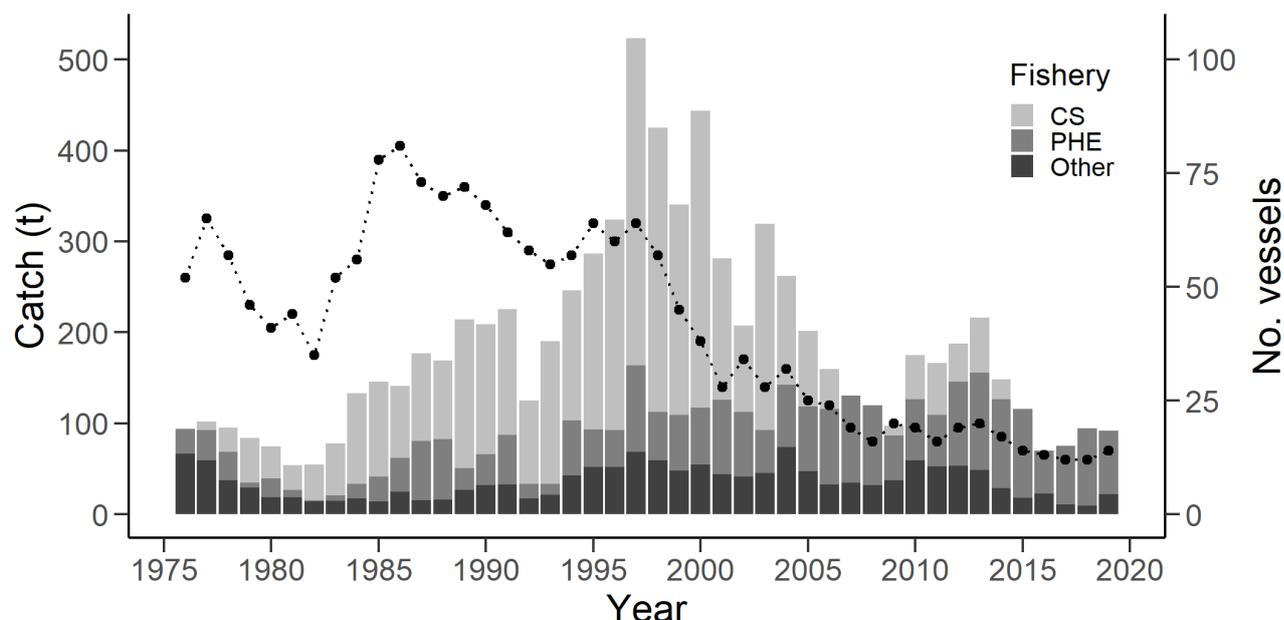
Map showing the boundaries of the main commercial blue swimmer crab fisheries in the West Coast Bioregion:

CATCH AND LANDINGS

Commercial Sector

Total commercial catch of blue swimmer crabs in the West Coast Bioregion decreased slightly from 95 t in 2018 to 91.9 t in 2019, primarily due to lower catches in the Peel-Harvey Estuary (West Coast Blue Swimmer Crab Figure 1). This is still well below historical catches with Cockburn

Sound remaining closed. The West Coast catch accounts for approximately 14% of the State's total commercial blue swimmer crab catch of 660 t for 2019. The State total catch of blue swimmer crabs in 2019 was slightly higher to that landed in 2018.



WEST COAST BLUE SWIMMER CRAB FIGURE 2.

West Coast bioregion commercial catch history for the blue swimmer crab in Western Australia since 1976 (by calendar year). The number of licensed fishing vessels retaining blue swimmer crabs each year is also shown (●). CS — Cockburn Sound, PHE — Peel-Harvey Estuary. Other fisheries include the Swan-Canning Estuary, Warnbro Sound, Mandurah to Bunbury (Area 1 and 2), Geographe Bay, Leschenault Estuary and Hardy Inlet. The Cockburn Sound Crab Managed fishery was closed December 2006 – December 2009 and has been closed since April 2014.

Recreational Sector

The estimated retained harvest of blue swimmer crab by boat-based recreational fishers in Western Australia during 2017/18 was 61.1 t. The West Coast Bioregion boat-based recreational catch of blue swimmer crab represented 90% of the total statewide boat-based recreational catch (kept by numbers) in 2017/18. The estimated recreational harvest range for Blue Swimmer Crab in the West Coast was steady at 54 t (95% CI 45–63) in 2017/18 compared with 44 t (95% 37–51) in 2015/16 (Ryan *et al.* 2019). Recreational catch estimates for the Peel-Harvey Estuary account for the majority of the total boat-based recreational catch in the West Coast Bioregion, although significant recreational catches are recorded for the Swan Canning Estuary and Geographe Bay regions also (Ryan *et al.*, 2019).

A previous (2008) survey of recreational fishing in Peel-Harvey covering fishing from boats, shore, canals and houseboats estimated the recreational catch to be between 107–193 t.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Cockburn Sound (Environmentally limited)

Since the fishery was closed in 2014, a harvest strategy has been determined for the Cockburn Sound Crab Fishery where the primary performance indicators are the juvenile abundance index and egg production index (Johnston *et al.*, 2015; 2020a). A weight-of-evidence approach was used for the stock assessment where these indices, in addition to commercial catch rates and the proportion of females in the commercial catch, are taken into account to assess stock status.

Juvenile index: From 2014 to 2018 the abundance of juveniles in Cockburn Sound has remained very low (0.03–0.11 juveniles/100 m²

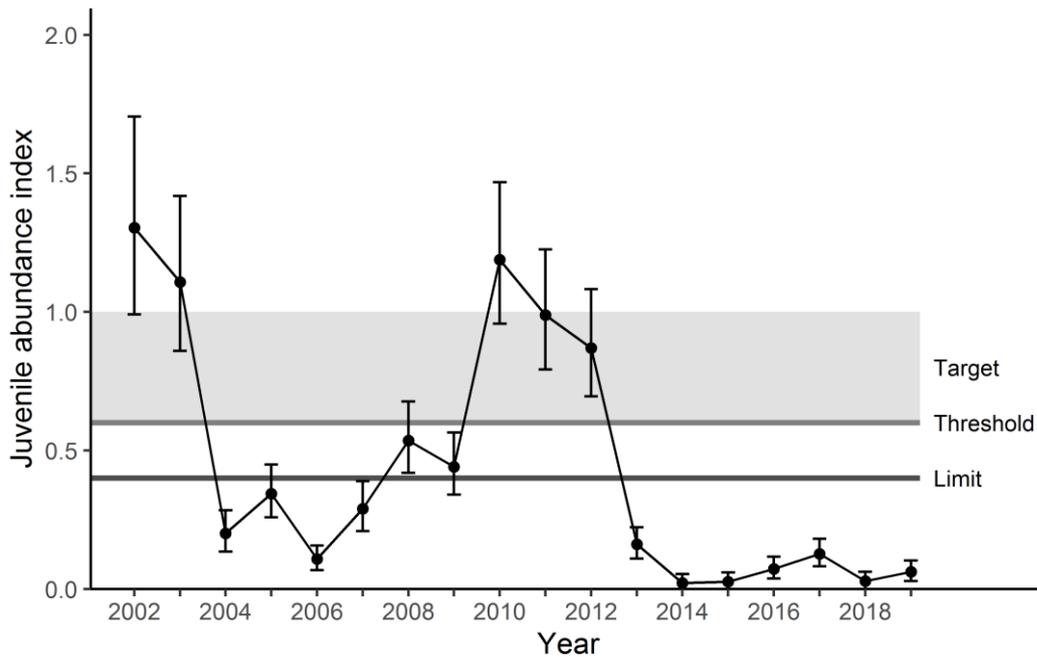
WEST COAST BIOREGION

trawled). Despite a small increase, the 2019 index of 0.04 juveniles/100 m² remains substantially below the harvest strategy limit of 0.4 juveniles/100 m² trawled, indicating that recruitment is at unacceptable levels. (West Coast Blue Swimmer Crab Figure 3).

Egg Production index: Since the improvement of the egg production values in 2016, scores for this index have declined from 2017 to 2019, with the 2019 value of 5.4×10^6 eggs/traplift being less than half the limit reference value of 12×10^6 eggs/traplift. This suggests that breeding stock levels are unacceptable, and the fishery remained closed for the 2019/20 season. As catch rates undertaken aboard a leased commercial vessel during the closure did not improve significantly in 2019, the status of the stock has been classified as **environmentally limited**.

As the 2019 egg production and juvenile indices were below their respective limit levels, the fishery remained closed for the 2019/20 season. The outcomes of the research and management review of south-west crab stocks (DPIRD, 2018) will determine the future of this fishery.

Potential reasons for the stock decline include combined effects of reduced levels of primary productivity within Cockburn Sound, changes in water temperature, increased predation, a low abundance of mature females and/or low proportion of berried females and the negative effects of density-dependent growth. The declines in abundance are believed to be substantially attributable to environmental changes, rather than fishing as the fishery has been closed for six years.



WEST COAST BLUE SWIMMER CRAB FIGURE 3.

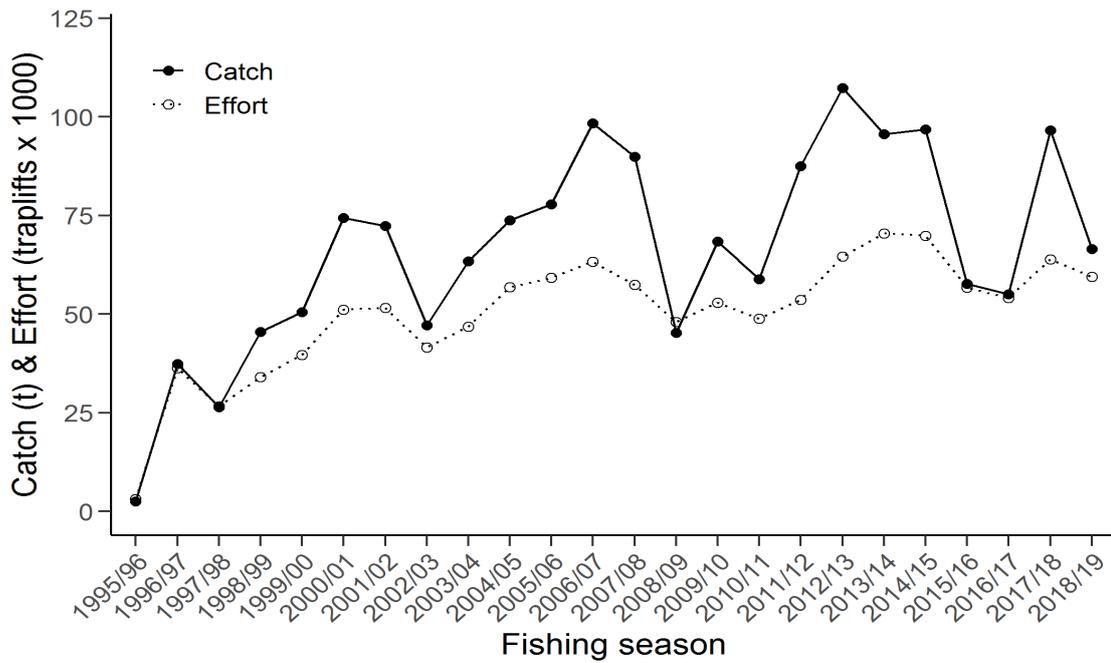
Annual standardised index of juvenile (0+) blue swimmer crabs in Cockburn Sound calculated using data from juvenile research trawls conducted in April, May and June of each year. The index units are numbers of juveniles/100m² trawled. The associated reference points (target, threshold and limit) for the harvest strategy and the 95% confidence intervals are shown. The fishery was closed between December 2006 and December 2009 and has remained closed since April 2014

Peel-Harvey Estuary (Sustainable-Adequate)

The commercial catch and effort from the Peel-Harvey Estuary for the 2018/19 fishing season (November–August) was 66.5 t from 59,472 trap lifts, a decrease of 30 t from the 2017/18 season (West Coast Blue Swimmer Crab Figure 4).

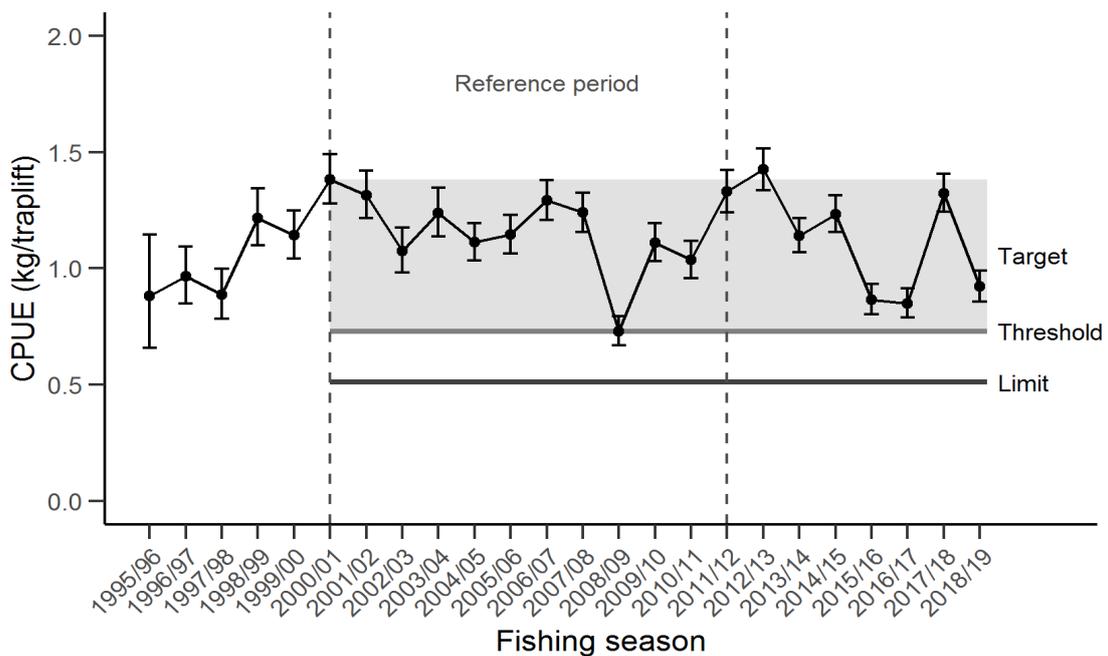
Since the conversion from nets to traps in 2000/01 annual commercial catch rates have fluctuated between 0.8 and 1.4 kg/traplift, but have generally remained above 1 kg/traplift. The standardised

catch rate of 0.92 kg/traplift for the 2018/19 fishing season was a decline from 1.4 kg/traplift in 2017/18, but remains above the harvest strategy threshold of 0.7 kg/traplift, indicating the stock is currently being fished at sustainable levels (West Coast Blue Swimmer Crab Figure 5). A weight-of-evidence approach was used for the stock assessment where information from fishery-independent surveys, commercial monitoring and environmental data are also taken into account to assess stock status. On the basis of this evidence, the crab stock in the Peel Harvey is classified as **Sustainable**.



WEST COAST BLUE SWIMMER CRAB FIGURE 4.

Blue swimmer crab commercial catch (t) and effort (trawlifts x 1000) for the Peel-Harvey Estuary from 1995/96 to 2018/19. Fishing season is defined as 1 November to 31 August.



WEST COAST BLUE SWIMMER CRAB FIGURE 5.

Annual standardised commercial catch rate (kg/trawlift) of blue swimmer crabs in the Peel-Harvey crab fishery, with 95% confidence limits, relative to the associated reference points (target, threshold and limit) for the harvest strategy. The reference period (2000/01 to 2011/12) was a period of relative stability when the fishery was considered to have been operating sustainably. The target range extends between the maximum and minimum values of the reference period, where the latter denotes the threshold level, a proxy for the stock level at which Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) can be achieved. The limit is set at 70% of the threshold value (0.7BMSY). Fishing season is defined as 1 November to 31 August. Annual values have been standardised using a generalised linear model to account for effects of month and fisher.

BYCATCH and PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

Crab traps are purpose-designed to minimise the capture of non-target species and are therefore an inefficient way to capture fish. The low number of fish caught and returned poses a **negligible** risk to these stocks.

Protected species interactions

The crab trap longline system is conducted in a manner that avoids mortality of, or injuries to, endangered, threatened or protected species and avoids or minimises impacts on threatened ecological communities and are therefore considered a **low** risk.

HABITAT and ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

Retrieval of traps may result in minor dragging across the mostly sandy substrate. The small amount of living seagrass removed, results in minimal habitat damage and hence trapping poses a **low risk** to benthic habitats. The potential impacts of wading on near shore habitats by the recreational fishers who scoop net in the Peel-Harvey Estuary is currently being assessed.

Ecosystem interactions

As the commercial take of crabs represents a relatively small portion of the biomass, which is effectively renewed annually and subject to high levels of natural variation in abundance, secondary food chain effects are likely to be minimal. These crab fisheries are a **low risk** to the ecosystem.

SOCIAL and ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

West Coast blue swimmer crab fisheries provide a **high social amenity** to recreational fishing and diving and to consumers via commercial crab supply to markets and restaurants. During 2019, approximately 20 people were employed as skippers and crew on vessels targeting blue swimmer crabs in the West Coast Bioregion. Blue swimmer crabs provide a highly popular recreational fishery, particularly in the Swan River, Cockburn Sound, Warnbro Sound, the Peel-Harvey Estuary and the Geographe Bay region, where they dominate the inshore recreational

catch. They are the highest captured (by number) recreational species. **Moderate–High** risk.

Economic

The commercial blue swimmer crab catch in the West Coast Bioregion for 2019 had an estimated gross value of production (GVP) of approximately \$0.74 million, a slight decrease on the \$0.77 million in 2018 (level 1 <\$1 million). Most of the catch from the West Coast Bioregion was sold through local markets. Price data was generated by collecting monthly returns recording prices paid to fishers by fish processors. A weighted average price is then calculated for the financial year from the monthly data and for 2018/19 was \$8.10 per kg. Moderate-High risk. The reasons for this risk level is the closure for the Cockburn Sound crab fishery and subsequent uncertainty around the economic value of the south west crab fisheries.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

Cockburn Sound: Closed

As the 2019 egg production index and juvenile index were below their respective limit levels, the fishery remained closed for the 2019/20 season.

Peel Harvey:

The primary performance indicator is standardised annual commercial catch. As the indicator was above the threshold for 2018/19, a three month closure (1 September to 30 November) to commercial and recreational crab fishing was implemented.

Other West Coast fisheries:

The primary performance indicator is standardised annual commercial catch rate. As the indicators were above the threshold in 2019 for all other fisheries in the West Coast Bioregion (Swan-Canning Estuary, Warnbro Sound, Comet Bay), a three month closure (1 September to 30 November) to commercial and recreational crab fishing was implemented.

Allowable Catch Tolerance Levels

Cockburn Sound: Under review

Peel Harvey: 45–107 tonnes

Other West Coast fisheries: Under review

A catch range for Cockburn Sound crabs will need to be developed when the management arrangements and stock levels have stabilised. The acceptable catch range for Peel Harvey is based on the last 10 years of catch values. The other west coast crab fisheries are yet to develop a sufficiently stable catch history or set of

management arrangements to develop a definitive catch range.

Compliance

Current risks to enforcement are **low** for West Coast crab fisheries. However, the Peel-Harvey Estuary has a high level of enforcement risk in the recreational fishery as it has the highest level of non-compliance in the State, particularly for undersize crabs being taken and during night-time periods.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with licensees on operational issues and processes and is responsible for the statutory management plan consultation. Industry Annual Management Meetings are convened by the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC) and the Southern Seafood Producers Association (SSPA), who are also responsible for statutory management plan consultation under a Service Level Agreement with the Department.

Consultation processes are now facilitated by Recfishwest under a Service Level Agreement although the Department undertakes direct consultation with the community on specific issues.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

A review of the south-west blue swimmer crab resource was initiated in late 2018. The aim of the review was to improve the level of protection to the breeding stock, in particular mated pre-spawn females, and improve resilience of the resource as well as improving the efficiency and consistency of management arrangements across the entire resource. The review included the release of *Fisheries Management Paper 288 - Protecting breeding stock levels of the blue swimmer crab resource in the south west* for public comment. Having considered public submissions and consultation with peak sector bodies, in August 2019 the Minister for Fisheries announced his decision to implement:

- an annual 3-month closure (1 September through 30 November) across all south west crab fisheries (except for Geographe Bay);
- a reduced bag limit of 5 crabs in the Swan and Canning Rivers;

- a maximum of 5 female crabs (as part of the 10 bag limit) in Geographe Bay; and
- a process to buy back commercial fishing licences in the Cockburn Sound, Warnbro Sound and Mandurah to Bunbury Crab Fisheries prior to their permanent closure.

The Department is now implementing the Minister's decisions and also working with Recfishwest, WAFIC and SSPA to consider other potential changes to the management of the south-west blue swimmer crab resource.

Separate to the Crab Review, as part of the Government's election commitment, \$1.5 million was allocated for projects to ensure the continued health of the Peel-Harvey Estuary. This commitment includes a voluntary fisheries adjustment scheme (VFAS) to buy back some of the 11 existing commercial licences operating on the estuary. The VFAS is underway and scheduled to run until the end of June 2020.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Levels of recruitment to many of the crab fisheries fluctuate considerably mainly due to environmental influences (e.g. water temperature) both on spawning success and larval survival through to recruitment. Temperature appears to be an important factor contributing to the initial decline (2006 closure) of the Cockburn Sound Crab Fishery. The level and timing of rainfall may also affect the Peel-Harvey and Swan River fisheries.

Potential reasons for the recent stock decline (2014 closure) and lack of recovery of crabs in Cockburn Sound include combined effects of reduced levels of primary productivity (Chlorophyll-a), changes in water temperature, increased predation and the negative effects of density-dependent growth which may have contributed to an observed decline in the proportion of berried females. The recent declines in abundance are believed to be substantially attributable to environmental changes, rather than fishing. It is unlikely that crab stock levels will recover to historical highs while productivity in the system remains low.

Although these temperature changes have also resulted in the increased abundance of blue swimmer crabs in the South Coast estuaries, on the West Coast this species is rated as having a high risk to climate change.

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WEST COAST OCTOPUS RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

A. Hart, D. Murphy, and L. Wiberg

OVERVIEW

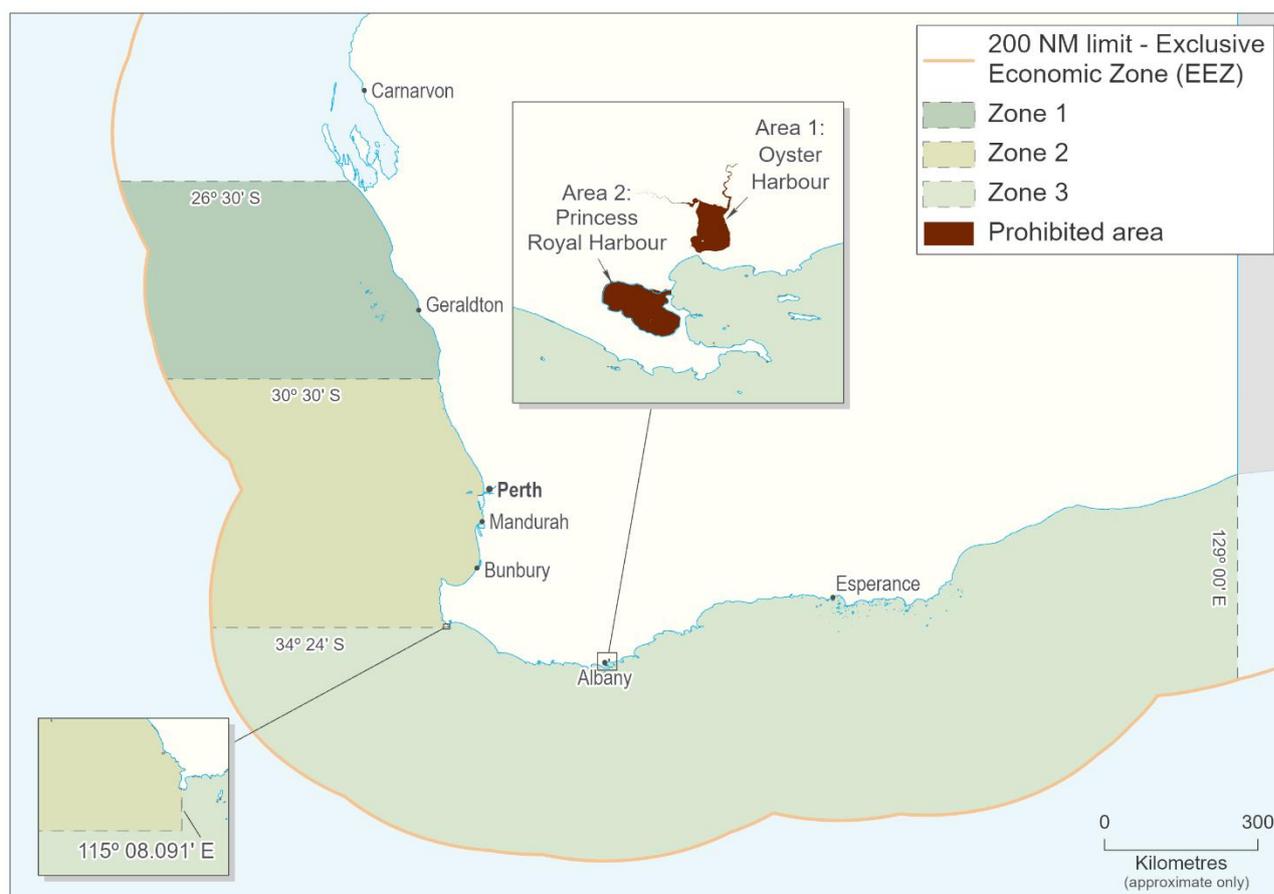
The octopus fishery in Western Australia targets the octopus (*Octopus djinda*), which is closely related to *Octopus tetricus* found on the east coast of Australia and New Zealand (Amor et al. 2014). Commercial octopus catch is harvested from three different fisheries with the majority of commercial catch coming from the Octopus Interim Managed Fishery (OIMF). The primary harvest method in the OIMF is a 'trigger trap'. Unbaited or passive (shelter) pots are also used mainly in the Cockburn Sound Line and Pot



Managed Fishery (CSLPMF) and octopus are also caught as by-product in rock lobster pots. Commercial management arrangements include input controls on the total allowable number of pots/traps permitted in each spatial management zone. More details are available in the octopus Resource Assessment Report (Hart et al. 2018) available at http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/wamsc_reports/wamsc_report_no_14.pdf.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery	Total Catch 2019: 453 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery	Total Catch 2019: 1 t	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
octopus (<i>Octopus djinda</i>)	Performance indicator above target	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Low Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Low Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$5.9 m)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Social	Low Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Low Risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	Low Risk	Acceptable

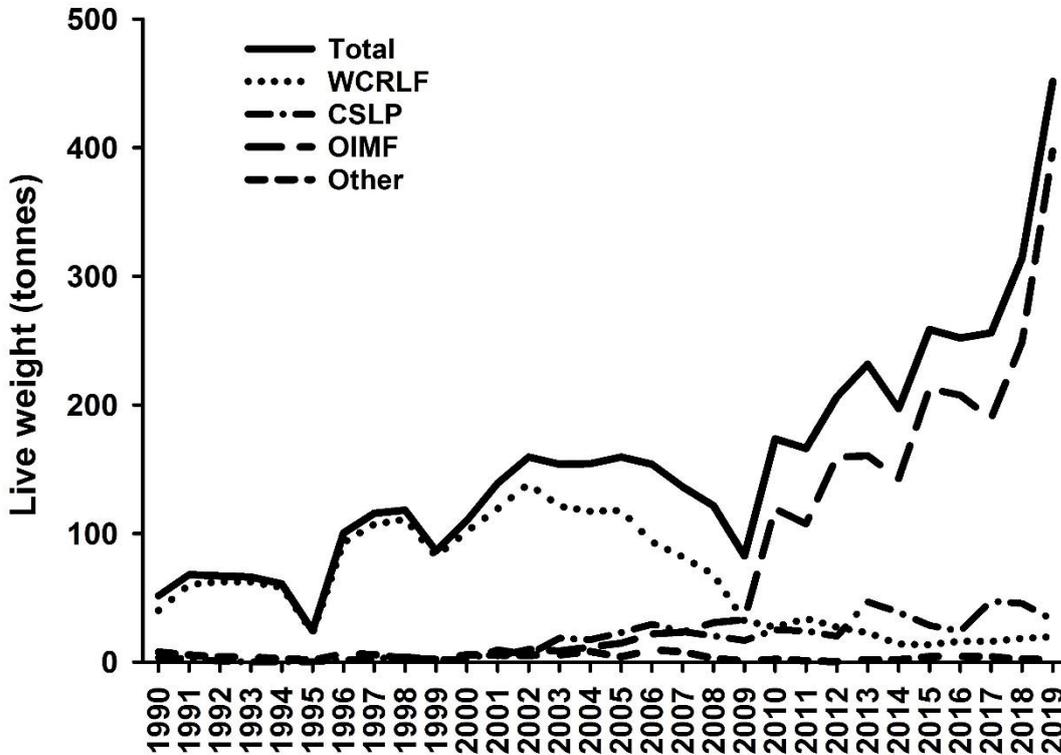
**OCTOPUS FIGURE 1.**

Map of the three fishery management zones (Zone 1, Zone 2, Zone 3) for the Octopus Interim Managed Fishery of Western Australia. The octopus fishery is primarily managed by the number of octopus traps permitted to be fished in each of these zones.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

In 2019 the total commercial octopus catch was 453 t live weight, which was 44% higher than the 2018 catch of 314 t and represents the highest catch recorded (Octopus Figure 2). The large increase was due to new vessels fishing across all

zones of the fishery, particularly in Zone 1. The recreational catch by boat-based fishers state-wide during 2019 was estimated a total weight of approximately 1.0 tonne (with most taken in the West Coast Bioregion).



OCTOPUS FIGURE 2.

Commercial catch (t) of *Octopus djinda* in Western Australia since 1990. WCRLF (West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery), CSLPMF, OIMF and Other, which is bycatch from trawl and miscellaneous pot fisheries.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Octopus (Sustainable – Adequate)

Octopus djinda (previously *Octopus aff. tetricus*) was subject to a recent comprehensive resource assessment which looked at biology, fishing efficiency and stock abundance and distribution (Hart et al. 2018). The overall conclusion was that the stock is highly productive, with an average maximum age of 1.5 years, as well as abundant and widely distributed along the West and South Coast of Western Australia. The estimated area of habitat fished in 2019 was 1500 km². This area was a minor percentage (7%) of the total estimated habitat area on the West Coast of 20,073 km² (Hart et al. 2019), where greater than 95% of the fishing occurs. The current catch of 453 t is likely to be approximately 12% of the total biomass, at a conservative estimate. Consequently, the breeding stock is considered to be **adequate**.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

The selective method of fishing used results in a minimal level of bycatch of other species. In 2019 there was two reported entanglements with a whale in octopus fishing gear. Fishers have adopted gear changes to mitigate entanglements, which includes setting pots on longlines, and using weighted ropes that hang vertically in the water column. **Low risk**.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

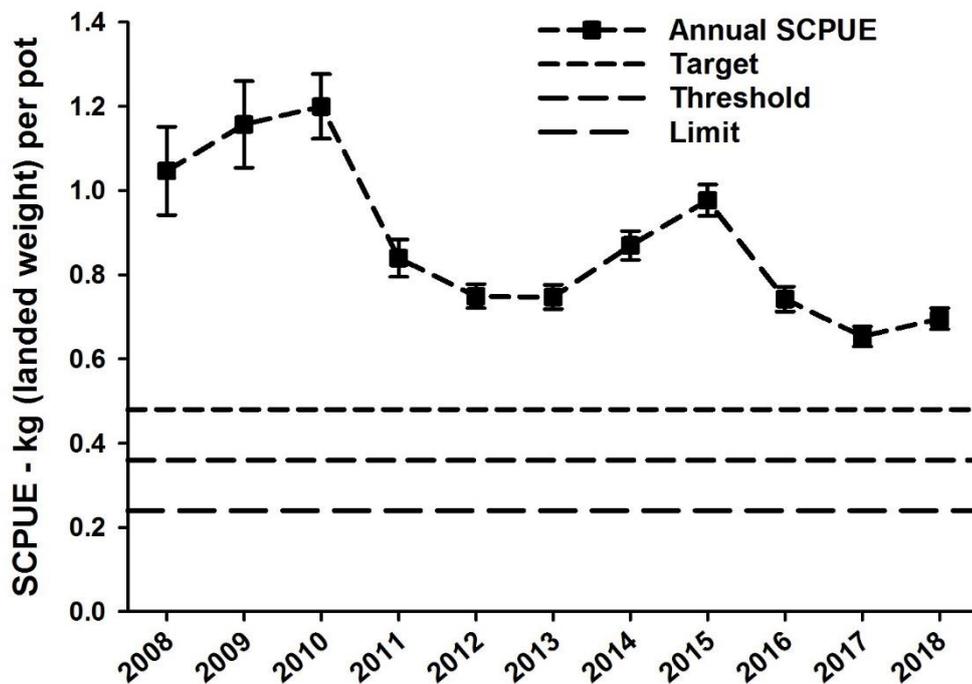
In the CSLPMF and OIMF, octopus-specific pots are set in similar habitats to those fished in the WCRLMF, as well as sandy and seagrass areas, particularly in Cockburn Sound. These are not expected to impact on benthic habitats as the soak times are at long intervals, averaging 10

WEST COAST BIOREGION

days in the OIMF and 15-20 days in the CSLPMF. Rock lobster potting in the WCRLMF occurs primarily on sand areas around robust limestone reef habitats covered with coralline and macroalgae, and these habitats are considered resistant to lobster potting due to the hard nature of the bottom substrate (see WCRLMF report for full details). **Low Risk.**

Ecosystem

This fishery harvests only a small amount of octopus available in the ecosystems per annum. The effect from this harvesting on the rest of the ecosystem, given that the catch is spread over a wide region, is likely to incur a **Negligible** risk to the ecosystem.



OCTOPUS FIGURE 3.

Standardised catch per unit effort (SCPUE) ($\pm 95\%$ CL) in kg / pot (kg in live weight) of *Octopus djinda*. Biological reference points (Target, Threshold, Limit) are also given (see Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2018 for definition of BRPs).

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

Each dedicated octopus fishing vessel employs between 2 and 4 people. Within the octopus-specific fisheries, 4 vessels fished in the CSLP, and 25 vessels in the OIMF. More than 20 vessels landed octopus as a by-product in the WCRLMF. There is also a substantial processing and value-added component to the octopus catch with factories in Fremantle and Geraldton. **Low Risk.**

Economic

The estimated annual value for 2019 was \$5.9 million based on the total catch of 453 t and an average product price of \$13.11 /kg live weight. **Low Risk.**

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels

Commercial – Acceptable

The target catch range for octopus is 200-500 t. The 2019 catch of 453 t was within the acceptable range.

Harvest Strategy (Formal)

The harvest strategy for the Octopus Resource of Western Australia (2018 – 2022) was published in April 2018 (DPIRD 2018). The main performance indicator in the harvest strategy is a standardised catch per unit effort (SCPUE) in kg/pot lift, which accounts for environmental and efficiency changes in the fishery. Target, Threshold, and Limit reference points have been set, and the fishery is currently above the target level (Octopus Figure 3).

Compliance

There are no significant issues.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with the Southern Seafood Producers Association WA (SSPA) and licensees on operational issues. Industry Annual Management Meetings are convened by the Department through the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who are also responsible for undertaking statutory management plan consultation on behalf of the Department under a Service Level Agreement.

Consultation processes with the recreational sector are facilitated by Recfishwest under a Service Level Agreement with the Department. However, the Department also undertakes direct consultation with the community on specific issues.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

In 2018 the Department commenced a baited trap trial to inform consideration of the use of baited traps in the future. Following the conclusion of the trial, the Department will formally incorporate the use of baited traps into the fishery.

The Octopus Interim Managed Fishery commenced assessment to attain Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification in 2018. The Fishery successfully attained MSC certification in late 2019. A gap analyses was undertaken to include the baited trap trial in the MSC unit of certification in January 2020.

In 2019/20 the Department in collaboration with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions have been working with permit holders in the OIMF to further improve whale entanglement mitigation measures and arrangements will be formalised by amendments to the OIMF Management Plan.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Cephalopods in general, including octopus, are known to be subject to large environmentally-driven fluctuations in abundance. Octopus was rated as a **low** risk to climate change.

The move of the rock lobster fishery from an effort-controlled fishery to a catch quota fishery, coupled with significant effort reductions, will ensure the octopus catch in the WCRLMF remains a low proportion of the overall catch.

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WEST COAST NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FINFISH RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

R. Duffy and N. Blay



OVERVIEW

The West Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Resource encompasses 10 commercial fisheries (West Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery, West Coast (Beach Bait Fish Net) Managed Fishery, South West Coast Salmon Managed Fishery, Cockburn Sound (Fish Net) Managed Fishery, Cockburn Sound (Line and Pot) Managed Fishery, South West Coast Beach Net Fishery (Prohibition Order 43), Open Access fishing in the West Coast Bioregion using nets, and three FBL condition exemptions), and recreational and customary fishing that targets nearshore and estuarine species. The main commercial methods

are haul, beach seine and gill netting. The main recreational method is line fishing from beach or boat.

Four estuaries are open to commercial fishing (Swan-Canning Estuary, Peel-Harvey Estuary, Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary, Toby Inlet). The Peel-Harvey Estuary commercial fishery (Area 2 of the West Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery) received Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for sea mullet in June 2016 (see Department of Fisheries 2015). Links to more detailed, online information are provided in the reference list.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery	Total Catch 2019: 406.5 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery	Total Catch 2017/18: 49–64 t (boat-based only)	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Western Australian Salmon	Above Target	Adequate
Sea Mullet (WCB)	Above threshold	Adequate
Australian herring	Above threshold	Recovering
Southern garfish (metro zone)	Below limit	Inadequate
Yellowfin whiting	Above threshold	Adequate
Whitebait	Below limit	Inadequate
Tailor	Above threshold	Adequate
Estuarine cobbler (Peel-Harvey)	Above threshold	Adequate
Perth herring	Undefined	Environmentally limited
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Negligible risk	Adequate
Habitat	Negligible risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Moderate risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP < \$1 m)	Moderate risk	Acceptable
Social (high amenity)	Moderate risk	Acceptable
Governance	Moderate risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	High risk	

CATCH AND LANDINGS

In 2019, the total commercial catch of nearshore and estuarine finfish in the WCB was 406.5 t. Nearly 70% of the catch came from two fisheries (South West Coast Salmon Managed Fishery and West Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery) and nearly 65% of the catch was comprised of just two

species, Western Australian Salmon and sea mullet (Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Table 1.). Catch and landings for nearshore fisheries was 253 t, and 153.5 t from estuaries (mostly from the West Coast Estuarine Manged Fishery - 134.5 t).

WEST COAST BIOREGION

The top 10 nearshore and estuarine species (or species groupings) in the West Coast represented 95% of the boat-based recreational catch (kept by numbers) in 2017/18. The estimated boat-based recreational harvest range for the top 10 nearshore and estuarine species in the West Coast were steady at 56 t (95% CI 49–64 t) in

2017/18 compared with 65 t (95% CI 57–73) in 2015/16 (Ryan *et al.* 2019). The total recreational shore-based catch was not estimated but is believed to represent a significant proportion of the overall catches of nearshore and estuarine species.

NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FINFISH TABLE 1.

Total catches (tonnes) of the top 10 finfish (by weight in 2019) in commercial fisheries in the West Coast Estuarine and Nearshore Scalefish Resources in previous five years.

Common name	Scientific name	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Western Australian salmon	<i>Arripis truttaceus</i>	37.9	98.0	103.8	139.5	147.8
Sea mullet	<i>Mugil cephalus</i>	143.4	138.4	127.1	140.9	114.3
Australian herring	<i>Arripis georgianus</i>	49.0	61.7	48.3	42.8	45.5
Yellowfin whiting	<i>Sillago schomberrgkii</i>	46.5	31.8	25.9	23.4	33.2
Whitebait	<i>Hyperlophus vittatus</i>	61.2	16.3	15.1	40.2	24.2
Yelloweye mullet	<i>Aldrichetta forsteri</i>	6.3	12.5	14.6	12.7	10.9
Tailor	<i>Pomatomus saltatrix</i>	9.8	3.0	2.0	4.9	6.8
Drummer & Sweep	Kyphosidae, Scorpididae - undifferentiated	0.2	0	0	0	3.8
Hardyheads & Tusked Silversides	Atherinidae, Dentatherinidae - undifferentiated	0	0.2	0	0.1	3.1
King George Whiting	<i>Sillaginodes punctatus</i>	0.8	1.1	0.6	1.8	3.0
Other finfish		15.6	26.7	16.0	24.1	13.9
Total		370.8	381.5	353.0	428.1	406.5

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

The status of each stock is assessed using a weight-of-evidence approach that considers all available information about the stock. Use of the indicator species approach is currently under review.

Western Australian Salmon (Sustainable-Adequate)

Refer to South Coast Estuarine and Nearshore Scalefish and Invertebrate Resource chapter.

Sea Mullet (Sustainable-Adequate)

The population structure of sea mullet in WA is unclear, due to uncertainty about the level of connectivity between Bioregions. Given this uncertainty, sea mullet within each Bioregion are currently managed as separate units. A level 3 assessment of stock status is underway which may also provide more information about stock structure. Refer to the Inner Shark Bay Scalefish status reports for information about sea mullet in other Bioregions.

Recent commercial landings in the WCB are low compared to historical levels due to effort reductions (Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Figure 1). Since 2000, landings have been relatively stable and ranged from 77 t (in 2011) to 143 t (in 2015). The 2018 WCB catch was 114.3 t (Table 1).

The boat-based recreational catch is estimated to be <1 t (Ryan *et al.* 2019) and, while the current recreational shore-based catch is not known, it is believed to be low.

In the WCB, the majority (~80% p.a.) of commercial landings are currently taken in the Peel-Harvey Estuary. The Peel-Harvey standardised commercial catch rate has been stable since 1980, suggesting stable stock availability over a long period. On the basis of this evidence, the sea mullet stock in this region is classified as **sustainable-adequate**.

Australian herring (Sustainable-Recovering)

The species is caught by commercial and recreational fisheries in WA and South Australia, with negligible quantities also taken in Victoria (Smith *et al.* 2013a).

In 2019, the total WA commercial catch was 65.6 t (Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Figure 2). The catch from the West Coast Bioregion was 45.5 t (Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Figure 1), and approximately 75% of the catch was from two fisheries (SWBN & CSFN).

The estimated boat-based recreational harvest range for Australian herring in the West Coast was steady at 11 t (95% CI 8-14) in 2017/18 compared with 11 t (95% CI 8-14) in 2015/16

(Ryan *et al.* 2019). The current shore-based recreational catch is unknown. Partial estimates of shore-based catch are available for the Perth area, February-June only (Smallwood *et al.* 2012). Since 2010, when the Perth shore-based survey commenced, herring catches have been variable with no clear trend. The catch was estimated to be 12-37 tonnes in 2017 and 3-11 tonnes in 2018 (95% CI).

There is currently a MEDIUM RISK to the stock, determined by a weight-of-evidence assessment workshop held in 2017 (Wise and Molony 2018). The workshop was attended by DPIRD staff, South Australian scientists and managers, independent scientists and fishing industry representatives. Stock biomass is projected to continue to increase under current management arrangements. On this basis, the Australian herring stock is classified as **sustainable-recovering**.

Yellowfin whiting (Peel-Harvey) (Sustainable-Adequate)

In WA yellowfin whiting occurs from Exmouth southwards, including relatively low densities of fish along the south coast. The population structure over this range is unclear. Yellowfin whiting are currently managed as two separate stocks. The southern stock includes the West Coast Bioregion and the South Coast Bioregion. The abundance of this species in both the WCB and SCB has been gradually increasing since the 1950s in response to ocean warming (Smith *et al.* 2019).

The commercial catch in the Peel-Harvey Estuary rapidly increased from 10 t in 2012 to 30 t in 2015 in response to a strong recruitment event (Department of Fisheries 2017). The total recreational catch is unknown due to lack of information about the shore-based sector which is believed to take almost all recreational landings of this species (Brown *et al.* 2013). The boat-based recreational catch is estimated to be very low (<1 t) (Ryan *et al.* 2019).

The most recent level 3 assessment was based on age structure data collected in 2015 and 2016. 'Per recruit' modelling (SPR) suggested that spawning biomass was above the threshold level (30%). On the basis of this evidence, the yellowfin whiting stock in this Bioregion is classified as **sustainable-adequate**. For information about the northern stock of yellowfin whiting see Inner Shark Bay Scalefish Status Report.

Southern garfish (Perth metropolitan zone) (Inadequate)

Southern garfish ranges across southern Australia from WA (Lancelin) to New South Wales (Eden). Population structure is complex. Semi-discrete populations can arise over small distances (<60 km) due to the low rates of movement/dispersal by individual fish (Smith *et al.* 2016). In the WCB,

the main fishing area was historically the Perth metropolitan zone, particularly Cockburn Sound. Garfish in this area are likely to have limited connectivity with populations further south (e.g. in Geographe Bay). In 2019, the total WA commercial catch was 7.4 t, and the catch from the West Coast Bioregion was 1.1 t (Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Figure 3).

The most recent level 3 assessment in 2016 indicated that spawning biomass in the Perth metropolitan zone was below the limit reference level (i.e. 20% of unfished level) (Smith *et al.* 2016, Smith *et al.* 2018). In June 2017, this zone was closed to commercial and recreational fishing for southern garfish to aid stock recovery.

On the basis of the most recent assessment, the southern garfish stock in the Perth metropolitan zone is classified as **unsustainable-inadequate**.

Whitebait (Inadequate)

In WA, whitebait is restricted to coastal waters between Perth and Cape Naturaliste. Since 2003/04, virtually all commercial landings have been reported in the Bunbury area by the South West Beach Seine Fishery. Landings peaked during the 1990s and have declined ever since. Within this broader trend, and highly cyclic trend of two to five year peaks and troughs existing in catch records (Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Figure 4). Recent low catches have been reported that are likely due to low stock abundance. In 2019, the total WA commercial catch was 24.2 t, all of which was from a single fishery in the West Coast Bioregion, the SWBN fishery.

Whitebait has a lifespan of only 3-4 years, and so catches are likely to be strongly driven by recruitment variability. Standardised catch rates have followed a declining trend since the late 1980s. The evidence suggests that the stock is **unsustainable-inadequate**. The contracted distribution and apparent heatwave impacts also suggest environmental limitations.

Tailor (Adequate)

In WA, tailor occurs from Onslow to Esperance and is believed to constitute a single stock over this range (Smith *et al.* 2013b). The catch rate of tailor fluctuates in response to recruitment variations, which are linked to environmental factors (Smith *et al.* 2013b, Department of Fisheries 2017).

In 2019, the total WA commercial catch was 20.8 t, 6.8 t of this was from the West Coast Bioregion. Peaks and dips in the catch of tailor within the West Coast Bioregion reflect those of the tailor catch of the whole State. However, State catch has declined substantially from the high around 2000, while the WCENSR catch in 2019 remains within the historic range of catches (Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Figure 5). The majority of

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the West Coast Bioregion commercial catch is taken in the Peel-Harvey Estuary.

The current recreational catch is uncertain due to lack of information about shore-based fishers, who previously were believed to take more tailor than boat-based recreational fishers (Smith *et al.* 2013b). However, the shore-based recreational catch appears to have declined and may now be lower than the boat-based recreational catch. The estimated boat-based recreational harvest range for tailor in the West Coast was steady at 2 t (95% CI 1-3) in 2017/18 compared with 5 t (95% CI 3-7) in 2015/16 (Ryan *et al.* 2019).

The current risk level for tailor is MEDIUM, based on all lines of evidence including recent trends in catch, effort and catch rates, and a vulnerability assessment. On this basis, the stock is classified as **sustainable-adequate**.

Estuarine cobbler (Peel-Harvey-Adequate)

In WA, cobbler occurs in ocean and estuarine waters but is mainly caught by commercial fishers in estuaries. Landings by recreational fishers are believed to be negligible. Each estuary has a discrete stock of cobbler, which is genetically distinct to other estuarine populations and also distinct to cobbler populations in adjacent ocean waters.

In 2019, the total WA commercial catch was 35.4 t, 0.4 t of which came from the WCB, of which 0.2 t came from Peel-Harvey Estuary. This is within the catch range of <1 t to 10 t that has occurred since 1996 (Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Figure 6). The current risk level for the Peel-Harvey stock is MEDIUM, based on all lines of evidence including trends in catch, effort and catch rates, and a vulnerability assessment (PSA). On this basis, the stock is classified as **sustainable-adequate**.

Perth herring (Environmentally Limited)

Perth herring is endemic to the WCB, where a single breeding stock is believed to occur. Stock level was assessed via commercial catch rate trends in the Swan-Canning Estuary until cessation of fishing for this species in 2007 (Smith 2006). Swan-Canning catch rates suggested a major decline in the stock after 1980, which is attributed to historical overfishing and environmental degradation in estuaries (Smith 2006). Fishery-independent evidence suggests stock abundance remains low compared to historical levels (Valesini *et al.* 2017). The Peel-Harvey Estuary is now the only area where this species is caught commercially, albeit in low quantities. Landings by recreational fishers are negligible.

Perth herring is anadromous (i.e. spawns in rivers then migrates back to ocean waters after spawning). Low spawning success due to

environmental degradation in the upper reaches of WCB estuaries and low rainfall is believed to be the main cause of ongoing low stock abundance. Commercial landings within the Peel-Harvey Estuary are managed under a Harvest Strategy, which specifies a maximum annual catch (target reference level <2.7 t) for this species (Department of Fisheries 2015). The catch was below this level in 2019 (2.0 t) (Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Figure 7). The stock is classified as **environmentally limited**.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

The small-scale commercial finfish fisheries in nearshore and estuarine waters mainly use gill, seine and haul nets that are deployed in a targeted manner. Few non-target species are taken. Mesh size regulations ensure that target species caught by these methods are within an appropriate size range. Minimal discarding occurs because virtually all fish taken can be retained and marketed. Recreational fishers mainly use line-based methods in nearshore and estuarine waters. This method can result in the capture and release of non-target species and undersized fish. The risks associated with post-release mortality vary considerably among species. In general, fish in nearshore and estuarine waters are captured from shallow depths and have a lower risk of barotrauma-related injuries than deep water oceanic species and so bycatch species are at **low risk**.

Protected Species

Interactions with listed species by the fishing gear used in these commercial fisheries are negligible. Estuarine birds have been known to interact with fishing nets, but none have been reported in recent years and the risks to their populations are negligible. Commercial fishers are required to report all interactions with listed species. Recreational fishers using line-fishing methods are unlikely to capture listed species and interactions are expected to be a **negligible risk**.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

The operation of gillnets and haul nets over predominantly sand and mud bottoms is unlikely to have any impact on these habitats in estuaries and nearshore waters. Similarly, line fishing methods used by recreational fishers have a negligible impact on the bottom substrates. Anchoring by recreational fishing vessels may

have localised impacts on habitats such as seagrass and reefs. Hence there is a **negligible risk** to benthic habitats.

Ecosystem

Whitebait is a key prey item for little penguins (*Eudyptula minor*) and whitebait availability may affect their breeding success (Cannell *et al.* 2012). Little penguins from colonies at Penguin Island and Garden Island forage for whitebait and other baitfish between Cockburn Sound and Geographe Bay (Cannell 2016). Whitebait removals by fishing pose a **moderate** risk to these penguins when whitebait abundance is low.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

The nearshore and estuarine recreational fisheries of the WCB provide a **high social amenity** for the WA community. This Bioregion hosts the main population centres and fishery resources are very accessible to shore-based and boat-based recreational fishers. There is currently a **moderate risk** to these values.

Economic

Estimated annual value (Gross Value of Production) to commercial fishers for 2019:

Level 1: <\$1 million

This reflects commercial beach price of landed product only and does not include economic flow-on values such as employment within the fishery, additional employment/value in distribution networks, retail fish sales sectors and spending on fuel and equipment.

The West Coast Bioregion is the most heavily used area in Western Australia for recreational fishing (including charter based fishing). The estimated value of all recreational fishing in the areas is \$1.7 billion. This consists of \$305.6 million in the South West, \$217.2 million in the Peel region, \$1.1 billion in the Metropolitan area and \$42.9 million in the Wheatbelt (McLeod and Lindner 2018). A significant amount of this value is derived from boat and shore-based fishing in nearshore and estuarine areas of the WCB.

Due to the decline in whitebait and ongoing recovery of herring, the economic risk is considered **Moderate**.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

This resource is harvested using a constant exploitation approach, where the annual catch

taken is assumed to vary in proportion to stock abundance. Indicator species are used to determine the status of the resource. All indicator species are assessed annually based on catch and/or catch rate trends, where data is available (noting that recreational fishery catch data is limited for these stocks). Additionally, higher level assessments are periodically undertaken for some stocks. A formal harvest strategy exists for finfish captured commercially within the Peel-Harvey Estuary (Department of Fisheries 2015) and is currently being updated. A formal harvest strategy is not currently in place for the remainder of this resource.

Allowable Catch Tolerance Levels

West Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery (Peel-Harvey Estuary only):

Finfish caught commercially in the Peel-Harvey Estuary are managed according to a Harvest Strategy which uses catches and catch rates as indicators of fishery performance (Department of Fisheries 2015). In 2019, the catch of sea mullet exceeded the threshold reference level (70 t). The Department reviewed the current risk posed by this catch level and determined that it was **acceptable**.

Australian herring fisheries:

The commercial catch tolerance range is 50-179 tonnes. This range represents the minimum and maximum total annual catches by 'minor' herring fisheries (i.e. excluding the former G-trap net fishery) over the period 2000-2014. The 2019 catch was 65.6 t, which was **acceptable**. The current catch tolerance range used to assess annual recreational fishery performance is based on boat-based recreational catches remaining below the 2013/14 estimated state-wide catch of herring, i.e. <16 t. The 2017/18 boat-based recreational catch was 14 t, which was **acceptable**.

Compliance

The Department undertakes regular compliance inspections to ensure fishing is being undertaken in accordance with the governing legislation and runs education programs with various stakeholder groups to increase the levels of voluntary compliance.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with the Southern Seafood Producers Association and licensees on operational issues. Industry Management Meetings are convened by the Department through the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who are also undertake statutory management plan consultation on behalf of the Department under a Service Level Agreement. Consultation with the recreational sector is undertaken via the peak

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representative body, Recfishwest, and/or the Department's website when documents are released for public comment.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

As part of the Government's election commitment to ensure the continued health of the Peel-Harvey Estuary, in 2018 a Voluntary Fishery Adjustment Scheme (VFAS) was initiated to remove three to five commercial licences from the Peel Harvey Estuary. At the completion of the scheme the amount of net that can be used by commercial fishers in the Peel-Harvey Estuary (Area 2 of the WCEMF) will be reduced in proportion to the number of licences that are removed. The VFAS also relates to the take of blue swimmer crabs in the estuary, see the West Coast Blue Swimmer Crab Report for information on this.

To assist recovery of the whitebait stock, management arrangements to reduce fishing pressure were introduced in July 2019. These will reduce the commercial catch to approximately 50% of the historical average catch.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Annual variations in coastal currents (particularly the Leeuwin and Capes Currents) appear to influence the spawning and recruitment patterns

of species such as whitebait, tailor, Australian herring and western Australian salmon (Lenanton et al. 2009).

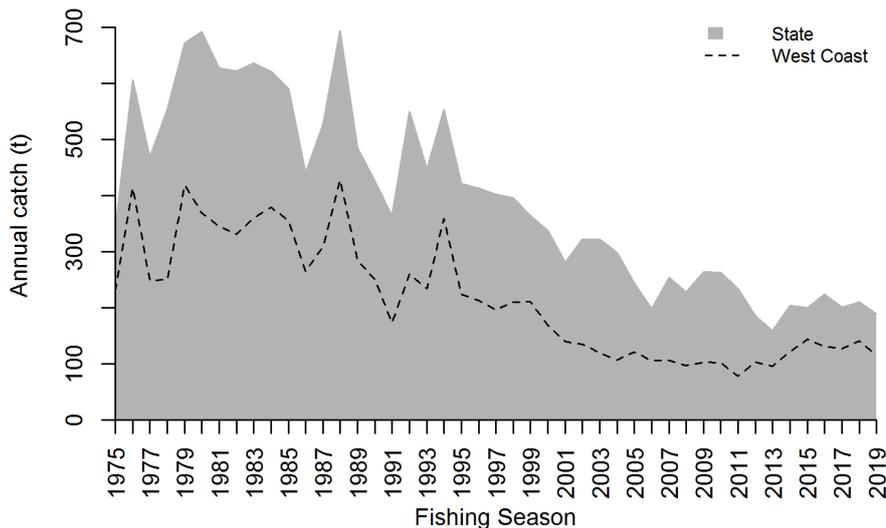
Changes in environmental variables due to climate change (such as ocean temperature, currents, winds, nutrient supply, rainfall, ocean chemistry and extreme weather conditions) are expected to have major impacts on marine ecosystems. These impacts are expected to create both difficulties and opportunities for fisheries.

In 2011, a 'heatwave' event in coastal waters of south-western WA altered the distribution (e.g. tropical species occurring in temperate waters) and behaviour (e.g. spawning activity, migration) of many nearshore finfish species, which appears to have affected the abundance of these species in 2011 and in subsequent years (Caputi et al. 2014).

WCB estuaries are highly modified and often degraded environments and the impacts of environmental factors on estuarine fish are likely to be more important than fishing pressure. Impacts in estuaries are most pronounced among 'estuarine-dependent' species, i.e. those that rely on estuarine habitats for spawning, feeding and/or nursery areas (e.g. cobbler, Perth herring, black bream).

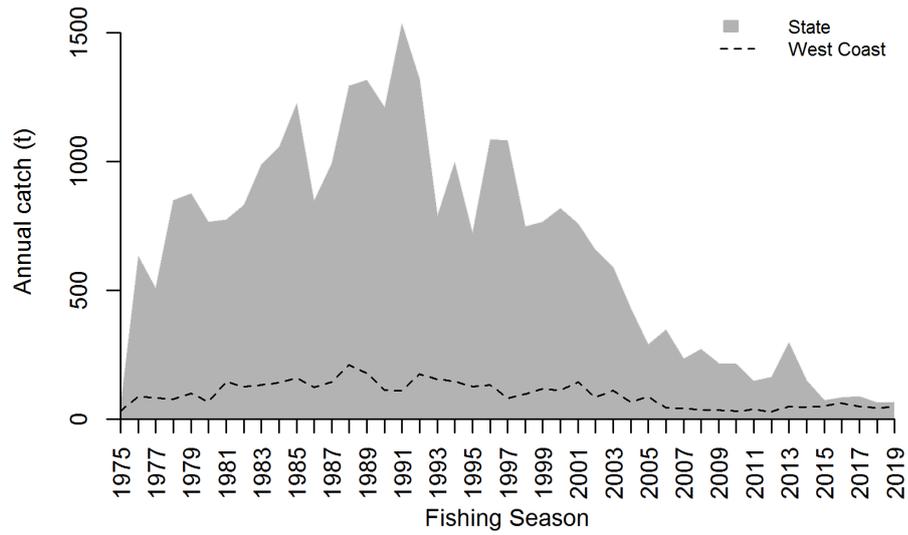
Fluctuating market demand is a significant factor affecting the annual commercial catch levels of many species.

High risk.



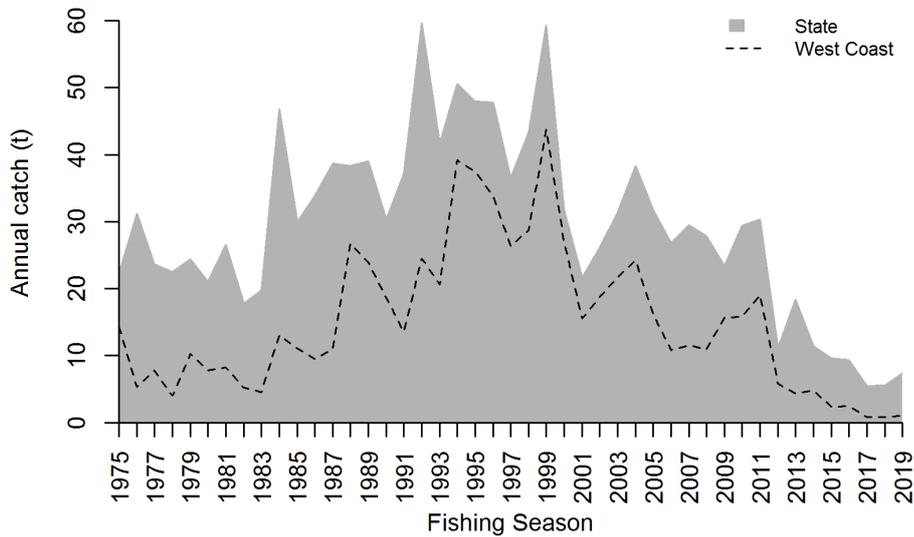
NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FINFISH FIGURE 1.

Annual commercial catch of sea mullet in the State and in the West Coast Bioregion, 1975 to 2019.



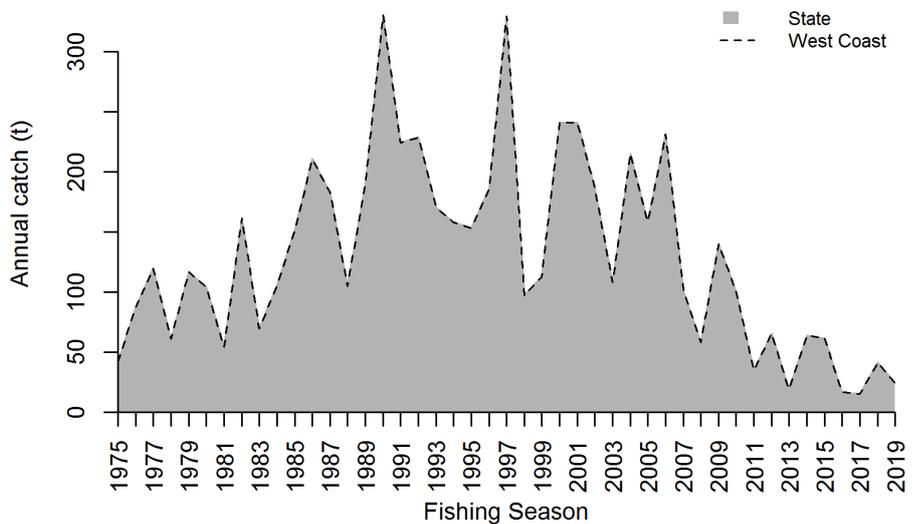
NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FINFISH FIGURE 2.

Annual commercial catch of Australian herring in the State and in the West Coast Bioregion, 1975 to 2019.



NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FINFISH FIGURE 3.

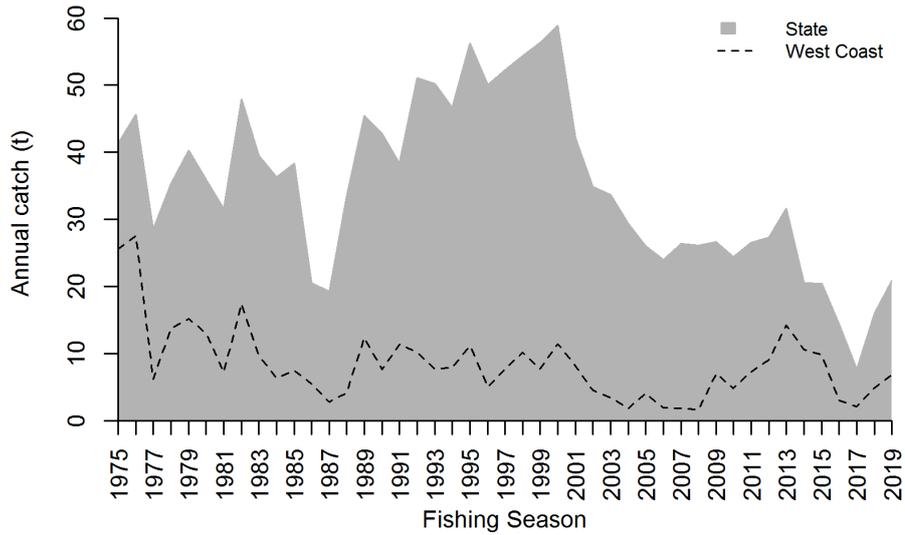
Annual commercial catch of southern garfish in the State and in the West Coast Bioregion, 1975 to 2019.



NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FINFISH FIGURE 4.

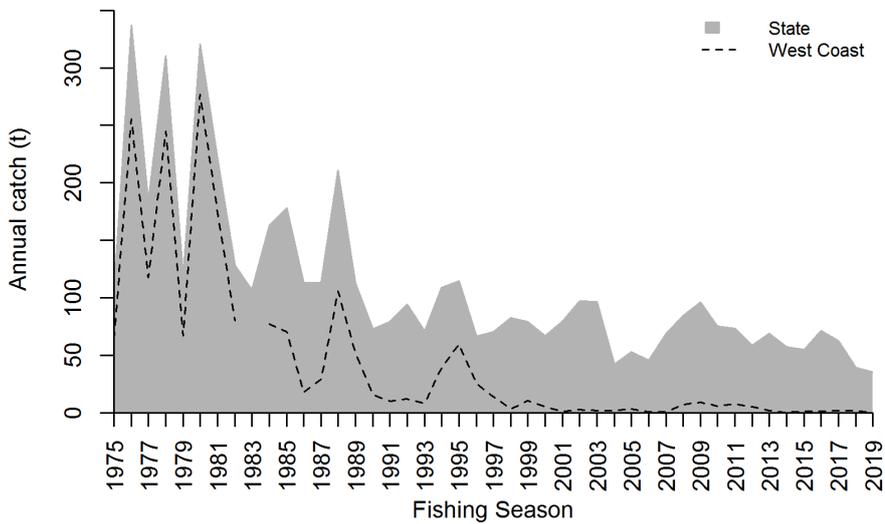
Annual commercial catch of whitebait in the State and in the West Coast Bioregion, 1975 to 2019.

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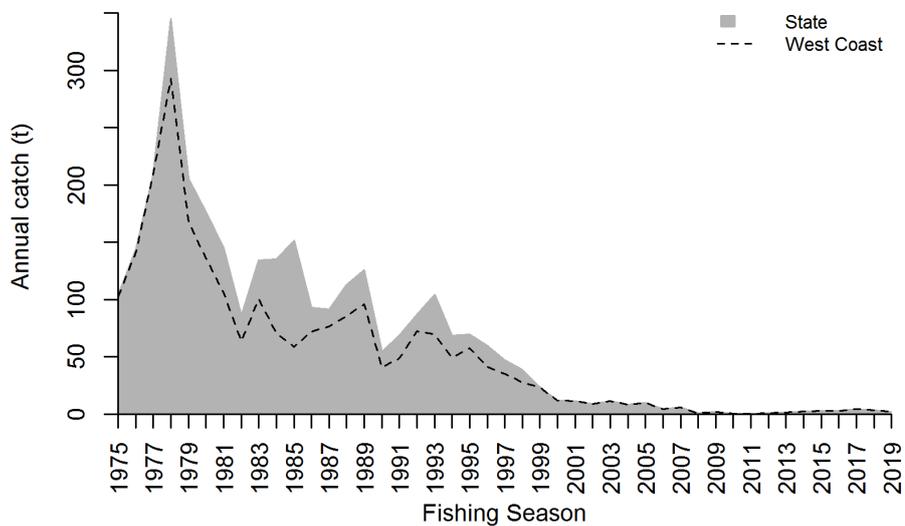
NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FINFISH FIGURE 5.

Annual commercial catch of tailor in the State and in the West Coast Bioregion, 1975 to 2019.



NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FINFISH FIGURE 6.

Annual commercial catch of Perth herring in the State and in the West Coast Bioregion, 1975 to 2019.



NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FINFISH FIGURE 7.

Annual commercial catch of Perth herring in the State and in the West Coast Bioregion, 1975 to 2019.

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WEST COAST SMALL PELAGIC SCALEFISH RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020



J. Norriss and S. Blazeski

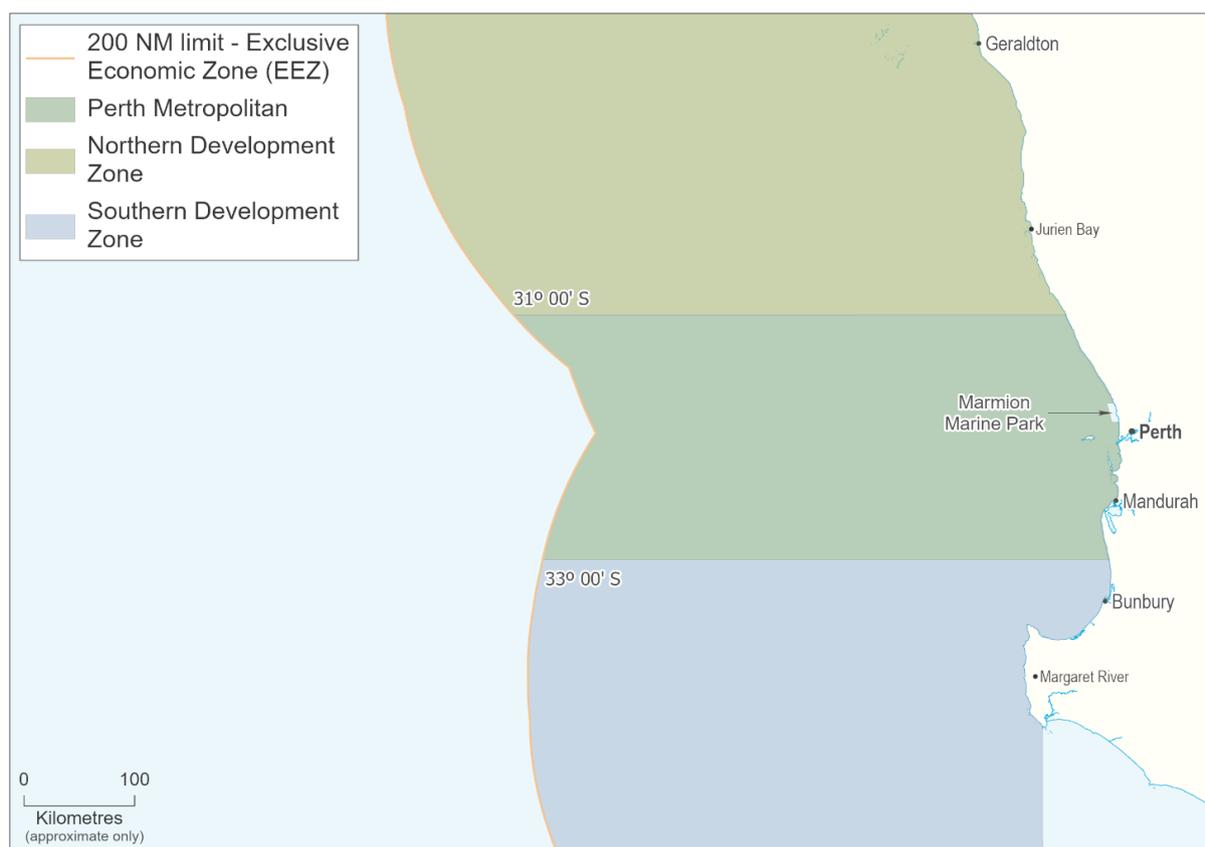
OVERVIEW

The five species comprising the west coast small pelagic scalefish resource are tropical sardine ('scaly mackerel', *Sardinella lemuru*, pictured above), pilchard (*Sardinops sagax*), Australian anchovy (*Engraulis australis*), yellowtail scad (*Trachurus novaezelandiae*) and maray (*Etrumeus teres*). They are taken predominantly by the West Coast Purse Seine Fishery (WCPSF) together with fishery developmental zone licence holders, using purse seine gear in waters between

Geraldton and Cape Leeuwin. This region is split into three zones - Northern Development Zone (all WA waters north of 31° 00'S), Perth Metropolitan (31° 00'S to 33° 00'S) and Southern Development Zone (33° 00'S to Cape Leeuwin). Licensees are also entitled to take Perth herring (*Nematalosa vlaminghi*), which forms part of the West Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Resource, but have not done so since 1997.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery Commercial notional TACs: Perth Metropolitan and Southern Development Zone combined: 3,000 t (Pilchards 2,328 t, Other small pelagic sp. 672 t); Northern Development Zone: 2,700 t tropical sardine.	Total Catch 2019: 527 t (all small pelagic species & zones combined)	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (not defined)	Total Catch 2017/18: <1 t (boat-based only)	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Tropical sardine	Above threshold	Adequate
Pilchard	Above threshold	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible Risk	Acceptable
Listed Species	Low Risk	Acceptable
Habitat	Negligible Risk	Acceptable
Ecosystem	Low Risk	Acceptable
Economic GVP <\$1 m	Moderate risk	Acceptable
Social (Low amenity)	Negligible Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Stable	Acceptable
External Drivers	Low Risk	Acceptable



WEST COAST SMALL PELAGIC SCALEFISH FIGURE 1.

Map showing boundaries of the West Coast Purse Seine Fishery and Northern and Southern Development Zones which take the large majority of the catch of the West Coast small pelagic scalefish resource.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

The total combined catch of the five west coast small pelagic scalefish species taken by the WCPSF and developmental licensees in 2019 was 527 t, of which 89% was tropical sardine and 10% pilchards (West Coast Small Pelagic Scalefish Figure 2). Tropical sardines have dominated the catch since pilchards suffered mass mortality events in 1995 and 1998/99 caused by a herpesvirus.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

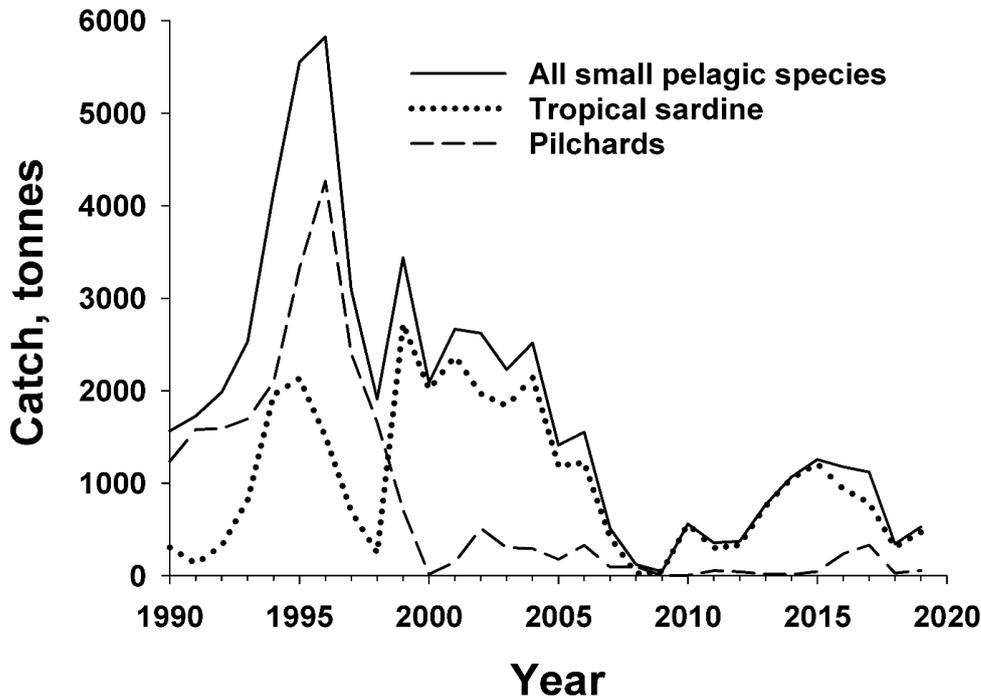
Tropical sardine (Sustainable-Adequate)

Tropical sardines are small, low trophic level pelagic species that feeds by filtering plankton. In WA longevity of 6 to 7 years and a maximum fork length of 20 cm has been recorded.

The WCPSF and developmental licensees operate at the southern limit of the tropical sardine distribution in WA. Analysis of otolith chemistry showed no evidence for the existence of separate

stocks between Carnarvon and Fremantle (Gaughan and Mitchell 2000). They are a highly mobile species resulting in a patchy but widespread distribution.

The WCPSF and developmental licensee catch of tropical sardines in 2019 was 470 t, a 53% increase from 2018 (West Coast Small Pelagic Scalefish Figure 2). Much of this increase can be attributed to repairs to a key fish processing facility following fire. Confidentiality requirements preclude disclosure of the spatial distribution of the catch. The limited spatial distribution of fishing effort, which has been at comparatively low levels in recent years, for what appears to be a highly mobile species suggests that only a small proportion of a widespread stock is being targeted. Catches and biological stock status are therefore considered **sustainable-adequate**.



WEST COAST SMALL PELAGIC SCALEFISH FIGURE 2.

Time series of total annual catch of all five west coast small pelagic scalefish species, tropical sardines and pilchards by the WCPSF and developmental licensees from 1990 to 2019.

Pilchard (Sustainable-Adequate)

The pilchard is a small, low trophic level pelagic species that feeds by filtering plankton. Longevity is up to 9 years and maximum size 200-250 mm SL.

The WCPSF and developmental licensee catch of pilchards in 2019 was 55 t. (West Coast Small Pelagic Scalefish Figure 2). Catches declined precipitously during the mid to late 1990s following two mass mortality events caused by a herpesvirus. While the stock had recovered by the mid-2000s (see below), catches have remained low since then due to reduced effort and the fishery transitioning to take mostly tropical sardine.

Population modelling, based on spawning biomass estimates (from egg surveys), catch-at-age and catch data, suggested the stock had recovered from the mass mortality events by the mid-2000s (Gaughan *et al.* 2008). By this time the annual exploitation rate was low: less than 5 per cent (around 400 t) of the estimated spawning biomass of approximately 25,000 t. Since then annual catches have remained below this level and so are unlikely to cause the stock to become recruitment overfished. Catches and biological stock status are therefore considered **sustainable-adequate**.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

The species available for capture in the WCPSF are restricted by the West Coast Purse Seine Managed Fishery Management Plan 1989. Small quantities of finfish species are sometimes taken as bycatch, but this occurs infrequently and the majority are released from the net unharmed. **Negligible risk.**

Interactions with endangered, threatened and protected species (ETPs) must be reported to the Department on monthly statutory CAES returns. WCPSF interactions are rare and usually result in the animal released unharmed, indicating the fishery poses a **negligible** risk to ETPs.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Purse seine nets are pelagic in nature, with little impact on benthic habitats during normal operations. On rare occasions nets may be deployed in shallow waters and come into contact with habitats such as seagrass beds. The light structure of the net is expected to cause minimal damage to benthic habitats when this occurs, and would be kept to a small, localised area. The WCPSF is therefore considered to be a **negligible** risk to these habitats.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

Small pelagic fish are not a major target for recreational fishers and catches are low: the only species detected in the catch of boat-based recreational fishers during 2017/18 was <1 t of yellowtail scad (Ryan *et al.* 2019). **Negligible** risk.

Economic

Local employment was provided by five active vessels as well as local processing factories. A small proportion of the catch is sold for human consumption while most is sold for bait or feed for aquaculture or pets. Product export was permitted by declaration of the WCPSF and Development Zones as an approved Wildlife Trade Operation by the then Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy in January 2020. The estimated gross value of production (GVP) for the WCPSF in 2019 was <\$1 million (Level 1). The economic risk is considered **Moderate**.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The WCPSF is currently managed under a constant catch harvest strategy approach, with catches limited to notional TACs.

Allowable Catch Tolerance Levels

Currently, a notional combined Total Allowable Catch (TAC), covering both the Perth metropolitan fishery and the Southern Development Zone, is set for pilchards and another for other small pelagic species. For the 2018/19 licensing period

(1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019) the notional TAC was 2,328 t for pilchards and 672 t for other small pelagic species (including tropical sardines). For the Northern Development Zone the notional TAC is 2,700 t for tropical sardines. Reaching or exceeding the notional TACs will trigger a management response.

Compliance

Compliance monitoring is via at-sea and on-land inspections.

Consultation

Consultation with licensees occurs directly on operational issues and through industry Management Meetings convened by the West Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who are responsible for statutory management plan consultation under a Service Level Agreement with the Department.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

There are no broader management reviews planned for the WCPSF in 2020. Stocks will continue to be monitored principally through Level 1 (catch based) assessments.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

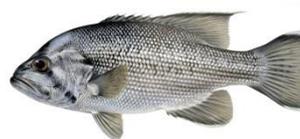
Climate change is likely to be causing a southward contraction in the natural distribution of pilchards (**moderate** risk) and facilitating a southward extension for tropical sardine (**negligible** risk).

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WEST COAST DEMERSAL SCALEFISH RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

D. Fairclough and S. Walters



OVERVIEW

The West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource (WCDSR) comprises over 100 species in inshore (20-250 m deep) and offshore (>250 m) demersal habitats of the West Coast Bioregion (WCB) which are exploited by both commercial and recreational (including charter) boat-based line fishers. The indicator species for inshore waters include West Australian dhufish, Snapper and Baldchin groper, while the proposed indicators for offshore waters include Hapuku, Blue-eye trevalla and Eightbar grouper (DoF 2011).

Following an assessment in 2007 that demonstrated overfishing of the indicators for the inshore demersal resource, management arrangements designed to recover the resource were progressively introduced between late 2007 and early 2010. The objective of these was to limit

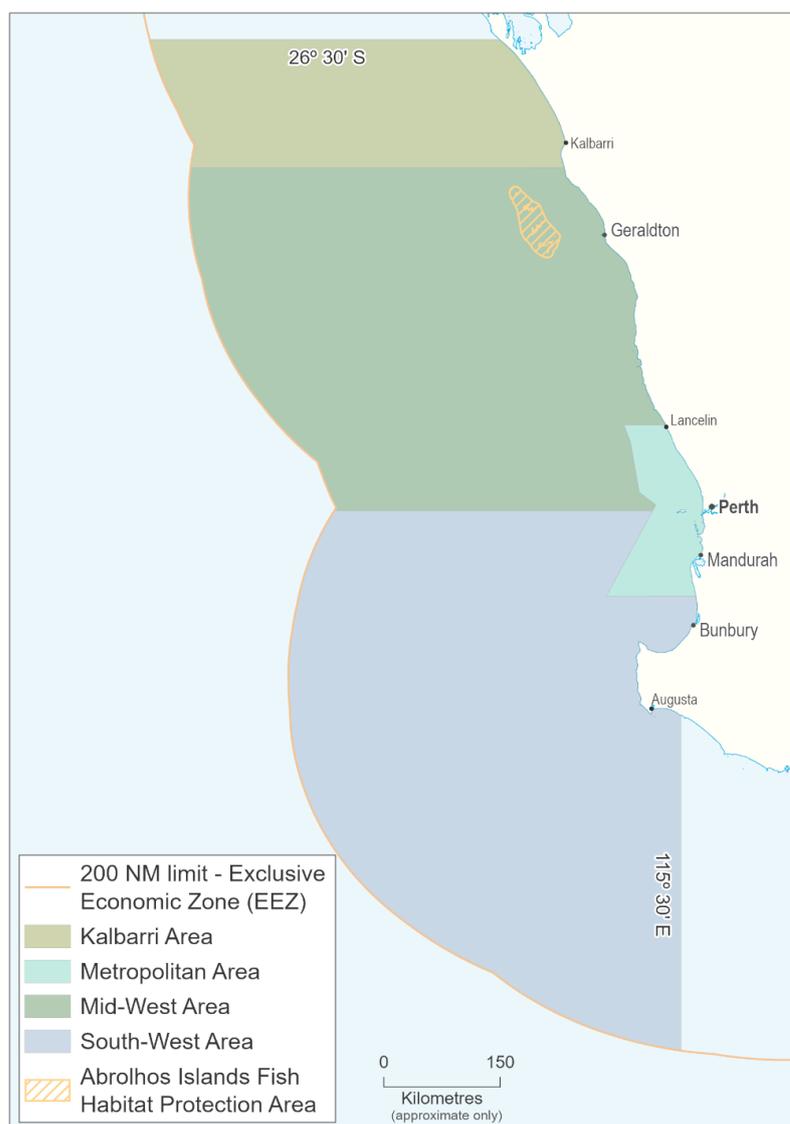
annual retained catches of demersal species by both the commercial and recreational sectors to no more than 50% of 2005/06 catch levels. These arrangements were implemented in order to reduce fishing mortality rates (*F*) of indicator species to below the threshold reference point and to manage the resource in accordance with a formal IFM sectoral allocation decision.

To achieve these management goals each of the commercial fisheries authorised to land demersal scalefish in the WCB have individual management arrangements with access, gear, area (including metropolitan closure) and/or entitlement limitations. Similarly, boat-based recreational and charter fishers are licensed and managed by input and output controls including a closed season.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch)	Outcome	Status
^a Commercial fisheries (450 t)	Total Catch 2018/19: 271 t	Acceptable
^b Recreational fishery (250 t)	Total Catch Rec (top 15 species) 95% CLs 2017/18: 210-253 t; Charter 2018/19: 51 t	Not acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
WCDSR	High Risk	
West Australian dhufish	^c 2017: $F > F_{limit}$, $SPR_{limit} < SPR < SPR_{threshold}$	Recovering
Snapper	^c 2017: $F > F_{limit}$, $SPR \approx SPR_{limit}$	Recovering, increased management action required on recreational catch
Baldchin groper	^c 2014: $F > F_{limit}$, $SPR_{limit} < SPR < SPR_{threshold}$	Recovering, increased management action required on recreational catch
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low risk	Acceptable
Listed Species	Negligible risk	Acceptable
Habitat	Negligible risk	Acceptable
Ecosystem	Low risk	Acceptable
Economic (GVP \$1-5 m)	Medium risk	Acceptable
Social (High amenity)	Medium risk	Acceptable
Governance	High risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	Medium risk	Acceptable

^ademersal suite; ^btop 15 demersal species catch by the recreational sector comprises estimated retained catch by private boat-based fishers (Ryan et al., 2019) and retained catch by charter fishers in 2017/18; ^cdate of last assessment



WEST COAST DEMERSAL SCALEFISH RESOURCE FIGURE 1.

Map showing boundaries of the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Interim Managed Fishery. Note: the West Coast Bioregion and recreational sector in that bioregion begins at 27°S.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

The total landings of demersal species by commercial fisheries in the WCB in the most recent season (2018/19 or 2019) was 271 t. The West Coast Demersal Scalefish Interim Managed Fishery (WCDSIMF) retained 234 t of demersal species (254 t of all fishes) in 2019, while the Temperate Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline fisheries, the Cockburn Sound Line and Pot Managed Fishery, South-west Trawl Managed Fishery and West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery landed 32 t, 1 t, 0 t and 3.5 t, respectively, in either 2018/19 or 2019.

Catches of demersal species by commercial fisheries in the WCB in 2018/19 (271 t) and by the WCDSIMF in 2019 (234 t) were below respective stock recovery benchmarks (50% of 2005/06 catches) of 450 t and 410 t (West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Figure 2), as they have been since 2008, when management commenced to

recover stocks. Catches of demersal species by the WCDSIMF in 2019 in the Kalbarri Area (94 t) increased from 84 t in 2018. Similar small increases occurred in the Mid-west Area (from 78 t in 2018 to 85 t in 2019) and in the South-west Area (from 50 t in 2018 to 55 t in 2019). The WCDSIMF fished for ~9,160 hours in 2019, an increase from ~7,060 in 2018. The majority of the effort occurred in the Mid-west (~5,260 h), followed by the Kalbarri (2,600 h) and South-west areas (1,300 h).

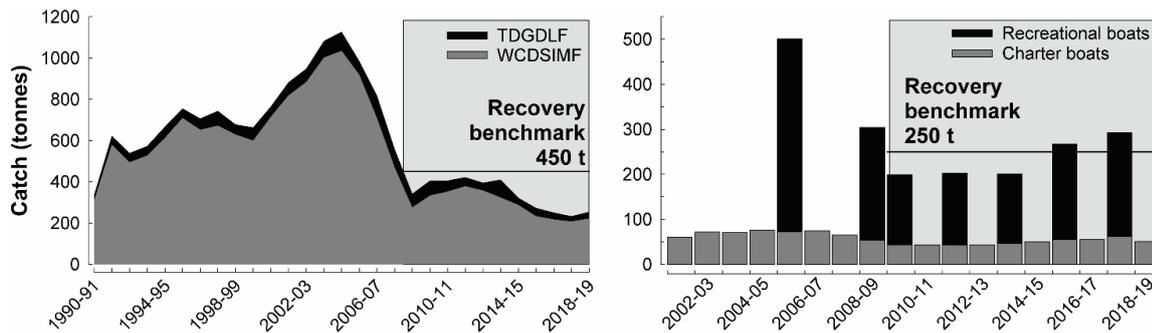
The estimated recreational harvest of the top 15 demersal species (or groupings) in the West Coast derived from the 2017/18 survey of private boat-based fishers and 2018/19 reported catches of charter fishers were 231 t (95% CI 210–253 t) and 51 t, respectively. The estimated harvest range of the recreational sector (charter and private boat-based) of 261–304 t was thus above

WEST COAST BIOREGION

the stock recovery benchmark of 250 t (West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Figure 2). The estimated recreational harvest (private boat-based) for the top 15 demersal species (or groupings) in the West Coast was steady at 231 t (95% CI 210–253 t) in 2017/18 compared with 213 t (95% CI 194–231 t) in 2015/16.

The annual estimated recreational fishing effort (private boat-based) in the West Coast Bioregion was steady in 2017/18 (311,495 boat days, 95% CI: 287,726–335,264) compared with 2015/16

(271,311 boat days, 95% CI: 249,688–292,934) (Ryan *et al.* 2019) and 2011/12 (293,112 boat days, 95% CI: 272,164–314,060), but was higher than 2013/14 (249,719 boat days, 95%CI: 229,016–270,423). Charter fishers retained 51 t of the top 15 demersal species in 2018/19, which decreased from 62 t in 2017/18, following an increasing trend from 41 t in 2010/11. The number of fishing days reported by charter fishers has steadily increased from about 1,550 in 2009/10 to 2,450 in 2018/19.



WEST COAST DEMERSAL SCALEFISH RESOURCE FIGURE 2.

Estimated retained catches of demersal species in the West Coast Bioregion for the commercial and recreational sectors. Stock recovery catch benchmarks were introduced between 2008 and 2010 (light grey shading). Estimated recreational sector retained catches combine data for financial year for charter (since logbooks were introduced in 2001/02) and survey year for recreational boats. Private boat-based recreational catches are estimates of the retained catch and do not show uncertainty (95% CIs), with 2011/12–2017/18 estimates derived from statewide phone diary surveys (Ryan *et al.*, 2019) and prior estimates derived from boat ramp creel surveys. TDGDLF = Temperate Demersal Gill-net and Longline fisheries; WCDSIMF = West Coast Demersal (Interim) Managed Fishery.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Annual assessments are undertaken using catch levels. Periodic Level 3 assessments of stock status of indicator species evaluate additional key performance indicators, including fishing mortality (F) and spawning potential ratio (SPR), using a weight-of-evidence approach that considers all available information (Wise *et al.*, 2007; Fairclough *et al.*, 2014) and determines the extent of risk of further depletion within the next five years using ISO 31000-based risk assessment methods (Fletcher, 2015; Fletcher *et al.*, 2011). The last assessment was conducted in 2017.

Inshore Demersal

West Australian dhufish (Recovering)

Retained catches of West Australian dhufish in the WCB by all commercial fisheries and the WCDSIMF have been around or below respective stock recovery benchmarks of 82 t and 72 t, since inception of the current management regime in 2008 to recover stocks. Fifty three tonnes of WA dhufish were landed by all commercial fisheries in 2018/19 and, of that, 44 t were landed by the WCDSIMF in 2019 (West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Figure 3). This represents increases from 43 and 37 t, respectively, from the previous season.

Retained catches of WA dhufish by the WCDSIMF in the Mid-west and South-west areas have remained around or below recovery benchmarks of 44 t and 19 t since 2008. Thirty tonnes and 12 t were landed in those areas in 2019, which had increased steadily in the last four years. Catches of WA dhufish in the Kalbarri Area remain low.

The estimated retained catches of WA dhufish by the recreational sector (boat-based and charter fishers) of 135 t (116–154 t) in 2017/18 and 127 t in 2015/16 (110–144 t) have increased since 2013/14 (81–108 t) and 2011/12 (76–101 t). The 2015/16 and 2017/18 point estimates were above the recovery benchmark of 126 t (West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Figure 3). However, in each case, the lower 95% CL was below the benchmark. The retained catch of WA dhufish by boat-based recreational fishers in 2017/18 was 123 t (95% CL: 105–141 t) and by charter fishers in 2018/19 was 12 t.

The numbers of WA dhufish released represented 59% of the 63,068 (SE=5,842) caught (retained and released) by boat-based recreational fishers in 2017/18 (Ryan *et al.* 2019) and 39% of the ~3,600 caught by charter fishers in 2018/19.

The 2017 weight of evidence assessment of the biological stock (bioregion level), which included

age composition data from 2012/13-2014/15 (post management changes), demonstrated that F and SPR for WA dhufish had not reached acceptable levels at that time (i.e. the threshold). F estimates had not decreased either at the stock level or in the northern and southern parts of the bioregion. They were also greater in the northern than southern part of the bioregion, indicating greater depletion prior to management changes (West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Figure 4). There was preliminary evidence that year classes recruited to the fishery after management changes have experienced lower F than those that recruited prior to changes, indicating some reduction in recent fishing mortality. However, additional post-release mortality associated with high recreational sector release rates and unknown commercial release rates may impair the rate of stock recovery. This species was thus assessed as **High Risk** (C3 x L4).

The above evidence indicates that estimated levels of fishing pressure should allow the stock to recover from overfishing, if retained catches are maintained below the stock recovery benchmark and levels of post-release mortality are not significant. The biological stock is classified as **recovering**.

Snapper (Recovering)

Retained catches of Snapper in the WCB by all commercial fisheries and the WCDSIMF were above respective recovery benchmarks of 126 t and 120 t between 2010 and 2014. Reductions in effort entitlements to WCDSIMF fishers in the Kalbarri and Mid-west areas in 2015 contributed to reducing total commercial and WCDSIMF landings below benchmarks. Total landings of 76 t by all fisheries in 2018/19 and of 67 t by the WCDSIMF in 2019 increased from 65 and 56 t in the previous season (West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Figure 3). In 2019, catches of snapper in the Kalbarri (35 t) and Mid-west (29 t) areas were below their respective benchmarks of 65 t and 43 t.

Estimated retained catches of Snapper by the recreational sector (boat-based and charter fishers) during the years of each of the four statewide surveys between 2011/12 and 2017/18 have been above the recovery benchmark of 37 t. For example, an estimated 70 t was landed by the recreational sector in 2017/18, comprising 22 t by charter fishers and 48 t (95% CLs 40-55 t) by boat-based fishers (West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Figure 3). Charter landings in 2018/19 decreased to 17 t.

The numbers of Snapper released by private boat-based recreational fishers in 2017/18 represented 71% of 61,446 (SE=4,922) caught (retained and released) (Ryan *et al.* 2019) and 55% of the ~12,700 caught by charter fishers.

The 2017 assessment of Snapper at the biological stock (bioregion) level, including age composition

data collected from 2012/13-2014/15, demonstrated that although F had declined since 2009/10-10/11, F (and SPR) had not reached acceptable levels at that time (i.e. the threshold; West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Figure 4). In addition, high recreational catches, post-release mortality associated with high recreational sector release rates and unknown commercial release rates may impair the rate of stock recovery. Snapper is thus assessed as **High Risk** (C3 x L4). However, there is preliminary evidence that year classes recruited to the fishery after management changes have experienced lower F than those that recruited prior to changes, indicating reductions in fishing mortality.

The above evidence indicates that estimated levels of fishing pressure should allow the stock to recover from overfishing, if retained catches are maintained below the stock recovery benchmark and levels of post-release mortality are not significant. The biological stock is classified as **recovering**.

Baldchin groper (Recovering)

Landings of Baldchin groper in the WCB by all commercial fisheries (10 t, 2018/19) and the WCDSIMF (7 t, 2019) were below respective stock recovery benchmarks of 22 t and 17 t, as they have been since commencement of the current management regime (West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Figure 3).

Retained catches of Baldchin groper by the recreational sector have been above the benchmark of 33 t during three of the statewide surveys between 2011/12 and 2017/18, e.g. 43 t in 2017/18. Charter fishers landed 11 t in 2017/18, while boat-based recreational fishers landed 32 t (95% CL: 26-38 t) (Ryan *et al.*, 2019; West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Figure 3). In 2018/19, charter fishers landed 10 t.

The numbers of Baldchin groper released by private boat-based recreational fishers in 2017/18 represented 33% of 22,971 (SE=2,184) caught (retained and released) (Ryan *et al.* 2019) and 33% of the ~4,900 caught by charter fishers in 2018/19.

The last assessment of Baldchin groper in 2014 demonstrated that rates of F at the biological stock level, using age composition data collected from 2008/09 to 2010/11 (i.e. during management changes) did not change from the previous assessment. F estimates were above the limit reference point of 1.5M (West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Figure 4; Fairclough *et al.*, 2014). Similarly, little change was identified in SPR , with point estimates between 0.2 and 0.3. Expected high post-release mortality associated with recreational and commercial releases may impair the rate of stock recovery.

The above evidence indicates that estimated levels of fishing pressure should allow the stock to

WEST COAST BIOREGION

recover from overfishing, if retained catches are maintained below the stock recovery benchmark and levels of post-release mortality are not significant. The biological stock is classified as **recovering**.

Offshore Demersal

Landings of the dominant offshore demersal species by the WCDSIMF have remained below the nominal sustainable catch range for this suite (20-40 t) since the fishery commenced in 2008. However, catches of offshore demersal species have increased gradually from 7 t in 2011 to 18-20 t per year between 2017 and 2019, the majority being landed in the South-west Area.

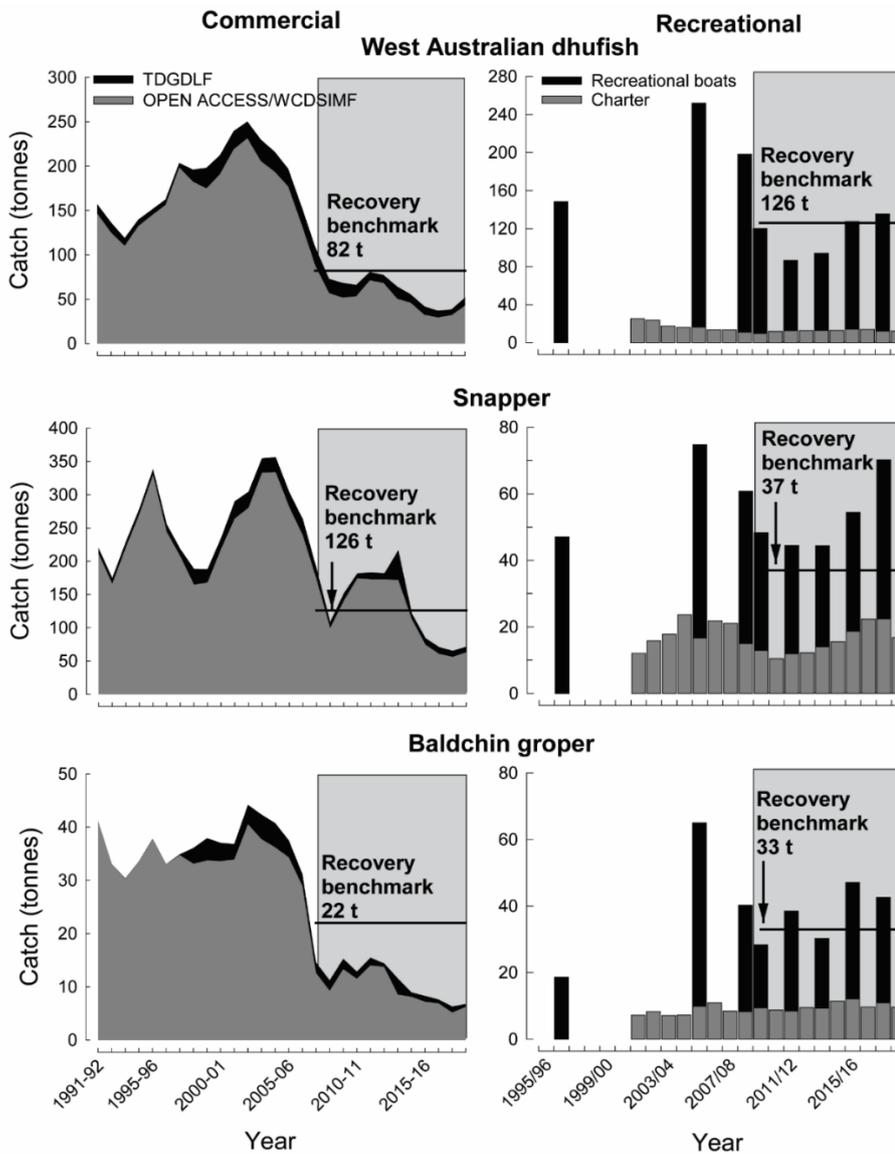
Offshore demersal species are sometimes also caught by the Commonwealth Western

Deepwater Trawl Fishery. However, reported effort and estimated annual catches of offshore demersal species have remained very low in recent years (< 1 t)

(<http://data.gov.au/dataset/reported-retained-annual-catch-from-commonwealth-fisheries-logbooks>).

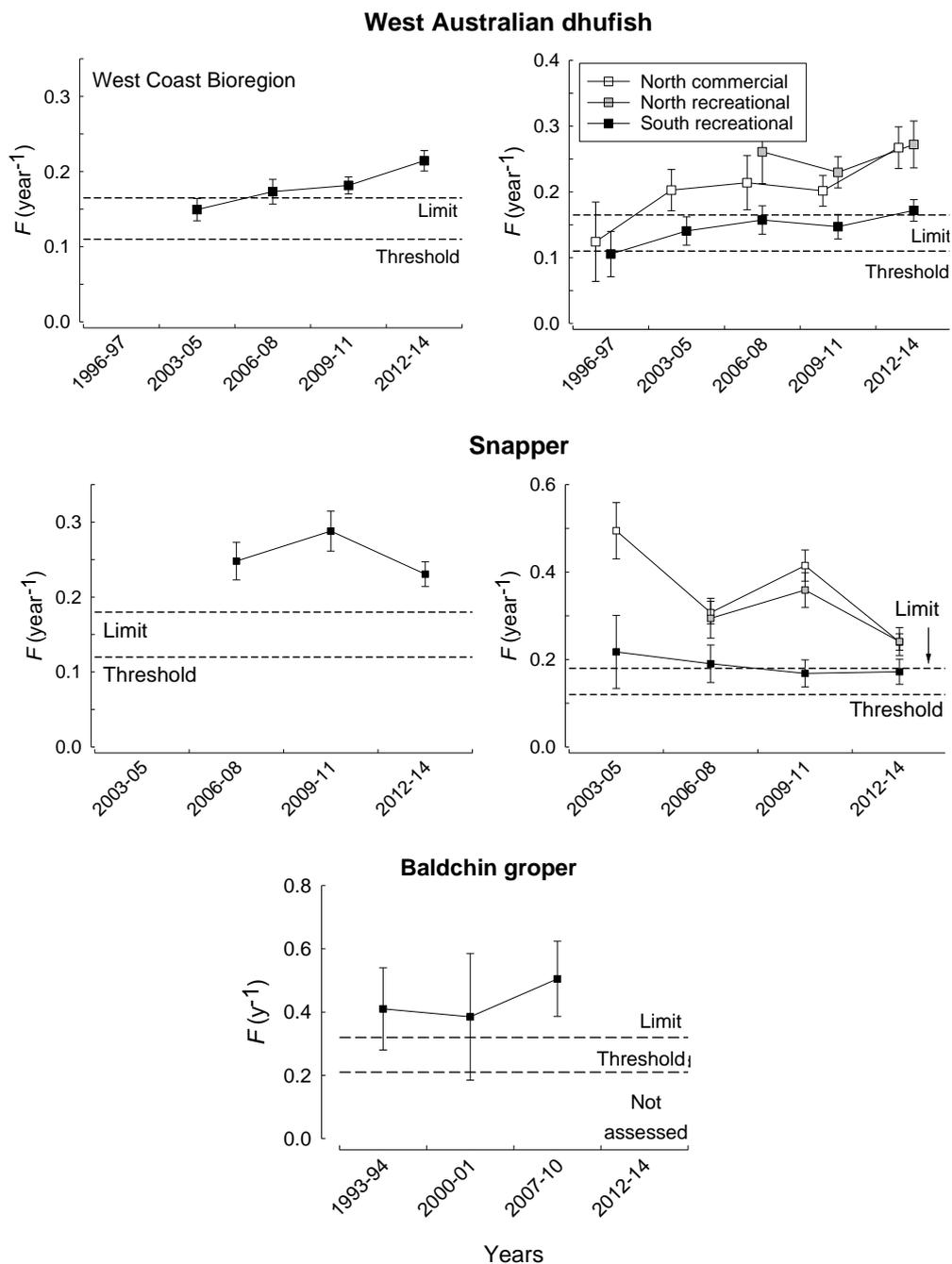
Retained catches of offshore demersal species by the recreational sector comprised 8 t in 2017/18 by private boat-based fishers (Ryan et al., 2019) and 3 t in 2018/19 by charter fishers.

The current level of fishing pressure is such that the biological stocks of offshore demersal species are considered **sustainable**.



WEST COAST DEMERSAL SCALEFISH RESOURCE FIGURE 3.

Commercial and recreational estimated retained catches of the indicator species West Australian dhufish, Snapper and Baldchin groper vs 50% of 2005/06 catch benchmarks for stock recovery. Private boat-based recreational catches are estimates of the retained catch and do not show uncertainty (95% CIs), with 2011/12-2017/18 estimates derived from statewide phone diary surveys (Ryan et al., 2019) and prior estimates derived from boat ramp creel surveys. TDGDLF = Temperate Demersal Gill-net and Longline fisheries; Open access and WCDSIMF [West Coast Demersal (Interim) Managed Fishery] are hand-line/drop-line fisheries.



WEST COAST DEMERSAL SCALEFISH RESOURCE FIGURE 4.

Estimated fishing mortality ($\pm 95\%$ CIs) vs threshold and limit reference points for West Australian dhufish, Snapper and Baldchin groper at the stock level (West Coast Bioregion) and for WA dhufish and Snapper in the northern half (Kalbarri and Mid-west areas) and southern half (Metropolitan and South-west areas) of the bioregion, based on age composition data collected from the commercial and/or recreational sectors. Note Baldchin groper is only assessed in the northern half of the bioregion. Most recent assessment in 2017 was based on biological data from 2012/13 to 2014/15.

BYCATCH and PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

Line fishing for demersal species using baited hooks is highly selective for fishes. While other fishes that are caught but not normally retained during demersal fishing activities (including inedible species, e.g. Silver Toadfish, and small species, such as wrasses) may not all survive, this still represents a minor impact to their stocks and therefore a **low risk**.

Protected Species

Commercial WCDSIMF and charter fishers are required to record listed species interactions in their statutory returns. Interactions with listed species by commercial, charter and recreational demersal fishers in the WCB are minimal. During 2019, four Grey nurse sharks were caught and released alive by WCDSIMF fishers. In 2018/19, charter fishers caught and released alive three

WEST COAST BIOREGION

gold-spotted rockcod that were above the maximum size limit and one Grey nurse shark. The level of interactions with listed species is therefore considered a **negligible risk** to their populations.

HABITAT and ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

Line fishing is the main fishing method used in the commercial and recreational fishery for demersal species which has little physical impact on the benthic environment and hence **negligible risk** to benthic habitats.

Ecosystem

Hall and Wise (2011) found that while the species composition in catches of commercial wetline, gillnet and longline fisheries in the WCB had changed over a 30-year timeline this may be a function of changes in targeting or differences in reporting methods. There was no evidence of a decline in the trophic level or mean size in catches and the fishery therefore represents a **low risk** to the ecosystem.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

The WCDSR provides **high social amenity** to recreational fishing and diving and to consumers via commercial fish supply to markets and restaurants. There is currently a **medium** level of risk to these values

The demersal resource in the WCB is highly accessible to boat fishers with 135,561 Recreational Fishing from Boat Licences held in WA from September 2017 to August 2018. The annual estimated boat-based recreational fishing effort in the West Coast Bioregion was steady in 2017/18 (311,495 boat days, SE=12,127) compared with 2015/16 (271,311, SE=11,032), and 2011/12 (293,112, SE=10,688), but higher than 2013/14 (249,719, SE=10,563) (Ryan *et al.* 2019).

Thirty-one WCDSIMF vessels (LFBs) operated in 2019 and employed between zero and four crew excluding the skipper. Fifty-four licensed charter operators fished in the WCB in 2018/19. The number of people employed in the charter industry has not been estimated.

Economic

The value of commercial fishing and aquaculture to the WA economy was recently estimated at

\$989 million (FRDC Project 2017-210). The estimated gross value of product (GVP) for the WCDSIMF in 2019 was \$1-5 million (Level 2). There is currently a **medium risk** to this level of return.

The value of recreational fishing to the WA economy was recently estimated at \$2.4 billion per year (McLeod and Lindner 2018) with recreational fishing in the Mid-West, Wheatbelt, Metro, Peel and South West regions estimated to be worth over \$1.7 billion per year.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The WCDSR is currently managed using a constant catch strategy and a formal allocation of 64% of the catch to the commercial sector and 36% to the recreational sector. Although a formal harvest strategy is not yet in place for this resource, a stock rebuilding program is underway whereby retained catches are to remain below benchmark levels (currently based on 50% of 2005/06 retained catches) until fishing mortality rates and spawning potential ratios reach acceptable levels, i.e. the threshold reference point (see Fletcher *et al.*, 2016).

Allowable Catch Tolerance Levels

Total catches of the demersal suite and indicator species (West Australian dhufish, Snapper, Baldchin groper) by the commercial sector in the most recent season were maintained below recovery catch benchmarks of 450, 82, 126 and 22 t, respectively. The retained catch levels of the commercial sector indicate that the fishery performance is considered **acceptable**.

Retained catch point estimates for the demersal suite and indicator species (West Australian dhufish, Snapper, Baldchin groper) by the recreational sector (boat-based recreational fishers in 2017/18 from the most recent statewide survey and charter fishers in 2018/19) were each above the respective stock recovery benchmarks, i.e. 250 t, 126 t, 37 t and 33 t, respectively, and were thus **not acceptable**.

Compliance

The Department undertakes regular compliance inspections to ensure fishing is being undertaken in accordance with the governing legislation and runs education programs with various stakeholder groups to increase the levels of voluntary compliance.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with licensees on operational issues. The Department convenes Annual Management Meetings through the West Australian Fishing

Industry Council (WAFIC), who are also responsible for undertaking statutory management plan consultation for the Department under a Service Level Agreement. Recreational consultation processes are facilitated by Recfishwest under a Service Level Agreement, although the Department undertakes direct consultation with the community on specific issues. Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

A formal harvest strategy recovery plan for the WCDSR will be developed in 2020/21. The next WCDSR stock assessment is due in late 2020. In 2021, a review will be undertaken to assess the current performance of the WCDSR against the harvest strategy and if we are recovering at an acceptable rate. Current recreational catches and the impact of post-release mortality will be considered through this review.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Recruitment success of demersal species, such as West Australian dhufish and Snapper vary annually and are influenced in part by environmental factors. Climate change may lead to a range of factors (e.g. increased water temperatures, changes in current strength) that could influence recruitment and the biology of demersal species (Caputi et al. 2014). Ongoing industrial development in Cockburn Sound may affect the spawning aggregation behaviour and survival of juvenile snapper in that area.

There is some overlap of species captured in the WCB by state fisheries and by the Commonwealth Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery and Great Australian Bight Trawl Sector of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery (>200 m). Published catches are currently small with no catches of demersal species in the WDWTF in 2016 and no data reported since then (data.gov.au). The Commonwealth's South-West Marine Bioregional Plan incorporates areas that will restrict access to fishing in parts of the WCB to the commercial and recreational sectors.

Moderate risk.

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GASCOYNE COAST BIOREGION

ABOUT THE BIOREGION

The marine environment of the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion (Gascoyne Overview Figure 1) represents a transition between the tropical waters of the North West Shelf of the North Coast Bioregion and the temperate waters of the West Coast Bioregion. Offshore ocean temperatures range from about 22°C to 28°C, while the inner areas of Shark Bay regularly fall to 15°C in winter. The major fish stocks are generally tropical in nature, with the exceptions of the temperate species, pink snapper, whiting and tailor, which are at the northern end of their distributions in Shark Bay.

The coastline is characterised by high cliffs in the southern half, changing to fringing coral reefs in the north. Coastal waters are generally high-energy in terms of wave action due to the strong trade wind system. The Exmouth Gulf section of the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion is seasonally influenced by extreme tropical summer cyclones, while the Shark Bay end of the Bioregion receives infrequent cyclones, but is affected at times by river outflows from inland cyclone-based summer rainfall. The limited local rainfall comes mostly from the northern edge of winter storm fronts.

The waters off the Gascoyne Coast are also strongly influenced by the southward-flowing Leeuwin Current, generated by flow from the Pacific through the Indonesian archipelago. This tropical current becomes evident in the North West Cape area and flows along the edge of the narrow continental shelf where, coupled with low rainfall and run-off plus the north flowing Ningaloo

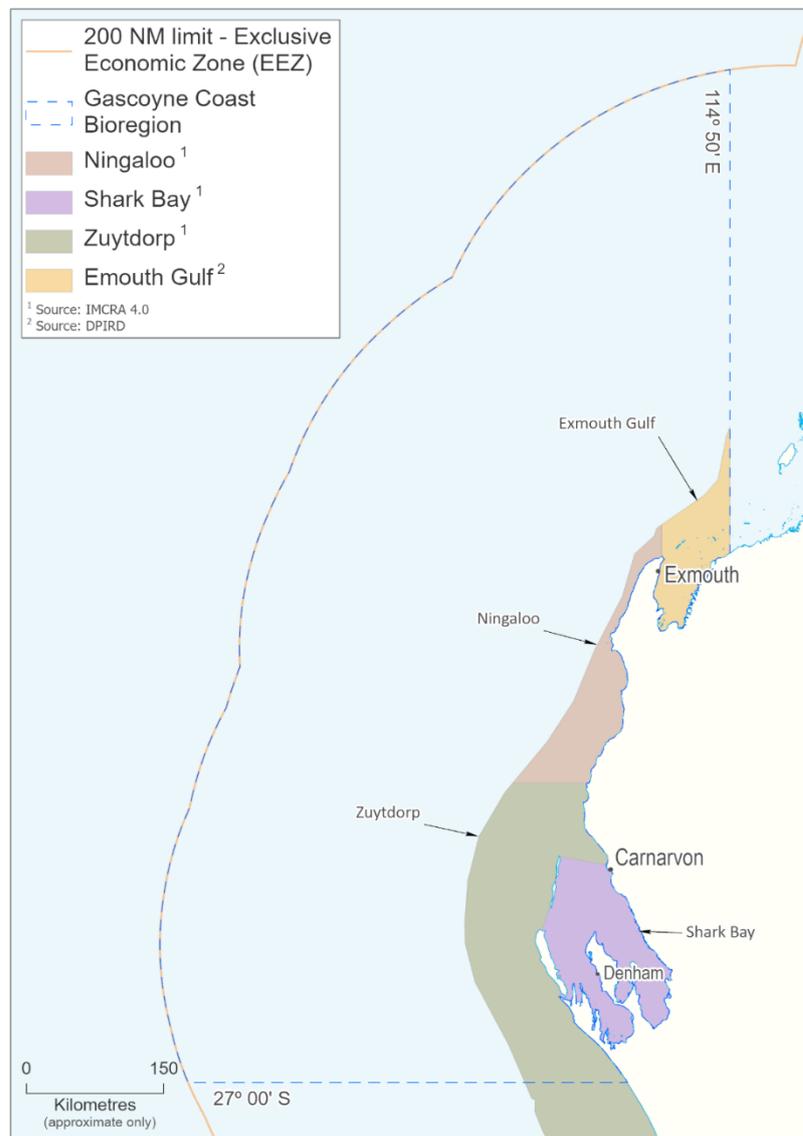
Current, it supports the diverse Ningaloo Reef marine ecosystem.

The outer area of the large marine embayment of the World Heritage-listed Shark Bay is also influenced by the warm winter current. The inner waters of the embayment are hyper-saline, due to the high evaporation and low rainfall of the adjacent terrestrial desert areas. The sea floor of both Shark Bay and the continental shelf are typically sandy compared to Exmouth Gulf, which has more mud areas and greater turbidity.

The Gascoyne Coast Bioregion has been identified as one of 18 World 'hotspots' in terms of tropical reef endemism and the second most diverse marine environment in the world in terms of tropical reef species.

The Ningaloo reef in the north of the Bioregion is the largest continuous reef in WA and is one the most significant fringing reefs in Australia. The Bioregion also has areas of mangroves, mostly in Exmouth Gulf, while seagrass beds are located in a number of areas.

The ecosystem boundaries as defined by IMCRA (V 4.0) in the bioregion are depicted in Gascoyne Overview Figure 1. The potential threats and risks to these ecosystems are often similar. For simplicity, risk ratings were allocated by grouping the ecosystems into two broad groups, estuarine or marine. However, if a particular ecosystem is unique and/or is exposed to different or significant threats, risk was allocated to these ecosystems separately.



GASCOYNE OVERVIEW FIGURE 1

Map showing the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion and IMCRA (V 4.0) meso-scale regions: Zuytdorp, Shark Bay, Ningaloo and Exmouth Gulf.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES POTENTIALLY IMPACTING THE BIOREGION

Climate Change

Some of the key environmental trends that may be affecting ecosystems in WA include:

- Increasing frequency of *El Niño*/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events;
- More years with a weaker Leeuwin Current;
- Increase in water temperature off the west coast of WA, particularly the lower west coast;
- Increase in salinity, which includes some large annual fluctuations;

- Change in the frequency and location of storms (and rainfall) affecting the lower west coast; and
- Change in the frequency of cyclones (and summer rainfall) affecting the north-west coast.

The Gascoyne Coast Bioregion is predicted to be at enhanced risk from the effects of climate given that it spans a transitional zone between tropical and temperate regions. The variables expected to drive climate change impacts include changes in water temperature, ocean currents, winds, rainfall, sea level, ocean chemistry and extreme weather conditions.

It is apparent that climate change will impact the biological, economic, and social aspects of many

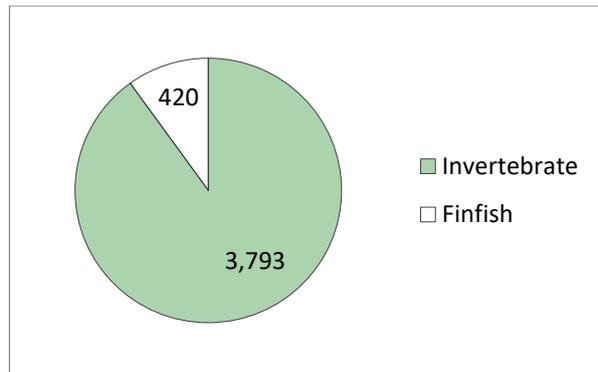
GASCOYNE BIOREGION

fisheries, and both positive and negative impacts are expected. Climate change can influence biological systems by modifying the timing of spawning, range and distribution, composition and interactions within communities, exotic species invasions and impacts, and the structure and dynamics of communities, including changes in productivity. Species distribution shifts are the most commonly reported changes and are often the easiest to recognise and measure. Changes in the distribution of key species are monitored in a national citizen-science program (www.redmap.org.au) in which the Department is a collaborator.

Commercial Fishing

Commercial fishing is a significant industry in the region, with catch dominated by invertebrate resources (Gascoyne Coast Overview Figure 2), including the State's more valuable fisheries – the Shark Bay Prawn, Exmouth Gulf Prawn and Shark Bay Scallop fisheries – landing combined catches valued in the range of \$40 – \$50 million annually. These trawl based fisheries have operated sustainably in the region since the mid-1960s and are internationally recognised as 'best practice' in terms of both management and research. Both prawn fisheries as well as the west coast deep sea crab fishery have achieved Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. Only a relatively small number of the approximately 1,400 species of fish inhabiting this bioregion are targeted by commercial fishing activity.

The Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Fishery (GDSF) and Shark Bay Beach Seine and Mesh Net Fishery have operated in the bioregion since the 1960s, and provide a significant proportion of the snapper and whiting catch for the State. The GDSF originally only targeted pink snapper but has developed over the past decade into a broader fishing sector taking other demersal finfish species including emperors, cods and deeper water species such as goldband snapper. The Gascoyne includes part of the Mackerel Managed Fishery (which extends to the NT border and is reported in the North Coast Bioregion chapter) with this area having lower annual catches compared to more northern areas. The region also includes some other small commercial fishing activities including the marine aquarium fishery which collects small numbers of a wide variety of species but is not permitted within some areas of the Ningaloo Marine Park, Shark Bay Marine Park or any waters closed to fishing. There is also a small beach seining fishery within Exmouth Gulf.



GASCOYNE COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 2

Contribution of finfish and invertebrates to the total commercial wild fishery catch originating from the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion. Numbers represent total catch (in tonnes) based on all major assessed fisheries identified in the Overview section of this report (Gascoyne Coast Overview Table 1).

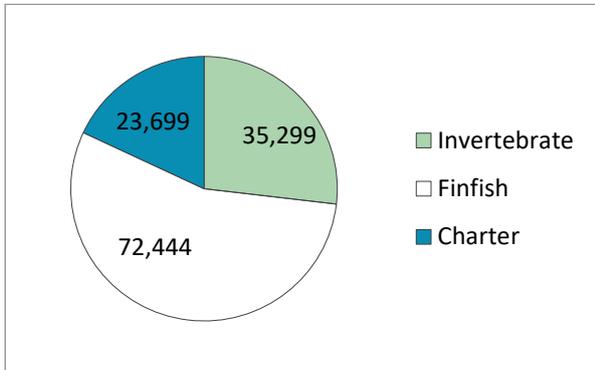
The main invertebrate species captured by fisheries in the Gascoyne Bioregion include a number of penaeid prawns, scallops, and blue swimmer crabs within the two main embayments of Shark Bay and Exmouth Gulf, plus deep sea crabs in the offshore region. The fishery for blue swimmer crabs which operates throughout the waters of Shark Bay had grown in the last decade to be the largest Australian crab fishery until recently affected by environmental issues. However, it is now recovering quite well. Other minor commercial fishing activities for invertebrates operating in the bioregion include collecting silver lipped pearl oyster which is used in pearl culture, though most effort is focused in the North Coast Bioregion, and some fishing for cockles.

Recreational Fishing

The special features of the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion, coupled with the warm, dry winter climate and accessible fish stocks, have made it a focal point for winter recreation by the Western Australian community. Fishing during this season is a key component of many tourist visits (Gascoyne Coast Overview Figure 3). A full range of angling activities is available, including beach and cliff fishing (e.g. Steep Point and Quobba), embayment and shallow-water boat angling (e.g. Shark Bay, Exmouth Gulf and Ningaloo lagoons), and offshore boat angling for demersal and larger pelagic species (e.g. off Ningaloo).

Recreational fishing is predominantly for tropical species such as emperors, tropical snappers, groupers, mackerels, cods, trevallies and other game fish and blue swimmer crab and squid. Some temperate species at the northern end of their ranges, such as (pink) snapper, tailor and whiting, provide significant catches, particularly in Shark Bay.

Improved infrastructure (e.g. sealed roads) has led to increasing levels of domestic and international tourism to the Gascoyne. Enhanced access to coastal waters via new boat ramps (e.g. Bundegi, Coral Bay, Tantabiddi) and camping sites/facilities and the sustained popularity of recreational fishing also contribute to pressure on local fish stocks.



GASCOYNE COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 3
 Recreational catches (by number) in the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion. Finfish and invertebrate catches were as assessed in the statewide survey of boat-based recreational fishing in 2017/18¹. Charter boat catch is for the same period. Estimates of shore based recreational catch are unavailable.

Aquaculture

Aquaculture in the Gascoyne focuses on the blacklip oyster *Pinctada marginifera*. The local aquaculture sector is also focusing on the production of aquarium species, including coral and live rock.

Tourism

The Gascoyne Coast Bioregion is a focal point for winter recreation by the Western Australian community. Apart from its scenic beauty, the main attraction of the coastline for tourists is the quality of marine life. The region supports extensive scuba diving and snorkelling activities, particularly inside the coral lagoons of Ningaloo. Specialised eco-tourism activities include whale shark and manta ray observation at Ningaloo and dolphin and dugong viewing in Shark Bay. Fishing is a key component of many tourist visits, and a full range of angling activities is available.

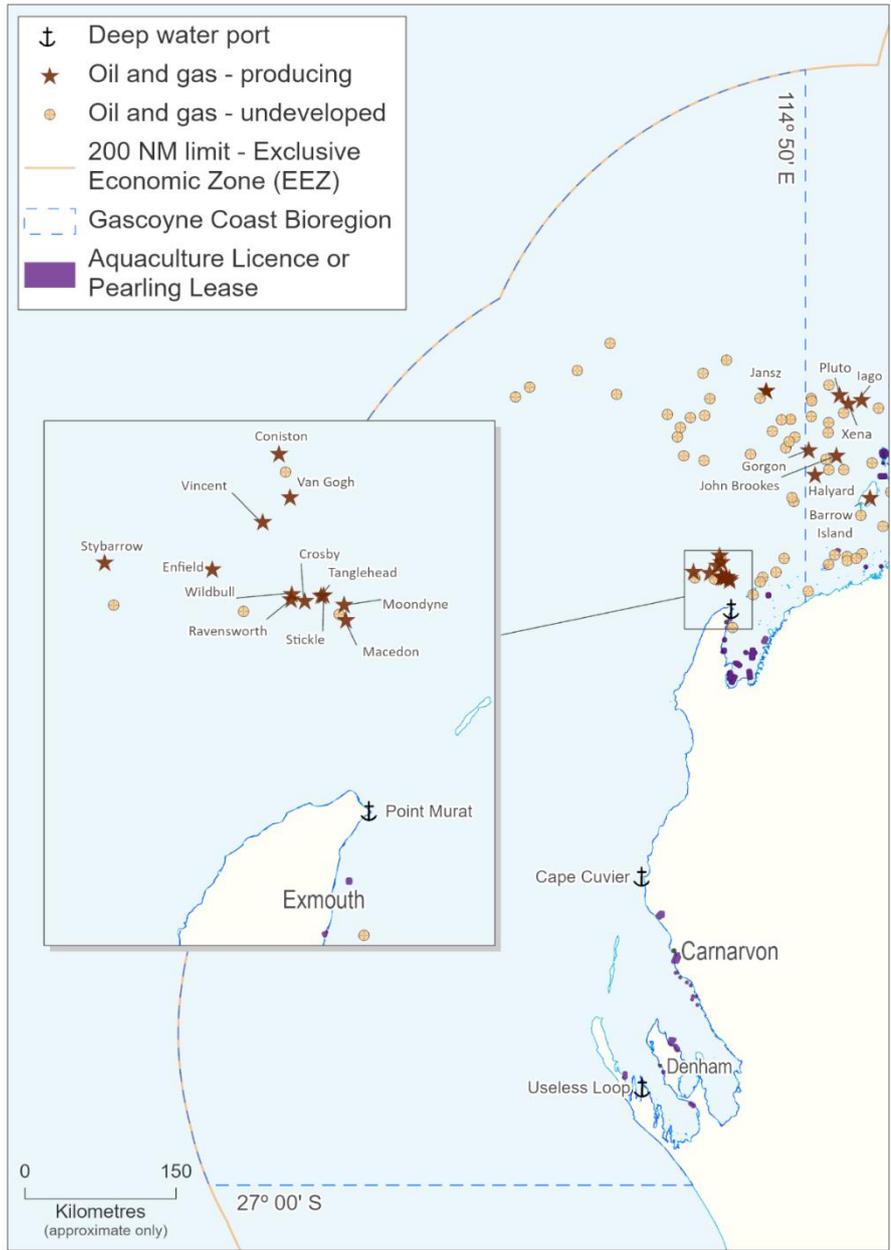
Oil and Gas Activity

Exploration and appraisal drilling has occurred mainly in the northern part of the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion (Gascoyne Overview Figure 4). There continues to be significant oil and gas mining activity offshore of North West Cape in the Exmouth Sub-basin, and the Australian Government has also recently released two areas offshore of Carnarvon in the Southern Carnarvon Basin for further exploration.

The main disturbances associated with oil and gas exploration and production include noise pollution from seismic surveys (e.g. potential for fish movement/impact arising from seismic surveys), disturbance to the marine habitat through drilling and/or dredging activities, release of produced formation water, shipping and transport activities and oil spill risks.

¹ Ryan KL, Hall NG, Lai EK, Smallwood CB, Tate A, Taylor SM, Wise BS 2019. Statewide survey of boat-based recreational fishing in Western Australia 2017/18. Fisheries

Research Report No. 297, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia.



GASCOYNE OVERVIEW FIGURE 4
Exmouth Sub-basin offshore oil and gas production sites and Aquaculture Licences and Pearling Leases.

Shipping and Maritime Activity

There are three deepwater port facilities currently operating in the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion: Useless Loop, Cape Cuvier (both private facilities servicing salt fields) and Point Murat, a naval port facility at Exmouth. The majority of shipping movements involve coastal cargo vessels, shipping associated with the two salt fields in the region, shipping associated with oil and gas industries, large passenger cruise vessels and fishing vessels operating out of the numerous small ports along the coast.

Other harbours and maritime facilities of the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion include Denham, Carnarvon, Coral Bay and Exmouth, all of which largely service local fishing and charter vessels, as well as the private vessels of local residents

and tourists. The expansion of oil and gas, along with increased recreational, charter and eco-tourism activities, in the area has led to the expansion of many of these facilities.

The impacts from vessels and ships tend to be concentrated around ports and favoured anchorage areas. Impacts include physical damage to the habitat, ship strikes of marine animals and the potential to introduce and spread marine pest species.

BIOREGIONAL SPECIFIC ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Within each Bioregion there are a range of management measures that have been implemented to manage the potential impact of activities (See Ecosystem Management Section for an overview). Management measures specific to the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion include:

Spatial Closures

The Department of Fisheries has established a comprehensive set of spatial management closures within the Gascoyne region that are equivalent to a number of IUCN categories for marine protected areas. Extensive trawl closures inside the 200 m depth zone in the Shark Bay and Exmouth region provide protection to sensitive benthic habitat, including coral reef, sand flats and seagrass beds of the continental shelf. These areas provide significant fish nursery, breeding

and feeding habitat (Gascoyne Overview Figure 5). The extent of these areas means that most of the Gascoyne Bioregion inside 200 m depth could be classified as one of the marine protected area IUCN categories (Gascoyne Ecosystem Management Table 1; as per Dudley, 2008 and Day *et al.* 2012¹). There are also a number of other 'formal' marine protected areas in this Bioregion that have been established under both the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984 and the Fish Resources Management Act 1994 (see Gascoyne Overview Figure 6). These include the Ningaloo and Shark Bay Marine Parks, the Murion Islands Marine Management Area, and the Quobba and Miaboolya Beach Fish Habitat Protection Areas. Commercial and recreational fishing activities are restricted in these regions.

The Commonwealth Government has recently implemented its marine bioregional planning which includes a number of protected areas in Commonwealth waters between Shark Bay and the Northern Territory border (see Gascoyne Overview Figure 6).

GASCOYNE ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT TABLE 1

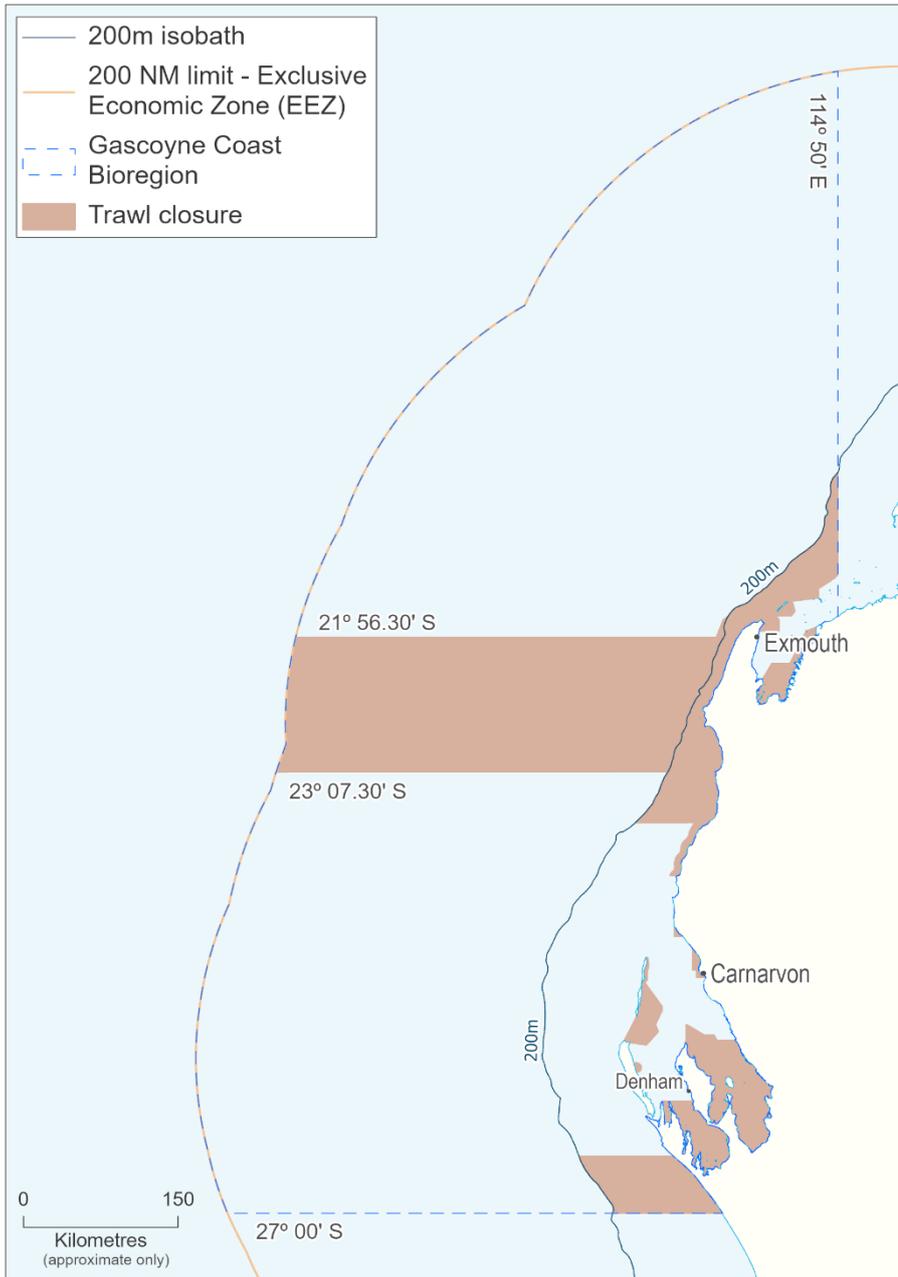
The areas and proportions of the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion making up State Waters and all continental shelf waters, out to 200 m depth, which are consistent with IUCN criteria for classification as marine protected areas.¹ This table does not yet include the closures that may be implemented by the Commonwealth as part of their marine planning zones (see next Gascoyne Overview Figure 6).

IUCN category or equivalent	State Waters only (24,100 km ²)				All Waters (416,300 km ² (including State Waters))			
	Fisheries km ²	%	Existing MPA km ²	%	Fisheries km ²	%	Existing MPA km ²	%
I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
II	0	0	2,500	10	0	0	5,000	1
III	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IV	3,100	13	6,400	27	13,200	3	6,400	2
V	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VI	9,500	39	2,600	11	389,100	93	2,600	1

¹ Dudley N. (editor) 2008. Guidelines for applying protected area management categories. IUCN. Gland, Switzerland.

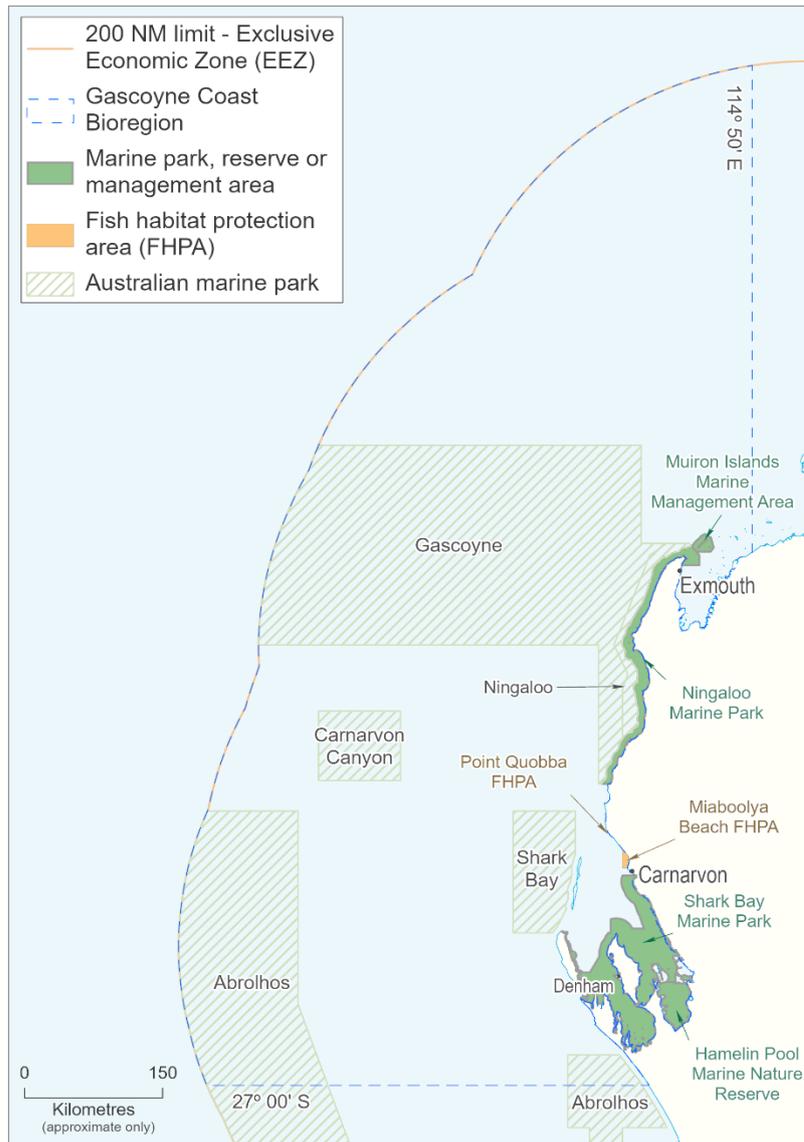
Day J. et al. 2012. Guidelines for applying the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories to Marine Protected Areas. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 36pp.

GASCOYNE BIOREGION



GASCOYNE OVERVIEW FIGURE 5

Map showing the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion and areas permanently closed to trawling, consistent with IUCN marine protected area category I. The area from Point Maud to Tantabiddi Well (23° 07.30' S to 21° 56.30' S) is closed to all commercial fishing activities.



GASCOYNE OVERVIEW FIGURE 6

Map showing the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion and State and Commonwealth marine parks and reserves in the Gascoyne Region.

ECOSYSTEM MONITORING AND STATUS

In order to assess the adequacy of management arrangements aimed at ensuring sustainability of the ecological assets within the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion, the Department must identify and monitor trends in the condition of these resources. This is achieved through application of an Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) framework (Fletcher, *et al.*, 2010) (see How to Use section for more details) to identify, in a hierarchical manner, the key ecological resources that require ongoing monitoring and assessment.

These key ecological assets identified for the Gascoyne Bioregion are identified in Gascoyne

Overview Figure 7 and their current risk status reported on in the following sections.

External Drivers

External factors include those impacting at the bioregional-level that are likely to affect the ecosystem as whole and may not fall within the direct control of Fishery legislation (e.g. climate change). An understanding of these factors, which are typically environmental (cyclones, ocean currents, water temperature) is necessary to fully assess the performance of the ecological resource. The main external drivers identified with potential to affect the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion include climate change and introduced pests and diseases¹.

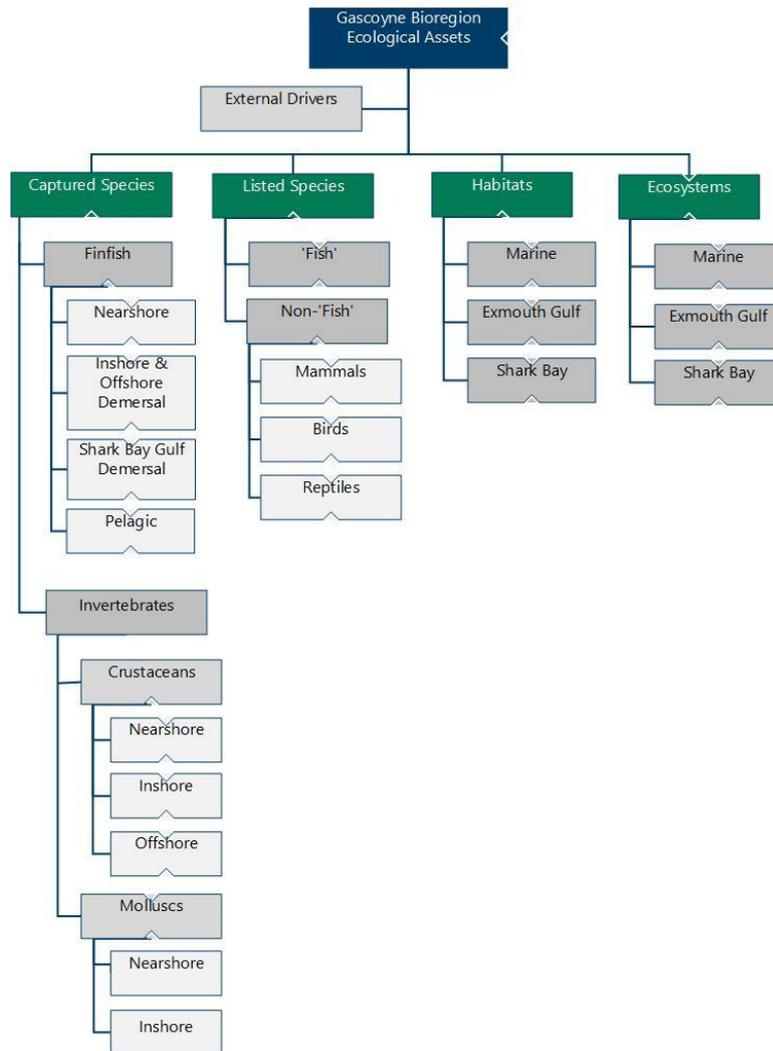
¹ Biosecurity issues are now reported by the Biosecurity pillar of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Climate

External Drivers	Current Risk Status
Climate	MODERATE in short term HIGH in medium term

Being a transitional zone between tropical and temperate regions, the biota of the Gascoyne Bioregion is at enhanced risk of being affected by climate change. Climate change can influence fisheries and biological systems by affecting the timing of spawning, range and distribution, composition and interactions within communities,

exotic species invasions and impacts, community structure and productivity. Waters off the Gascoyne coast are strongly influenced by the Leeuwin Current which brings warm low salinity water southward. After experiencing a weakening trend from the 1960s to the early 1990s, the strength of the Leeuwin Current has shown an increasing trend in the past two decades which has been driven by changes in frequency of El Niño/La Niña Southern Oscillation (ENSO) patterns.



GASCOYNE OVERVIEW FIGURE 7

Component tree showing the ecological assets identified and separately assessed for the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion.

During the summer of 2010/11, a significant warming event took place off the coast of Western Australia, with widespread reports of fish kills and of tropical species being found further south than their normal range. Sea-surface temperatures were > 3°C above the normal summer averages in some regions. The “marine heat wave” was associated with extremely strong *La Niña* conditions, leading to a record strength Leeuwin Current for that time of year, which resulted in record high summer sea levels along the mid-west and Gascoyne coasts. The heat wave resulted in

what is considered to be the first WA regional-scale coral bleaching event, affecting corals south to Rottnest Island and north to the Montebello and Barrow Islands. This warming event appears to have also contributed to a significant decline in blue swimmer crab and scallop stocks in Shark Bay and a subsequent recruitment failure for both of these species in 2011. Recruitment to the Gascoyne pink snapper stock may also have been affected.

A preliminary assessment of fisheries-dependent indicators of climate change in WA was undertaken in 2010. This work has now been completed as part of a three-year FRDC-funded project (2010/535) that assessed the effects of climate change on the marine environment and key fisheries, as well as management implications. The first phase of the project was to understand how environmental factors, such as water temperature and salinity, affect fish stocks in Western Australia based on available historical data. The second phase was to look at historical trends and possible future scenarios of Western Australian marine environments using climate model projections. Lastly, existing management arrangements were reviewed to examine their robustness to climate change effects.

Captured Species

FINFISH

The Gascoyne supports a diverse fish fauna and is noted for its high quality of both commercial and recreational fishing. Approximately 1,400 species of fishes inhabit this region. Of these only a relatively small number are targeted by commercial fishing activities with demersal finfish species (e.g. pink snapper) captured in the Zuytdorp region and nearshore finfish species (e.g. whiting) within the Shark Bay region.

Due to the broad spatial distribution of both species and fisheries, the majority of finfish species in this area are managed at the Bioregional scale within recognized aquatic zones. Indicator species which reflect the characteristics of the broader exploited stocks are monitored in order to assess ecological risk to the suite of species targeted. The major fishery operating at the bioregional level is the Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Fishery. This line fishery originally targeted pink snapper but has been developed over the past decade into a broader fishing sector targeting other demersal finfish species including emperors, cods and deeper water species and is managed as the Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish (Managed) Fishery.

The Gascoyne Coast Bioregion also has the Shark Bay-based beach seine fishery (the Shark Bay Beach Seine and Mesh Net Managed Fishery) that since the 1960s has provided most of the whiting catch for the state.

Nearshore (0-20m depth)

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Nearshore (0-20 m depth)	MODERATE

The indicator species for this suite (e.g. whiting) are all considered to have adequate breeding stocks, fishing catch and effort has been occurring at acceptable levels for over 40 years and there

are no additional risks that have been identified. Annual catch and effort monitoring is continuing.

Inshore and Offshore demersal

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Inshore and Offshore Demersal	HIGH

The main fishery operating in this region is the Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Fishery, for which a detailed status report is provided at the end of this chapter. The indicator species for this fishery are pink snapper, spangled emperor, and goldband snapper.

Shark Bay Demersal

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Shark Bay Gulf Demersal	MODERATE

The main fishery operating in this ecosystem is the Inner Shark Bay Scalefish Fishery, for which a detailed status report is included at the end of this chapter.

Pelagic

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Pelagic	LOW

The stock status and fishing levels of these species (e.g. Spanish mackerel) are at acceptable levels.

INVERTEBRATES

Commercial fishing for invertebrates is a very significant industry within the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion; three of the State's most valuable fisheries (the Exmouth Gulf Prawn, Shark Bay Prawn and Shark Bay Scallop Managed Fisheries) land combined catches valued in the range of \$40-50 million annually. These trawl-based fisheries have operated in the region since the mid-1960s and are internationally recognised as 'best practice' in terms of both management and research (Fletcher and Santoro 2012). A fishery for blue swimmer crabs (the Shark Bay Crab Managed Fishery) is based primarily in Carnarvon but operates throughout the waters of Shark Bay. The Gascoyne also supports the majority of the catch of deep sea crabs off the coast of Western Australia as part of the West Coast Deep Sea Crustacean Managed Fishery.

Molluscs

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Molluscs (Pearl Oysters)	Nearshore	MODERATE
Molluscs (Scallops)	Inshore	MODERATE

The recent levels of pearl oysters in the bioregion have been low. Recovery management

arrangements have been implemented and minimal catches have been taken in recent years.

The Shark Bay Scallop Managed Fishery is currently in a recovery phase. The stock has fully recovered in Denham Sound but is recovering more slowly in northern Shark Bay. The current status is the result of a series of poor recruitment events associated with sustained unfavourable environmental conditions resulting from the marine heat wave in 2010/11.

Crustaceans

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Crustaceans (Crabs)	Nearshore	MODERATE
Crustaceans (Prawns)	Inshore	MODERATE
Crustaceans (Deep Sea Crabs)	Offshore	LOW

Blue swimmer crab stocks in Shark Bay continue to rebuild following declines in 2011/2012 that were attributed to the impacts of anomalous environmental conditions. Sustained stock recovery has allowed an increase to the Total Allowable Catch.

Stocks in both the Exmouth and Shark Bay Prawn Managed Fisheries are considered adequate with both fisheries being re-certified by the MSC in 2020.

Stocks in the West Coast Deep Sea Crustacean Managed Fishery, that operates primarily in the Gascoyne bioregion, are considered adequate with the fishery gaining MSC in 2016.

Listed species

A variety of endangered, threatened and protected¹ (ETP) species can be found within the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion, including cetaceans, dugongs, marine turtles, sea snakes, elasmobranchs, seahorses and pipefish and sea/shore birds. These species are protected by various international agreements and national and state legislation. Primary pieces of legislation include the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the *Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, and the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994*.

Specific commercial fishing regulations implemented in the 1970s and 1980s preclude the use of large-mesh gillnets and long-lines throughout the region, to prevent the incidental entanglement of dugongs and turtles. These controls have also provided protection for the large shark species which are a feature of this region. Bycatch reduction devices ('grids') have been mandatory in all trawl nets in this bioregion

since early 2000s and have further increased the protection for sharks, rays and any turtles encountered on the trawl grounds. In a further effort to protect sharks and rays, line-fishery vessels are not permitted to use wire snoods.

Fish

Listed species	Risk
Fish	MODERATE

Statutory reporting indicates there are a low number of interactions with sawfish. However, increasing the understanding of the number and nature of the interaction of trawl fisheries in the bioregion with sawfish was raised as an issue through the MSC process.

Non-Fish

Listed species	Risk
Birds and Reptiles	MODERATE
Mammals	LOW

While there are a number of listed species in the Gascoyne bioregion, only sea snakes and occasionally turtles are encountered in the trawl catches. The number of turtles captured now is very low and most of these are returned alive. Both groups are typically returned to the sea alive.

Captures of both turtles and sea snakes are recorded and their status at release are monitored and reported. However, increasing the understanding of the number and nature of the interaction of trawl fisheries in the bioregion with sea snakes was raised as an issue through the initial MSC process. Research over the last 5 years has focused on increasing the knowledge of seasnake abundance and distribution and improved reporting of interactions by fishers. In recognition these improvements the recent re-certification does not contain any requirements for additional research.

There are no recorded captures of mammals by the trawl fisheries in this bioregion.

Habitats and Ecosystems

A high level of protection of the ecosystems and habitats within the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion is ensured based on the limited area of the Bioregion that is available to commercial fishing activity.

If the areas that are not trawled is taken into account, more than 90% of statewide benthic habitats out to the 200 m depth contour are, in practical terms, fully protected and may never have been trawled (Ecosystem Management Table 1). There are extensive trawl closures inside the 200 m depth zone in both Shark Bay

¹ Note that being on the listed species list does not automatically indicate that a species is either threatened or endangered.

and Exmouth Gulf that provide protection to sensitive benthic habitats including coral reef, seagrass and sand flats. These areas also provide significant nursery, breeding and feeding habitats for many retained and listed species. There is also a large area from Point Maud to Tantabiddi Well off the Ningaloo Coast (23° 07.30' S to 21° 56.30' S) that is closed to all commercial fishing activities (Gascoyne Overview Figure 5).

The Department identifies and monitors trends in the condition of ecosystems and their associated habitats to ensure the long term sustainability of both these key ecological assets and the fisheries that depend on them. Utilising the Integrated Marine and Coastal Regionalisation for Australia (IMCRA) scheme, the bioregion has been divided into four meso-scale ecosystems; the Ningaloo Coast, Shark Bay and Zuytdorp and Exmouth Gulf ecosystem (Gascoyne Overview Figure 1).

The key habitats occurring in depths of less than 40 m (where the vast majority of relevant fisheries resources are located and fishing activities are undertaken in this bioregion) include:

Coral reefs: The Ningaloo ecosystem has the only major coral reef system in the bioregion. The Ningaloo Reef the largest continuous reef area in Western Australia and is considered one of Australia's most significant fringing coral reef systems.

Mangroves: The eastern coast of Exmouth Gulf supports one of the largest areas of mangroves in the region. These areas are thought to be significant sources of nutrients that contribute to the prawn fishery of the Gulf and provide nursery areas for juvenile fish and invertebrates.

Seagrasses: The central Gascoyne coast and Shark Bay support major seagrass communities, which play important roles in sedimentary processes, food chains and nutrient cycling. Smaller seagrass beds also occur in the eastern and southern sections of Exmouth Gulf. Seagrass beds provide important nursery habitats for many finfish and invertebrate species, such as spangled emperor. The 2011 marine heatwave event caused significant (35%) losses of seagrass and carbon from the Shark Bay system. The impacts of this are yet to be understood, but medium to longterm changes in productivity of some fisheries species is possible.

Sand banks: Extensive sand areas support seagrasses and provide substrate for microalgae in all areas, particularly Ningaloo Reef. In both Exmouth Gulf and Shark Bay, shallow sand banks provide productive habitat and nursery areas for local prawn and finfish stocks. Within the deeper central areas of Shark Bay and Exmouth Gulf, bare sandy/muddy bottom habitats provide the main habitat for juvenile and adult prawns within the trawl areas.

Other habitats that are located in the ecosystems within the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion include algal communities, rocky shore communities, hard- and soft-bottom benthic communities, and pelagic mid-water communities.

In depths beyond 40 m, ecosystems include hard- and soft-bottom benthic communities, sand banks and pelagic communities.

Gascoyne Marine

Ecosystem / Habitat	Aquatic zone / category	Current Risk Status
Gascoyne benthic habitat	Sand, Coral	LOW
Gascoyne ecosystem	Marine	LOW

Habitats

Protection of habitats within Ningaloo occurs mainly through the use of spatial zoning throughout the Ningaloo Marine Park. There are no commercial fishing activities conducted in this area. The main risk is to coral habitat results from tourism and other boating related activities. There are no major pressures on seagrass communities, which are general small and patchily distributed in this region.

The remainder of the bioregion is dominated by mud/sand bottoms. The majority of non-trawl based fishing takes place over habitats in depths of 20-250 m, depending on which species is being targeted. The Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Fishery operates in this ecosystem and is based on using hook and lines, resulting in virtually no impact on benthic habitats. Fishing typically occurs over patches of hard bottom around the entrance to Shark Bay and the adjacent ocean. Fishing does not normally occur over sensitive seagrass or hard coral habitats. The West Coast Deep Sea Crustacean Fishery also operates in this area in depths from 150-1200 m. Crab traps are mainly set over mud bottom and occasionally bring up solitary corals or sponges that get entangled in the pot. The footprint of the pots and effort levels are both extremely small in relation to the extent of this habitat. There are thus few direct impacts of fishing activity to these habitats.

Ecosystems

Ningaloo is protected via establishment of the Ningaloo Marine Park (NMP) which covers a total area of 4,566 km² from the shoreline to continental slope. No commercial fisheries operate in the waters of the NMP and 34% of the park is zoned as no-take sanctuary areas. A significant level of research and monitoring has been undertaken in the Ningaloo marine park region by Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), CSIRO, AIMS and universities. This reflects the main pressures on the ecosystem which are largely not fishing-related.

The remainder of the ecosystem is largely protected due to the lack of trawling that occurs in this area.

An assessment of the community structure and trophic level of all commercially caught fish species in the Gascoyne Bioregion over the past 30 years through an FRDC project found no evidence of systematic changes that could be evidence of an unacceptable impact on this ecosystem (Hall and Wise, 2011)¹.

Exmouth Gulf

Ecosystem / Habitat	Aquatic zone / category	Current Risk Status
Exmouth Gulf benthic habitat	Sand, Mud, Sponge, Seagrass	MODERATE
Exmouth Gulf ecosystem	Marine	MODERATE

Habitats

There is significant protection in place for all sensitive habitats and restrictions on the level of impacts that can occur in less sensitive habitats. Trawling is focused in the deeper central and north-western sections of the Gulf which is primarily mud. The total area trawled each year is monitored and has to remain below 40%.

Seagrass beds are spatially separated from trawling activities and are protected within the permanent nursery area closure along the southern and eastern sections of the Gulf. However, there are concerns over seagrass habitats after substantial die backs were associated with the marine heat wave in 2010/11. A better understanding of benthic habitats was also a key component of maintaining MSC certification for the Exmouth Gulf Prawn Managed Fishery. Research over the last 5 years has focused on increasing the knowledge benthic habitats (e.g. FRDC project 2015/027) and the overlap with fishery footprint . In recognition these improvements the recent re-certification does not contain any requirements for additional research.

Ecosystems

Approximately 29% (335 nm²) of Exmouth Gulf is trawled. Trawling is prohibited in a designated nursery area in the southern and eastern section of the Gulf. The nursery area covers 344 nm² and represents 28% of Exmouth Gulf. A major project surveying biodiversity on and off the trawl grounds in Exmouth indicated that trawled areas have similar diversity to the larger adjacent untrawled areas, indicating that the current level of trawling activity does not affect overall biodiversity and

cannot be distinguished from other sources of variation in community structure.

The ecosystem in this region could be at increased risk if a number of proposed industrial developments are implemented.

Shark Bay

Ecosystem / Habitat	Aquatic zone / category	Current Risk Status
Shark Bay Gulfs habitat	Sand, Sponge, Seagrass	MODERATE
Shark Bay Gulfs ecosystem	Marine	LOW

Habitats

Benthic habitats and communities of Shark Bay have been described and mapped (CALM 1996). There is extensive seagrass throughout the eastern and western gulfs, while corals can be found primarily along the eastern coast of the western gulf, and the eastern coasts of Dirk Hartog, Dorre and Bernier Islands. Almost all of these areas are part of the Shark Bay Marine Park and are permanently closed to trawling activities. In addition, permanent trawl closures protect the majority of seagrass and coral habitats in the eastern and western gulfs. The few unprotected areas where coral occur (e.g. Egg Island and Bar Flats) are not part of the actively trawled areas. The main areas where trawling occurs, in the central bay, north Cape Peron and in the northern area of Denham Sound are sand/shell habitat.

A better understanding of benthic habitats and the overlap with fishery footprint is also a key component of maintaining MSC certification for the Shark Bay Prawn Managed Fishery. Research over the last 5 years has focused on increasing the knowledge benthic habitats and the overlap with fishery footprint. In recognition these improvements the recent MSC re-certification does not contain any requirements for additional research.

Ecosystems

The current level of fishing by all methods has not noticeably affected the trophic/community structure in Shark Bay. A study of biodiversity in Shark Bay found no significant difference in the fish and invertebrate abundance, species richness, evenness or diversity between trawled and untrawled areas (Kangas et al. 2007)². Therefore, the closed areas provide protection to those species more vulnerable to trawling (Kangas et al. 2007).

¹ Hall NG, and Wise BS. 2011. Development of an ecosystem approach to the monitoring and management of Western Australian fisheries. FRDC Report – Project 2005/063. Fisheries Research Report No. 215. Department of Fisheries, Western Australia. 112 pp.

²Kangas MI, Morrison S, Unsworth P, Lai E, Wright I, and Thomson A. 2007. Development of biodiversity and habitat monitoring systems for key trawl fisheries in Western Australia. Final FRDC Report 2002/038. Department of Fisheries, Western Australia. Fisheries Research Report, No. 160. 333 pp.

FISHERIES

SHARK BAY PRAWN RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

M. Kangas, S. Wilkin, P. Cavalli and G. Grounds

OVERVIEW

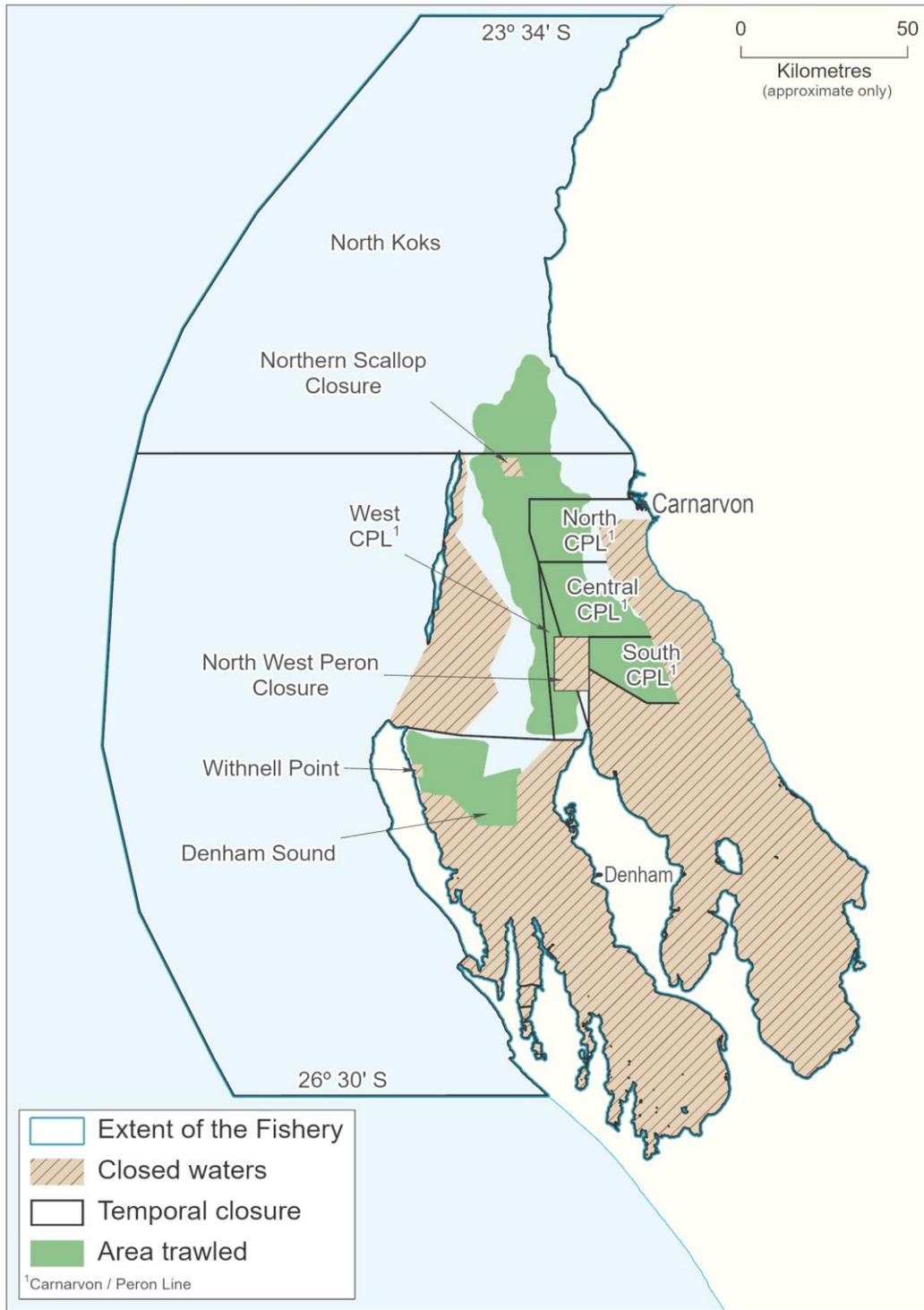
The Shark Bay Prawn Managed Fishery (SBPMF) uses low opening, otter prawn trawl systems within inner Shark Bay (Kangas *et al.* 2015) to target western king prawns (*Penaeus latisulcatus*), brown tiger prawns (*Penaeus esculentus*) and lesser quantities of endeavour (*Metapenaeus endeavouri*) and coral prawns (*Metapenaeopsis sp.*). The SBPMF is managed in accordance with the *Shark Bay Prawn Managed Fishery Management Plan 1993* (SBP Management Plan) and the *Shark Bay Prawn Managed Fishery Harvest Strategy, 2014-2019* (SBP Harvest Strategy). Management of the SBPMF is based on input controls such as limited entry, gear controls (e.g. maximum headrope units), seasonal and spatial openings and

closures designed to keep fishing effort at levels that will maintain a sufficient spawning biomass of prawns. Bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) are mandatory in this fishery, with all boats required to fish with a 'grid' and a secondary fish escape device (FED) fitted in each net.

In October 2015 this fishery received Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. It was also accredited for export under the provisions of the EPBC Act (1999) in 2015 for ten years. A more detailed account of the resource is provided in Kangas *et al.* (2015) (www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/wamsc_reports/wamsc_report_no_2.pdf).

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (1350-2150 t)	Total Catch 2019: 1214 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery	Total Catch 2019: NA	NA
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Western King Prawn	Moderate Risk: Breeding stock: Above target	Adequate
Brown Tiger Prawn	Moderate Risk: Breeding stock: Above target	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Low Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Moderate Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$15.3 m)	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
Social (4 amenity)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	High Risk	Acceptable

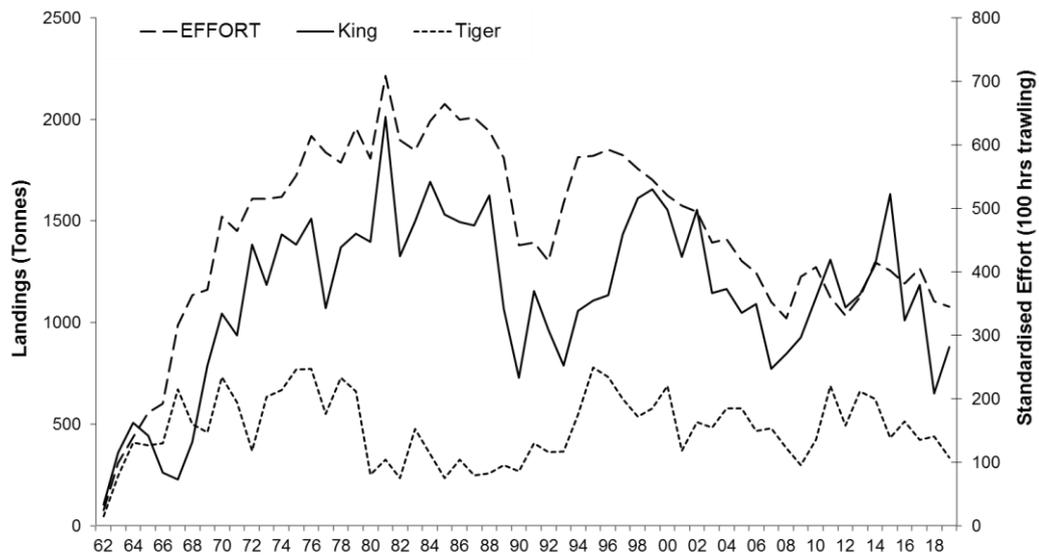


SHARK BAY PRAWN FIGURE 1.
Map showing boundaries of Shark Bay Prawn Managed Fishery

CATCH AND LANDINGS

The total landings of target prawns in Shark Bay in 2019 were 1,214 t, with 878 t of western king prawn, 335 t of brown tiger prawn and 1 t of endeavour prawn (Shark Bay Prawn Figure 2). The recorded landings of byproduct were 81 t of coral prawns, 27 t of mixed finfish, 60 t mantis

shrimp, 17 t of cuttlefish, 12 t of squid, 6 t of bugs (*Thenus orientalis*) and 1 t of octopus. Scallop and blue swimmer crab landings are reported in Saucer Scallop Resource and Shark Bay Blue Swimmer Crab Resource Status Reports.



SHARK BAY PRAWN FIGURE 2

Annual prawn landings (t) and fishing effort (total adjusted hours to twin gear units) for the Shark Bay Prawn Managed Fishery 1962-2019.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Western king prawns (Sustainable-Adequate)

The status of the stock is assessed annually using a weight-of-evidence approach primarily based on fishery-independent indices of recruitment and spawning stock levels relative to specified reference points in the harvest strategy (DoF 2014).

There are 57 years of catch and effort data supporting the assessment that this stock has never been reduced to levels considered to be recruitment overfished (Caputi *et al.* 1998) and current effort levels are below the level of effort applied in the 1970's and 1980's (Shark Bay Prawn Figure 2). Analysis of a stock-recruitment relationship for western king prawns showed that the spring spawning stock has never been reduced to levels where it had a significant effect on recruitment.

There is no evidence of a declining trend in recruitment in fishery-independent survey indices since 2000 (Kangas *et al.* 2015) with the annual recruitment indices being well above the target reference level each year (25 kg/hr). In 2019 it was 92.1 kg/hr at a moderate level compared to historically observed recruitment levels. Most of the recruitment variability is driven by environmental factors (e.g. water temperature, Caputi *et al.* 2015, 2016). The fishery-independent recruitment survey in 2019 indicated a catch prediction (Caputi *et al.* 2014) for western king prawns between 800 and 1,200 t with the catch of 878 t in the lower end of the prediction range.

In 2019 the mean spawning stock survey catch rate was 61.2 kg/hr, which is well above the catch

rate target. Biomass dynamics modelling of the prawn stocks in the fishery has indicated that the target reference levels are close to MSY biomass levels.

Historical catch and catch rates from 1989 to 1998, when it was known that recruitment was not affected by fishing effort, were used as the basis for calculating the catch tolerance range for this stock (950 to 1,450 t) and mean catch rate (21 kg/hr; range 16 to 29 kg/hr). The total commercial western king prawn landings for 2019 were higher than 2018 (652 t) but still below the target catch tolerance range. However, the overall mean catch rate of 25.5 kg/hr was within the 10 year average and an improvement on the 2018 (18.4 kg/hr) catch rate.

The recruitment surveys have highlighted a declining trend in the size of western king prawns which may be influencing total catch levels. The possible reasons for this, such as the effect on changes in the water temperature cycle on the spawning and recruitment cycles are being investigated.

Brown tiger prawns (Sustainable-Adequate)

The status of brown tiger prawns is assessed annually using a weight-of-evidence approach similar to that of western king prawns. A spawning stock–recruitment relationship exists for brown tiger prawns (Penn *et al.* 1995, Caputi *et al.* 1998), and the maintenance of adequate spawning stock is the key management objective (Kangas *et al.* 2015).

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The spawning survey catch rate for brown tiger prawns in NCPL in June after it was closed was 32.3 kg/hr. There was a decrease in July to 17.4 kg/hr with catch rates then remaining at a similar level (17.8 kg/hr) in August. The brown tiger prawn spawning stock level in NCPL was therefore at the target reference level of 25 kg/hr between June and July. Biomass dynamics modelling of the prawn stocks in the fishery has indicated that the target reference levels are close to MSY biomass levels.

The southern Carnarvon Peron Line (SCPL) is the most southern area of the fishing grounds on the eastern side of the fishery. It mostly provides important protection for small size prawns (recruits) before they migrate to more northerly spawning areas. Fishery-independent surveys conducted in June, July and August showed brown tiger prawn catch rates of 61.5, 51.8 and 14.4 kg/hr respectively in the SCPL. As such the SCPL fully opened after the July survey with the combined catch rate of the two areas (NCPL and SCPL) in June and July being higher than the target level. The use of a combined brown tiger prawn catch rate for the two areas, with the development of an appropriate catch rate target reference level, will be examined during the next harvest strategy review.

The current harvest strategy has an annual catch tolerance range of 400 to 700 t. The brown tiger prawn catch prediction (based on fishery-independent recruitment surveys) was 315 to 475 t. The total catch (395 t) was just below the catch tolerance range but within the catch prediction range.

The level of fishing effort since 2007, when all boats adopted quad gear (4 standardised nets), has been between 33 to 41 thousand trawl hours (standardised to twin nets) with fishing effort in 2019 being 34 thousand trawl hours. This evidence indicates that the current level of fishing mortality is unlikely to cause the management unit to become recruitment overfished.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

Overall bycatch taken in Shark Bay trawl nets is moderate relative to other subtropical trawl fisheries. Bycatch composition is a mixture of small size fish species generally not taken by other sectors, significant quantities of small blue swimmer crabs (under commercial size) and other crustacean species which are normally returned alive. At times, quantities of seagrass which have broken off the shallow seagrass banks and not trawled, are moved onto the trawl grounds by tides and currents and are caught in nets.

A study of the bycatch of trawled and untrawled areas of Shark Bay in 2002/03 indicated highly diverse fish and invertebrate fauna (Kangas and Morrison 2013, Kangas *et al.* 2007) with no significant differences between trawled and untrawled areas for species richness, diversity or evenness for the major faunal assemblages. Bycatch composition for a subset of sites sampled in 2002/03 were resampled between 2015 and 2017 as part of the MSC second annual audit for this fishery. This comparison indicated that the majority of the 20 most common species of fish and invertebrates recorded were still generally amongst the top 20 in these recent samples and that there was no major change in faunal species composition in almost 15 years of trawling. Bycatch reduction devices have been fully implemented since 2003 and reduce the quantity of small fish and invertebrates retained in trawls. **Low risk.**

Protected species

Protected species including whales, dolphins, dugongs, turtles and sea snakes are particularly abundant in Shark Bay. However, only sea snakes are seen in the trawl catches in any numbers. Most are returned to the sea alive. Protected species reporting by skippers has improved in the last five years following targeted education and monitoring of daily logbooks. Interactions with protected species are also recorded during Departmental fishery-independent surveys in the fishery. The full implementation of bycatch reduction devices (grids) in the fishery has generally reduced the occasional capture of turtles in trawl nets (Shark Bay Prawn Table 1). **Low risk**

SHARK BAY PRAWN TABLE 1.

Protected species interactions recorded in the daily logbooks during 2019. Note: Reported dolphin impacted by the propeller of the vessel.

Species	Alive	Dead	Unknown
Turtles	61	0	0
Syngnathids	47	1	0
Sea Snakes	2324	249	0
Saw Fish	3	0	5
Dolphin	0	1	0

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

As a result of the extensive permanent and temporary closures first introduced in the 1960s, the fleet operates in approximately 5-7% of the overall legislated area of the fishery. Inside Shark Bay, trawl fishing is focused in the deeper areas

(predominantly sand/mud/shell habitats) of the central bay, north of Cape Peron, and in the northern area of Denham Sound. The majority of sponge/coral habitats are contained within specific trawl closures to protect these areas (Kangas et al. 2015).

Due to the predominantly mud and sand habitats of the trawl grounds the trawl gear has relatively little physical impact. Overall, the nature of this trawl fishery and the controls on effort indicate that its environmental effect is likely to be moderate. Performance measures for habitat impact relate to the spatial extent of trawling within the SBPMF. In 2019 the total area trawled, at approximately 739 square nautical miles, was 16% of inner Shark Bay, and 6% of the total fishery. **Moderate** risk.

Ecosystem interactions

Although the prawn species are managed at relatively high levels of annual harvest, the impact of the catch on local food chains is unlikely to be significant in view of the high natural mortality of prawns, extent of non-trawled nursery areas and variable biomass levels of prawns resulting from variable environmental conditions. Because of this natural variation in prawn populations, most prawn predators are opportunistic, and it is unlikely that the commercial take of prawns impacts significantly on the upper trophic levels of the Shark Bay ecosystem. The gear modifications to reduce unwanted catch, have further lessened the impact the fishery has on the wider Shark Bay food chain. **Low** risk.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

This industry is a major contributor to regional employment. During 2019, approximately 100 skippers and crew were employed in the fishery. There are also processing and support staff employed at Carnarvon. One of the key operators with 10 licensed fishing boats is based in Carnarvon with administration, wharf and engineering staff based at the small boat harbour, A further eight boats travel to the region and utilise local contractors during the fishing season. The prawn sector also utilises, wherever possible, Western Australian service companies providing engineering supplies, packaging, transport logistics, ship stores and fuel. **Low** risk.

Economic

The value of the fishery including coral prawns, cuttlefish, squid, octopus and bugs is \$15.3 million. This value excludes scallops and blue swimmer crabs which are separate Managed Fisheries (see Saucer Scallop Resource and Blue

Swimmer Crab Resource Status Reports) and low quantities of various finfish species that are retained. Ex-vessel (beach) prices for prawns vary, depending on the type of product and the market forces operating at any one time. Average prices per kg for 2019 were generally lower than 2018. **Moderate** risk.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The fishery is managed in accordance with the SBP Harvest Strategy (DPIRD, 2015). The primary management objective is to maintain the spawning biomass of each target species at a level where the main factor affecting recruitment is the environment.

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels

The total landings of brown tiger prawn were within their annual catch tolerance range. The western king prawn landings were below their annual catch tolerance range; however, the survey index catch rate targets were all met.

The annual fishing levels are considered **acceptable**.

SHARK BAY PRAWN TABLE 2.

Annual catch tolerance levels (acceptable)

Total Prawn Catch	1,431-2,460 t
Western King Prawns	950-1,450 t
Brown Tiger Prawns	400-700 t
Blue Endeavour Prawns	1-30 t
Coral Prawns	80-280 t

Compliance

It is a requirement that all vessels in the fishery are fitted with an Automatic Location Communicator (ALC). The implementation of an ALC enables the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (the Department) to monitor the fleet using a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and manage compliance with temporal and spatial closures. The Department also undertakes regular vessel inspections to ensure fishing is being undertaken in accordance with the governing legislation (e.g. gear requirements, catch reporting).

Consultation

Management Meetings are held between the Department and licensees, in conjunction with the Industry Consultation Unit of the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC). These meetings provide an opportunity for the

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Department, WAFIC and industry to discuss research outcomes and initiatives, management of the fishery and industry issues.

Season arrangements are developed each year in consultation between the Department and licensees. During the season, the Department and licensees undertake collaborative management to ensure the protection of smaller prawns and to maintain the spawning stock biomass.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

Work is being undertaken in 2020/21 to support the fishery's MSC recertification.

The Department introduced a set of guidelines for in-season decision making in 2019, to complement the SBP harvest strategy and support its review. The guidelines provide transparency and guidance for in-season operational decision making.

The SBP Harvest Strategy and Bycatch Action Plan are being reviewed in 2020/21.

In 2019, two scallop protection areas were implemented in northern Shark Bay to protect scallops from prawn trawling and aid recovery. The areas are closed to all trawl fishing.

An external review of the research and management of the Shark Bay trawl fisheries was undertaken in April 2019. The Department has developed a workplan which is being implemented to address and incorporate findings of the review in the management and science programs..

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Economic

Prawn demand in the domestic market was reasonable although prices were lower than in 2018 and the traditional export markets remained stable. Industry has sought to maximise the return from byproduct species in the fishery where possible. **Moderate** risk.

Environmental

The major environmental factors influencing these stocks appears to be i) water temperature which is influenced by the Leeuwin Current strength is positively correlated with growth and catchability of prawns; and ii) turbidity during flood events is likely to increase production due to lower natural mortality. A decreasing trend and earlier onset of winter water temperatures and an increasing summer temperature are being monitored and their effect on egg production and recruitment needs to be assessed. **High** risk.

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SAUCER SCALLOP RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

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OVERVIEW

Saucer scallops, *Ylistrum balloti* (formerly *Amusium balloti*), are fished using otter trawls in four separate fisheries in Western Australia. The Shark Bay Scallop Managed Fishery (SBSMF) is usually Western Australia's most valuable scallop fishery with boats licensed to take only scallops (11 Class A licenses) and boats that also fish for prawns (18 Class B licenses). The second largest scallop fishery is the Abrolhos Islands and Mid-West Trawl Managed Fishery (AIMWTMF) (11 licenses), while the South Coast Trawl Fishery (SCTF) is small (four vessels) that targets scallops on the south coast. The South West Trawl Managed Fishery (SWTMF) is a multi-species trawl fishery that primarily targets scallops. Management is generally based on limited entry, gear controls and seasonal closures however the SBSMF has been managed under a quota management framework since the fishery

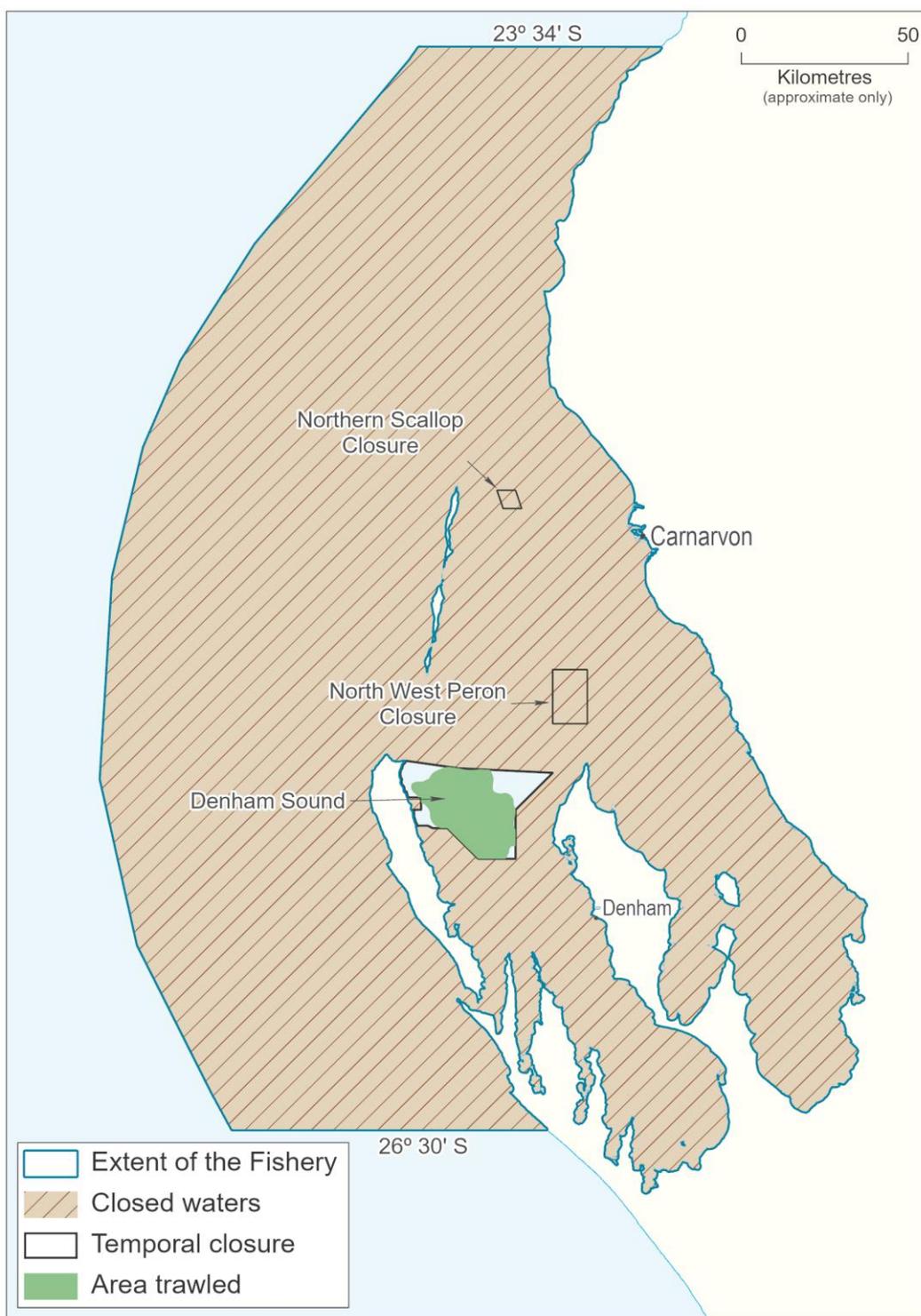
reopened in 2015 with an allocation between the Class A and B sectors.

Catches in these fisheries vary widely depending on the strength of recruitment, which is thought to be influenced by the strength of the Leeuwin Current and water temperature. Extreme environmental events, as was observed with a marine heat wave in the summer of 2010/11, can have a significant impact on scallop stocks, particularly in Shark Bay and the Abrolhos Islands.

Further details on the resource assessments are provided at https://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/resource_assessment/resource_assessment_report_003.pdf

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (2019)	Total Catch 2019: 502 t meat weight (2510 t whole weight)	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (N/A)		
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Saucer Scallop	Shark Bay – northern Shark Bay	Inadequate
	Shark Bay – Denham Sound	Adequate
	Abrolhos	Adequate
	South-west	Adequate
	South coast	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Low risk	Adequate
Habitat	Low risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$9.0 m)	High risk	Acceptable
Social (3 amenity)	Moderate risk	Acceptable
Governance	Moderate risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	High risk	Acceptable



SAUCER SCALLOP FIGURE 1.
Map showing boundaries of Shark Bay Saucer Scallop Managed Fishery.



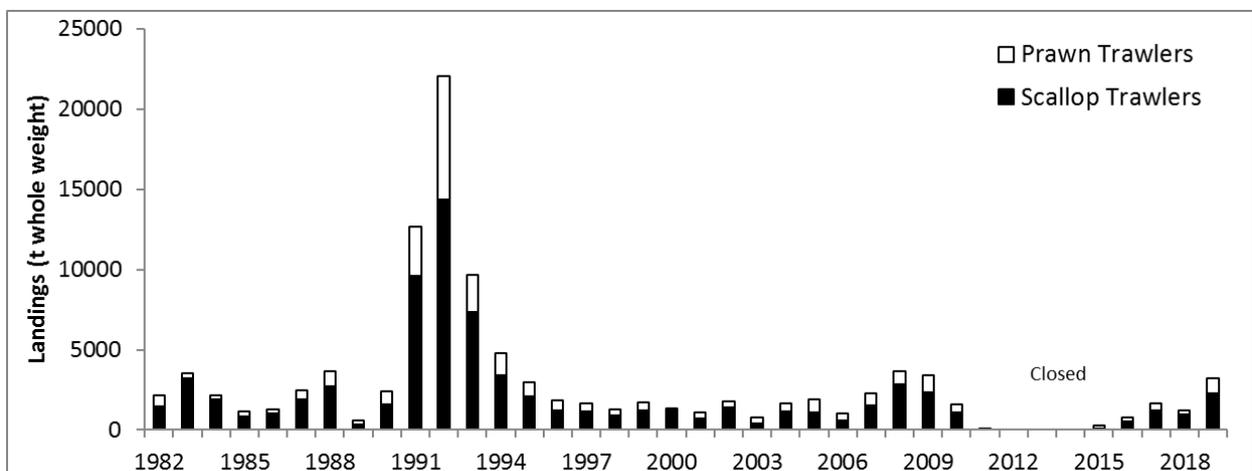
SAUCER SCALLOP FIGURE 2.

Map showing boundaries of Abrolhos Islands and Mid-West Trawl Managed Fishery

CATCH AND LANDINGS

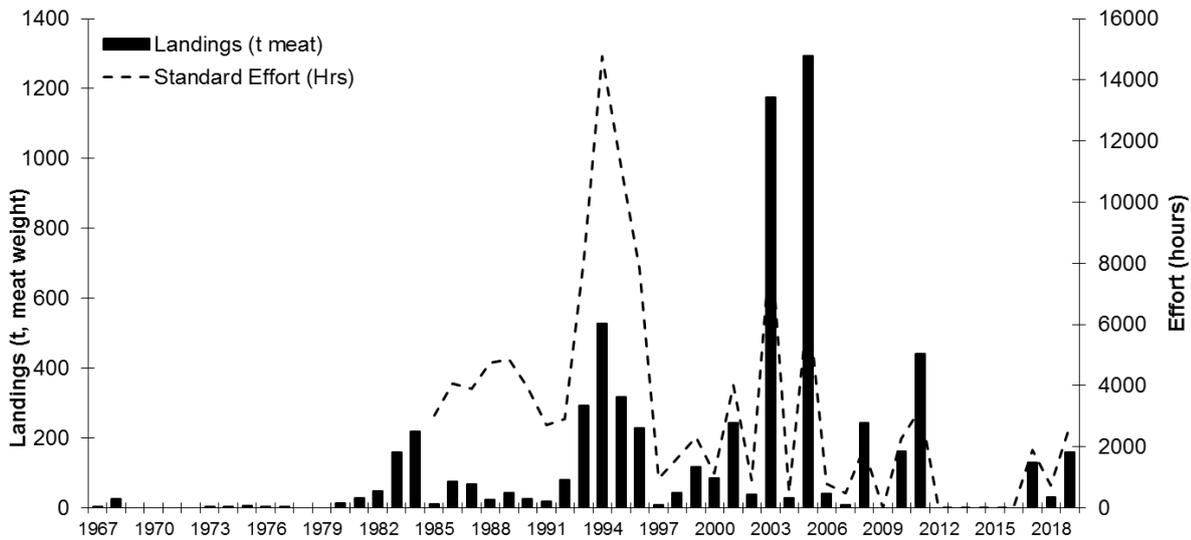
The total scallop landing was 502 t meat weight (2510 t whole weight) in WA in 2019. There was 339 t meat weight (1,694 t whole weight) taken from Shark Bay, 97% of the total quota of 350 t meat weight (season 1 March 2019 to 30 April 2020, an extension of the normal 12-month season (with 131.3 t meat weight (656.5 t whole weight) retained up to Dec 2019). The Class A

boats landed 291 t (86 %) and the Class B boats landed 48 t (Saucer Scallop Figure 3). Minimal by-product was retained by Class A boats in Shark Bay or by vessels in the Abrolhos Islands. The scallop landings in the AIMWTFM were 159.1 t meat weight (795.6 t whole weight) (Saucer Scallop Figure 4) Only one boat fished in the SWTMF and the South Coast was not fished.



SAUCER SCALLOP FIGURE 3.

Annual scallop catch (t whole weight) for the Shark Bay scallop fishery, 1982 to 2019. The fishery was closed between 2012 and 2014 and has operated under a trial quota since 2015.



SAUCER SCALLOP FIGURE 4.

Annual scallop catch (t whole weight) and standardised trawl hours fished for the AIMWTFM 1967 to 2019. The fishery was closed in 2009 and 2012 to 2016.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Shark Bay Scallop Managed Fishery (Sustainable-adequate in Denham Sound and inadequate in northern Shark Bay)

The status of the stock in Shark Bay is determined from the annual fishery-independent survey of recruitment (0+) and residual (1+) stock (Caputi et al. 2014) carried out in November–December since the 1980s. Some additional multi-species surveys have been conducted in recent years during February/March and June which are now used to inform Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) and season arrangements. These surveys enable the management arrangements of the fishery to maintain adequate level of breeding stocks and to set a conservative TACC limit for the fishery.

The annual survey in November 2017 indicated that the stock abundance in Denham Sound (DS) were in the higher end of historical ranges and this part of the fishery continues to be fully recovered from the 2010/11 heatwave. This recovery of the DS stock was confirmed with the catch achieved during 2018 and the survey abundances in November 2018 and February 2019. However, catches from northern Shark Bay during 2018 were well below expectations and the surveys in November 2018 and February 2019 indicated very low stock abundance in this part of the fishery. Therefore, this part of the fishery is assessed to be inadequate in 2019 and subject to stock recovery strategies.

Abrolhos Islands and Mid-West Trawl Managed Fishery (Sustainable-adequate)

The AIMWTFM is managed using a constant escapement approach in the Harvest Strategy (DPIRD 2020). The impact on the spawning biomass is limited by fishing after the peak spawning period; setting the duration of fishing according to catch predictions (based on pre-season surveys); closing the fishery at a minimum catch rate threshold (150 kg meat weight per day); avoiding areas of high concentrations of small scallops and by not opening the fishery if scallop abundance is considered too low (below a specified limit reference point)

The November 2018 and February 2019 pre-season surveys showed a further improvement in the distribution of scallop abundances over the historical fishing grounds with two key areas of higher abundance, in the southern area (as in 2018) as well as in the central areas. Overall catch was predicted to be in the range 150-200 t meat weight which was realised (159.1 t).

South West Trawl Managed Fishery (Sustainable-adequate)

Effort in the SWTMF has been related to either the abundance of western king prawn or saucer scallop, which can be highly variable due to sporadic scallop recruitment. 1-4 vessels have operated in the fishery since 2005, and have covered approximately 1-3% of the allowable fishery area. Only one boat fished in the SWTMF in 2019 for a total of 32 boat days. The level of fishing pressure is unlikely to adversely impact the spawning biomass.

South Coast Trawl Fishery (Sustainable-adequate)

Effort is related to the abundance of scallops in any given year, which can be highly variable due to sporadic recruitment. The few vessels (up to four) that operate in the fishery only fish over 1-3 % of the allowable fishery area. No vessels went to the SCTF in 2019 due to higher catches expected from SBSMF and AIMWTMF.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

Bycatch and protected species interactions for Class B Shark Bay Scallop vessels is discussed in the status report for the Shark Bay Prawn resource. Owing to the legislated 100 mm mesh size of the nets, the relatively short duration of the fishing season for Class A vessels and the reduced number of boats operating since quota was implemented, the total bycatch landed is minimal.

Bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) are mandatory in the SBSMF and ABMWTMF, with all boats required to fish with a 'grid' with these management conditions, grids have been fully implemented in these fisheries since 2003.

Protected species

Protected species are occasionally captured in the SBSMF but generally released alive due to the relatively short duration of trawls. For 2019, there were 11 sea snakes reported with ten reported as returned to the sea alive by Class A vessels (nets) 2019. **Low** risk.

Protected species that are susceptible to capture by trawling do not occur regularly in the fishing areas of the SWTMF and the SCTF and while turtles occur in the Abrolhos Islands, these are toward the southern extent of their range, and do not breed in the area because water temperatures are too low. Consequently, interactions with turtles were always minimal, and with the compulsory use of grids in the fishery their capture has been minimised. No protected species were reported in the AIMWTMF/SWTMF/SCTF fisheries in 2019. **Low** risk.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

Habitat effects are considered **low risk**, with trawl boats generally sweeping a small proportion of the designated trawl area. Because these areas are

sandy habitats, and trawling activity has low impact on the substrate (Laurenson et al. 1993); the overall habitat effects are **low**. In Shark Bay, only 8.6% of the allowable trawl area was fished in 2019. Only 5.7% of the allowable area was trawled in the AIMWTMF and <1% in the SWTMF.

Ecosystem

The ecosystem impacts of scallop fisheries are considered to be **low risk**, due to the relatively low total biomass taken by these operations. The high natural recruitment variability, and therefore scallop stock abundance, and short life span (up to 3 years) also means that few predators will have become highly dependent on the species.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Approximately 30-40 skippers and other crew were employed in scallop fishing in WA in 2019 with support staff in Geraldton and Fremantle. In Shark Bay, an additional 90 crew are employed in the prawn fishery (Class B) that can also retain scallops. The overall GVP for the fisheries that operated in 2019 (including scallop landings for Class B boats in Shark Bay) was \$9.0 million.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The harvest strategy for Shark Bay and the Abrolhos Islands fisheries is based on the abundance of scallop during the annual recruitment/spawning stock surveys.

For the Abrolhos Islands, cessation of fishing occurs at a catch rate level.

For Shark Bay, a quota management system with a conservative TACC, a mid-year review and target reference levels for resumption of fishing was implemented in 2015 to provide protection for the breeding stock and aid in recovery. Catch predictions in Shark Bay for 2019 for the two separate stocks, were derived from the correlation of the annual landed catch (meat weight) and the mean catch rate (number per nautical mile trawled) of recruit (0+) and residual (1+) scallops for standard survey sites in November. These predictions are used in determining the conservative TACC for each part of the fishery in a Departmental/industry consultative framework. In 2019, no TACC was set for northern Shark Bay due to very low scallop abundance. Additional conservative management measures have been implemented each year since 2015 including a limit on the level of scallop harvest pre-spawning complemented by small scale spatial closures. Following the March 2019 survey, a total TACC of 350 t meat weight (1750 t

GASCOYNE BIOREGION

whole weight) for Denham Sound was implemented which was an increase on the initial TACC set for the season after the November 2018 survey.

Following a review of the trial quota management arrangements during 2017, the Department determined that formalising the quota system for the SBSMF would provide for catch share security, operational flexibility, opportunity for licence holders to optimise catch and rationalise effort as well as sustainable management of the scallop resource in Shark Bay. The Department continued to manage the SBSMF under a quota management system in 2019 and progress the development of a harvest strategy based on a quota management framework, in consultation with industry. This is nearing completion.

A formal harvest strategy for the SBSMF was released for public consultation during July 2020 and a final version is being completed in 2020/21.

A formal harvest strategy document for the Abrolhos Islands was published in July 2020 (DPIRD 2020). This outlines the long and short-term management objectives for the fishery, the performance indicators, reference levels and harvest control rules required to achieve these objectives.

In the Abrolhos Islands, the 2018 survey showed an overall higher level of recruitment than observed in 2017, with the predicted catch for 2019 (at 750-1000 t whole weight) above the target range and the fishery opened in March 2019. The landings were within the lower end of the range and fishers ceased fishing at a catch rate above the target.

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels

Shark Bay: A catch limit of 1750 t (whole weight) (equivalent to 350 tonnes meat weight) was set for 2019 and 1694 t was achieved.

Abrolhos Islands: Catch prediction was above the target range (95-1830 t whole weight) and 796 t whole weight was achieved.

South West: Catch range not developed.

South Coast: Catch range not developed.

Compliance

It is a requirement that all vessels in each of the fisheries are fitted with an Automatic Location Communicator (ALC). The implementation of an ALC enables the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Department) to monitor the fleet using a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and manage compliance with temporal and spatial closures. Regular vessel inspections are also conducted to ensure fishing is being undertaken in accordance with the governing legislation (e.g. gear requirements, catch reporting).

Under the trial quota management arrangements in the SBSMF, operators are required to provide catch and disposal records (CDRs), including the weight of scallops landed. Inspections at the landing port and CDRs are monitored throughout the season to maintain the integrity of the quota system.

Consultation

Management Meetings are held between the Department and licensees, in conjunction with the Industry Consultation Unit of the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC). These meetings provide an opportunity for the Department, WAFIC and industry to discuss research outcomes and initiatives, management of the fishery and industry issues. A Shark Bay Scallop Working Group was established in 2016 to provide advice on the TACC, conduct in-season TACC reviews and assist in the development of a Shark Bay Scallop resource harvest strategy. Skippers briefings are also conducted prior to the commencement of each season.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

A formal harvest strategy for the SBSMF was released for public consultation during July 2020 and a final version is being completed in 2020/21.

Measures to aid recovery of scallops in northern Shark Bay were implemented in 2019 and included; a complete closure to the take of scallops in the area and; two scallop protection areas closed to all trawl fishing. An external review of the research and management of the Shark Bay trawl fisheries was undertaken in April 2019. The Department has developed a management and science workplan which is being implemented to address and incorporate findings of the review in the management and science programs.

The Abrolhos trawl fishery is commencing MSC assessment during 2020/21.

An FRDC project is commencing in 2020/21 involving the collection of scallop broodstock from the South West Trawl to trial hatchery rearing of scallops with growth and development in situ, aiming for subsequent release back into the fishery and potential contributions to stock enhancements.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Strong La Niña events that typically result in strong Leeuwin Currents and warm sea-surface temperature often result in below-average scallop recruitment in Shark Bay and the Abrolhos Is. Between 2012 and 2014, the SBSMF was closed

due to the 2011 marine heatwave event (associated with a strong La Niña) which resulted in reduction of breeding stock and subsequent very poor recruitment for a number of years (Caputi et al. 2015, 2016). The AIMWTMF

remained closed for 2012 to 2016. A study into understanding recruitment variation (including the collapse) of scallop stocks was recently completed (Chandrapavan et al. 2020). **Significant risk.**

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SHARK BAY BLUE SWIMMER CRAB RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

A. Chandrapavan, S. Wilkin, N. Breheny, G. Grounds and P. Cavalli.



OVERVIEW

The blue swimmer crab (*Portunus armatus*) resource in Shark Bay is harvested commercially by the Shark Bay Crab Managed Fishery which consists of Shark Bay crab trap, Shark Bay prawn trawl and Shark Bay scallop trawl operators. This crab stock also supports a regionally important recreational fishery (<5 t). Management of the commercial sector moved from an effort-controlled system to an Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) management system at the start of the 2015/16 season under the *Shark Bay Crab Managed Fishery Management Plan 2015*.

Recreational fishing for blue swimmer crabs mainly takes place using drop nets or scoop nets. This sector is managed through a combination of input and output controls including a minimum size limit that is well above the size at sexual maturity along with bag and boat limits.

The fishery was assessed under the provisions of the Commonwealth's EPBC Act in 2015 and has been accredited for export for a period of ten years (re-assessment in 2025).

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

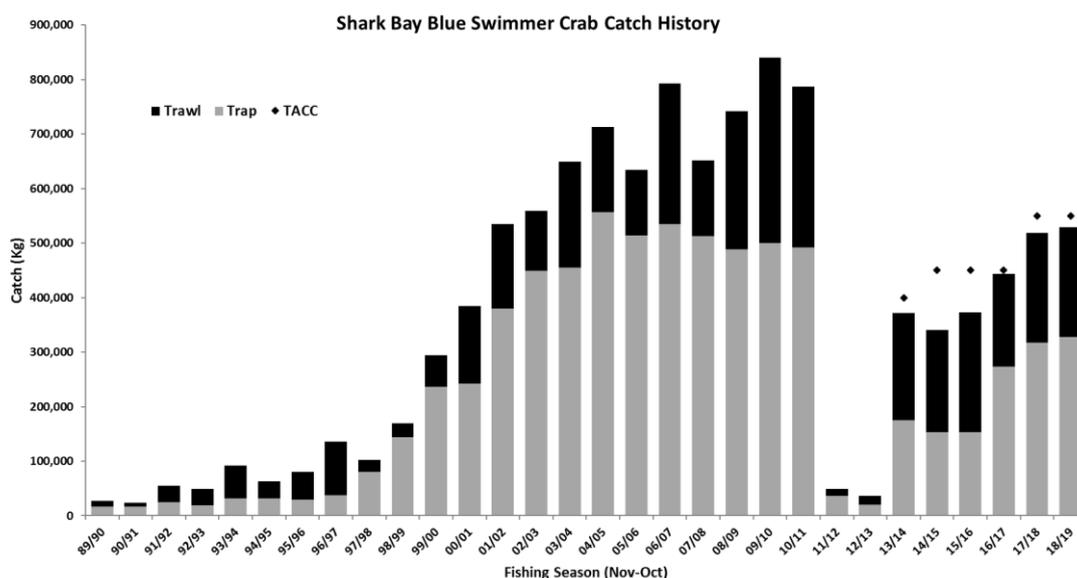
Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (550 t TACC)	Total Catch 2018/19: 529 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery	Total Catch 2017/18: ~5 t (boat-based only)	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Blue Swimmer Crab	CPUE above target	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible risk (trap) Low risk (trawl)	Adequate
Listed Species	Low risk	Adequate
Habitat	Low risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$3.1million)	GVP Level 2 – (\$1 - 5 million)	Acceptable
Social	Amenity Score 3	Acceptable
Governance	Moderate risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	Environment – Risk Level 5 (climate)	Ongoing monitoring

CATCH AND LANDINGS

A Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) of 550 tonnes was set for the 2018/19 fishing season (1 November 2018 to 31 October 2019). The total catch landed for the 2018/19 season was 529 t (~96% of the TACC), the highest landed catch since the resumption of fishing in 2013 (Shark Bay Blue Swimmer Crab Figure 1). The trap sector’s total catch was 327 t and represented 62% of the total landings for this season. The prawn trawl sector’s total catch was 202 t which represented

38% of the total landings. The scallop trawl sector only retained 40 kg.

The estimated boat-based recreational catch of blue swimmer crab in the Gascoyne Coast was 5.4 t in 2017/18 (Ryan *et al.* 2019). The estimated boat-based recreational harvest range for blue swimmer crab for inner Shark Bay during 2016/17 was 1–2 tonnes (Taylor *et al.* 2018).



SHARK BAY BLUE SWIMMER CRAB FIGURE 1.

Commercial catch history for the blue swimmer crab (*Portunus armatus*) between trap and trawl sectors since 1989/90. *The catch for 2012/13 is generated from the experimental commercial fishing trial. A TACC of 400 tonnes was set for 2013/14 and increased to 450 tonnes for the 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17 fishing seasons and 550 tonnes for the 2017/18 and 2018/19 fishing seasons.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

The Shark Bay crab stock experienced a significant stock decline in late 2011, following a series of adverse environmental conditions between 2010 and 2011, particularly the extreme 2011 marine heatwave. The fishery was closed for a period of 18 months in 2012 and 2013 to promote stock recovery. Limited commercial fishing resumed under a notional quota management system for the 2013/14 (400 t) season, and continued for the 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 seasons with a TACC of 450 t. An increase of 100 tonnes was deemed appropriate for the 2017/18 season with a TACC of 550 tonnes which was maintained for the 2018/19 season.

Shark Bay crab stocks are assessed as part of a multi-species fishery-independent surveys conducted in February, June and November each year. The current stock assessment indicates that spawning, recruitment and biomass levels have been increasing steadily under increasing catch levels and favourable environmental conditions. The biomass dynamics model for this resource also indicates increasing biomass with a MSY point estimate of 672 t. The average commercial trap catch rate was 1.7 kg/traplift during 2018/19, above the Target reference level of 1.4 kg/traplift. A TACC of 550 t was set for the 2018/19 season.

A harvest strategy has been developed for this fishery which now incorporates a mid-season review. This review during the 2018/19 season found no major changes in the stock indicators so the TACC was maintained at 550 t for the remainder of the season.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

The trap sector operates in a manner that avoids mortality or injury to endangered, threatened or protected species and avoids or minimises impacts on threatened ecological communities. Hourglass traps, used in the commercial fishery, are purpose-designed to minimise the capture of undersized blue swimmer crabs and non-target species, the majority of which are able to escape through the entrance gaps when the pot is soaking or being hauled. The number of bycatch species recorded in the fishery (mainly finfish and other invertebrates) is low and considered to pose a **negligible** risk to these stocks.

Bycatch from the prawn and scallop trawl fleets are described in the relevant status reports specific to the trawl fisheries (see Gascoyne Shark Bay Prawn Resource and Saucer Scallop Resource Reports).

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

As the commercial take of crabs represents a relatively small portion of the biomass, which is effectively renewed annually, secondary food chain effects are likely to be minimal in this fishery.

Fishing with traps results in limited habitat disturbance, as only minor dragging of traps on the sea bottom occurs during trap retrieval. Sand and associated biota does not get brought to the surface in commercial blue swimmer crab traps, as the mesh used on traps is sufficiently large to allow the escape of any sand-dwelling macrobenthos. Although seagrasses are occasionally uprooted and brought to the surface with the trap, the infrequent nature of this occurrence, and the small amount of living seagrass removed, results in minimal habitat damage and therefore poses a **low** risk. The impacts of interactions specific to the trawl sectors are described in the relevant status reports.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

The trap sector employs approximately 12 people as skippers and crew on vessels fishing for blue swimmer crabs in the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion, as well as additional employment for 30-35 workers for the post-harvest processing of the crab catch. The closure of the Shark Bay crab fishery during 2012/13 had a significant socio-economic impact on both the trap and trawl sectors however the resumption of fishing has relieved some economic pressure.

For the trawl sector, approximately 100 skippers and crew were employed in the fishery. There are also approximately 35 processing and support staff employed at Carnarvon. One of the large operators with 10 licensed fishing boats is based in Carnarvon with administration, wharf, coldstore and engineering staff based at the small boat harbour. Eight other boats travel to the region and utilise local contractors during the fishing season. The trawl sector also utilises, wherever possible, Western Australian service companies providing engineering supplies, packaging, transport logistics, ship stores and fuel.

Economic

The average beach price for uncooked crabs across WA was \$5.91/kg. The estimated value of the commercial blue swimmer crab resource from Shark Bay for 2018/19 season was \$3.1 million.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The Department developed a formal harvest strategy for the Shark Bay blue swimmer crab resource. This outlines the long and short-term management objectives for the fishery, the performance indicators, reference levels and harvest control rules required to achieve these objectives.

The capacity for the SBCMF is specified in the SBCMF Management Plan as 650 tonnes, based on estimates from 2018 of the long-term maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for the blue swimmer crab resource under normal environmental conditions.

Noting the short-lived and dynamic nature of blue swimmer crabs, the TACC is reviewed each year in April/May based on the state of the resource relative to specific reference levels.

DPIRD and industry have implemented a co-management arrangement whereby industry will abide by a TACC that is less than the legislated capacity. This voluntary agreement provides DPIRD with the flexibility to increase or decrease the TACC in accordance with fluctuations in the crab stock.

A constant catch harvesting strategy is applied to the commercial fishery. A weight-of-evidence approach is adopted to support the TACC setting process. The weight-of-evidence approach takes into account information from fishery-independent surveys, commercial catch and effort, environmental conditions and also results from a biomass dynamic model.

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels

A TACC of 550 t was set for the 2018/19 fishing season of which 529.5 t was achieved (~96% of TACC). This was the highest catch landings since fishing resumed in 2013 and with an annual catch tolerance range of >90%, the annual catch achieved is at **acceptable** level.

Compliance

The Department undertakes regular vessel and landing inspections to ensure fishing is being undertaken in accordance with the governing legislation (e.g. gear requirements, catch reporting and size and bag limits). It is also a statutory requirement that commercial fishers submit Catch and Disposal Records, including the weight of crabs landed after each fishing trip. This information enables the Department to monitor the TACC and investigate any breaches of relevant legislation.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with commercial licensees on operational issues,

while Annual Management Meetings between the Department and licensees, convened by the Industry Consultation Unit of the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), provide an opportunity for the Department, WAFIC and industry to discuss research outcomes and initiatives, management of the fishery and industry issues. A Shark Bay Crab Working Group was established in early 2017 to provide a transparent and inclusive decision making process between the Department, licensees and the recreational sector, that supports the review of the annual TACC for the Fishery and development of a Shark Bay crab resource harvest strategy.

Focused recreational consultation occurs with Recfishwest, and broader recreational consultation processes are facilitated by Recfishwest.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives/Outlook Status

The SB Crab Harvest Strategy was formally published in June 2020, following the public consultation period held in April 2020.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Shark Bay is currently exhibiting atypical seasonal SST profile compared to historical years (pre 2010). Average peak summer SST ranges are 25 to 26°C since 2010, which is almost 1°C warmer than temperatures between 1980-2000. Since 2016, summer SST's have been average to below-average which is most favourable for recruitment and has likely contributed to increased landings in recent years including 2017/18 and 2018/19 seasons.

The greatest shift in water temperatures in Shark Bay is occurring over the autumn/winter period which has been cooling since 2000 and more rapidly since 2015. This unique phenomenon that persists within Shark Bay is associated with the shift in the position of the subtropical ridge that drives climatic conditions at this latitude. Winter 2018 has been the coldest on record, ~ 1.8 °C cooler than average (Chandrapavan *et al.* 2019).

Blue swimmer crabs are ranked "high risk" under the current climate change scenario with Shark Bay now considered at "High Risk" from climate change impacts (NESP 2018). While recent cooler summer water temperatures pose low risk to crab recruitment, the peak spawning period appears to be shifting earlier as a response to the shifting winter season and cooler water temperatures. Earlier spawning is consistent with the increased juvenile recruitment biomass occurring in November in recent years. Uncertainty from

environmental variability continues to pose high risk to stock.

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EXMOUTH GULF PRAWN RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

M. Kangas, S. Wilkin, I. Koefoed and S. Brown



OVERVIEW

The Exmouth Gulf Prawn Managed Fishery (EGPMF) uses low opening, otter prawn trawl systems within the sheltered waters of Exmouth Gulf (Kangas *et al.* 2015) to target western king prawns (*Penaeus latisulcatus*), brown tiger prawns (*Penaeus esculentus*), blue endeavour prawns (*Metapenaeus endeavouri*) and banana prawns (*Penaeus merguianensis*). Management of this fishery is in accordance with the *Exmouth Gulf Prawn Managed Fishery Harvest Strategy*

2014 – 2019 (EGP Harvest strategy) and is based on input controls; including limited entry, gear controls (maximum headrope units), seasonal and spatial openings and closures, and monthly moon closures. Management arrangements are designed to keep fishing effort at levels that will maintain a sufficient spawning biomass of prawns (particularly brown tiger prawns). Bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) and a secondary fish escape device (FED) are mandatory.

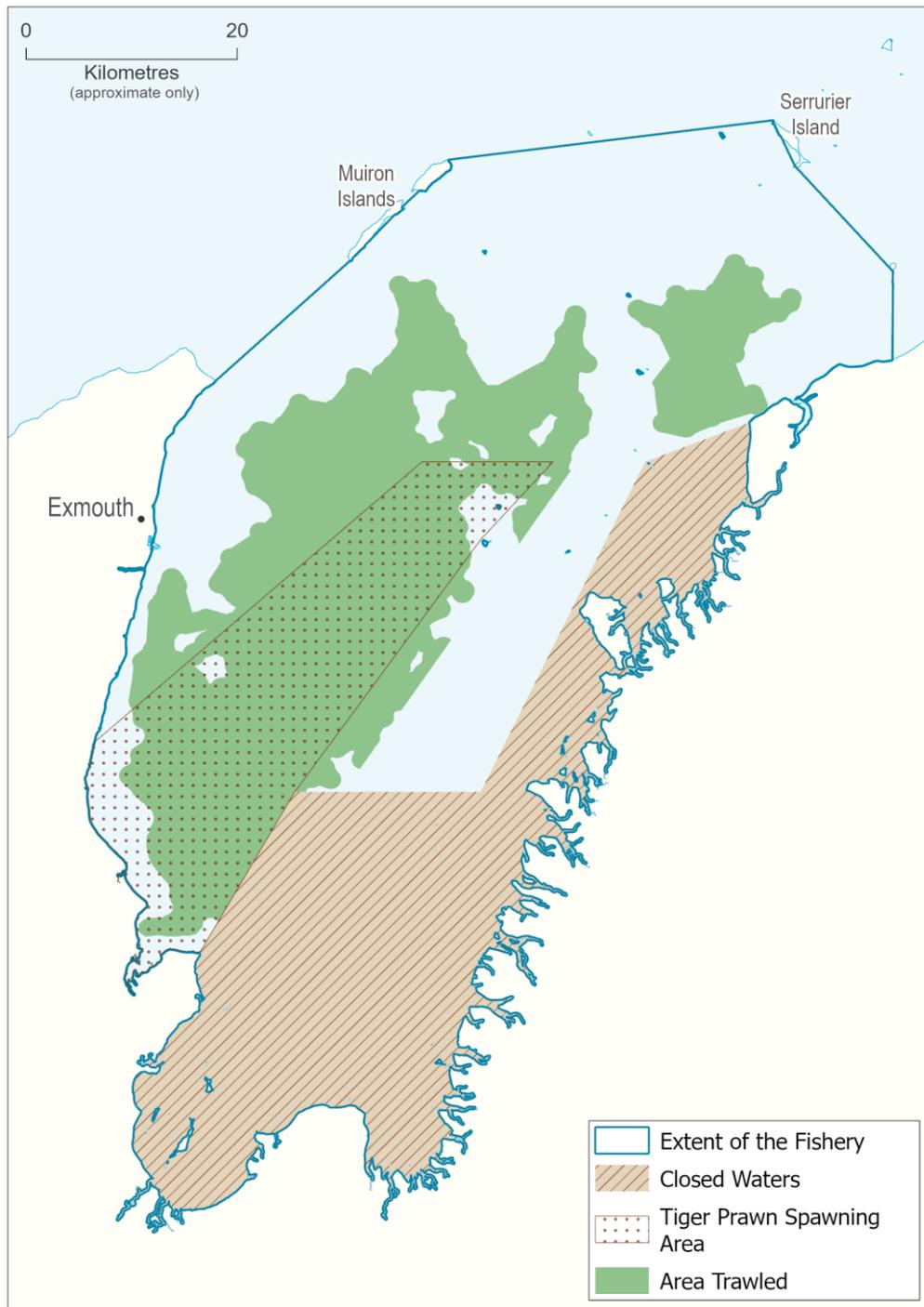
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This fishery received Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification in October 2015. The Commonwealth Government Department of the Environment and Energy (now known as the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE)) assessed the fishery in 2015 under the provisions of the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and accredited the fishery for a period of ten years

(re-assessment in 2025), allowing product from the fishery to be exported from Australia (<https://www.environment.gov.au/marine/fisheries/wa/exmouth-gulf-prawn>). A more detailed account of the resource is provided in Kangas *et al.* (2015) (www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/wamsc_reports/wamsc_report_no_1.pdf).

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (2019)	Total Catch : 821 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (NA)		
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Brown Tiger Prawn	Breeding stock above target	Adequate
Western King Prawn	Breeding stock above target	Adequate
Blue Endeavour Prawn	Breeding stock above target	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Low Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Low Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$9.9 m)	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
Social (3 amenity)	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	High Risk	Acceptable

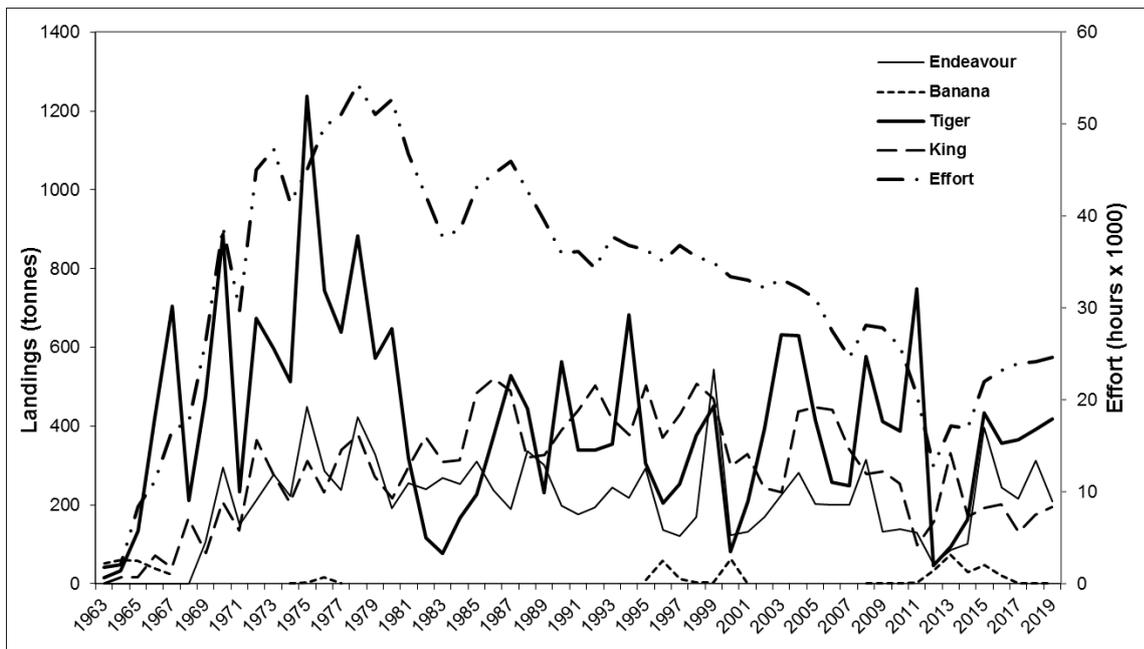


EXMOUTH GULF PRAWN FIGURE 1.
Map showing boundaries of the Exmouth Gulf Prawn Managed Fishery.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

The total landings of prawns in 2019 were 821 t, comprising 418 t of brown tiger prawns, 194 t of western king prawns, 208 t of blue endeavour prawns and one tonne of banana prawns (Exmouth Gulf Prawn Figure 2). Recorded landings of by-product were; 21 t of coral prawns,

6 t of blue swimmer crab (*Portunus armatus*) and cuttlefish, 2 t of squid and bugs (*Thenus orientalis*), <1 t mantis shrimp and octopus. Historical landings are provided in Kangas *et al.* (2015).



EXMOUTH GULF PRAWN FIGURE 2.
Annual prawn landings (t) and fishing effort (total adjusted hours) for the Exmouth Gulf Prawn Managed Fishery 1963-2019.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Brown tiger prawns (Sustainable-Adequate)

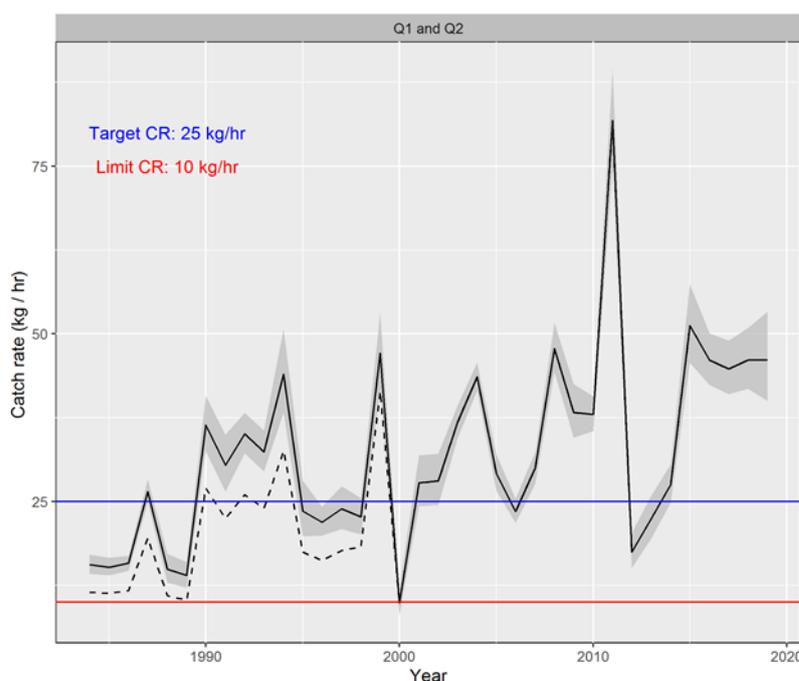
The status of the stock is assessed annually, using a weight-of-evidence approach primarily based on fishery-independent indices of recruitment and spawning stock levels relative to specified reference points. Recruitment surveys provide the basis of an annual catch prediction (Caputi *et al.* 2014).

The management objective is to maintain the spawning biomass above the historically determined biological reference points, with a target of 25 kg/hr and a limit of 10 kg/hr in the spawning stock surveys (DPIRD 2018). The standardised spawning stock surveys carried out from August to October 2019 had an average catch rate of 42.7 kg/hr, well above the target level (Exmouth Gulf Prawn Figure 3), indicating that the stock is highly unlikely to be recruitment overfished. Biomass dynamic modelling of the brown tiger prawn stocks in the fishery has indicated that the target reference levels are close to MSY biomass levels. The fishery has fully

recovered from the effects of the marine heat wave (Caputi *et al.* 2016) that may have affected the structured inshore nursery habitat.

With respect to fishing mortality, temporal and spatial closures (based on fishery-independent and industry surveys) ensure that brown tiger prawns are not harvested at sub-optimal sizes. The annual catch tolerance range for brown tiger prawns is 250 to 550 t (DPIRD 2018) with a catch prediction of 460 t and a range of 370 to 550 t for 2019 (this revised prediction was derived using lower historical landings in recent years). The total catch (418 t) was within the catch tolerance and prediction range.

The standardised fishing effort in 2019 was 24.6 thousand trawl hours. This is a reduction from historical levels (35 to 50 thousand hours standardised to twin gear). The current level of fishing mortality is unlikely to cause the stock to become recruitment overfished and stock level is considered **adequate**.



EXMOUTH GULF PRAWN FIGURE 3.

Brown tiger prawn spawning stock mean catch rate (kg/hr) and 95% confidence interval (shaded area) for August, September and October combined for two areas (Q1 and Q2) and target (upper line) and limit (lower line) reference levels. The blue line indicates the target reference point (25 kg/hr) and the red line indicates the limit reference point (10 kg/hr). The dotted line indicates catch rates that have not been adjusted for the difference in net spread between twin and quad gear.

Western king prawns (Sustainable-Adequate)

Fishery-independent recruitment surveys are undertaken each year to assess the abundance and size structure and are used for catch predictions (Caputi *et al.* 2014) and management decisions, such as spatio-temporal opening of fishing areas. In 2019, the recruitment index was 47.6 kg/hr, well above the target (30 kg/hr), however fishing was restricted in key western king prawn grounds until August, similar to what occurred in 2017 and 2018. The spawning stock index for 2019 (commercial catch rates in key western king prawn fishing grounds in August and September) was 30.4 kg/hr, which was above the target (25 kg/hr). Fishery-independent surveys of western king prawn grounds during August and September commenced in 2016 to provide additional spawning stock abundance information. In 2019 these surveys indicated a mean catch rate of 40.3 kg per hour in August and 29.2 kg per hour in September with an average over that period of 34.8 kg per hour, well above the target reference level. Biomass dynamic modelling of the western king prawn stocks in the fishery has indicated that the target reference levels are close to MSY biomass levels.

Catch and catch rate levels from 1989 to 1998 have been used as the basis for calculating the catch tolerance range of 350 to 500 t and mean catch rate of 12 kg/hr (with a range between 8 and 14 kg/hr). However, due to the apparent negative

impacts of increased water temperatures on western king prawn recruitment, and with the level of effort having declined as a result of fleet reductions and targeting larger prawns, a catch range based on the last 15 years of production sets a revised catch range of 100-450 t and a mean catch rate range (8-16 kg per hour). The commercial catch for 2019 of 194 t is within the target range with a mean catch rate (7.9 kg per hour) at the lower end of the target catch rate range.

The above evidence indicates that the biomass of the stock is unlikely to be recruitment overfished and that the current level of fishing mortality is unlikely to cause the stock to become recruitment overfished. Stock levels are considered **adequate**.

Blue endeavour prawn (Sustainable-Adequate)

In 2018, the Harvest Strategy for the Exmouth Gulf Prawn Managed Fishery was modified to include blue endeavour prawns (DPIRD 2018) with specific limit (4.5 kg/hr) and target (9 kg/hr) reference levels for the spawning stock. Overall stock assessment of this species is based on a weight of evidence approach. Fishery-independent spawning stock and recruitment surveys of brown tiger and western king prawns record the abundance of blue endeavour prawns and provide an annual spawning stock and recruitment abundance index expressed in terms

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of survey catch rate. In 2019, the mean survey catch rate for the blue endeavour prawn spawning stock was 28.5 kg per hour, well above the target. Biomass dynamics modelling of the blue endeavour prawn stocks in the fishery has indicated that the target reference levels are close to MSY biomass levels.

A secondary performance indicator is the annual recruitment survey catch rate which indicates recruitment strength. A preliminary catch prediction has been developed based on the mean annual recruitment index and landings since 2012, when blue endeavour prawns began to be retained more consistently due to improved markets. The recruitment catch rate index in 2019 of 18.0 kg per hour was above the 10-year mean (2007–16) of 16.7 kg per hour. The catch prediction was 215 – 325 t and landings (208 t) was just below this range. There has been no declining trend in the fishery-independent survey catch rates over the periods sampled for either the spawning stock or recruitment. The above evidence indicates that the biomass of the stock is unlikely to be recruitment overfished.

A target catch range is set at 120–300 t, based on historical catches between 1989 and 1998, a period when the stock was considered to be moderately exploited (Gaughan and Santoro 2018) and retention rates varied due to the abundance of the key target species (brown tiger and western king prawns) as well as market demand. Total catch in 2019 was within the target catch range. A significant portion of the breeding biomass is protected by the brown tiger prawn spawning closures and an additional portion of the blue endeavour prawn biomass occurs inshore of the key fishing grounds for brown tiger prawns, which are permanently closed.

The above evidence indicates that the biomass of the stock is unlikely to be recruitment overfished and that the current level of fishing mortality is unlikely to cause the stock to become recruitment overfished. Stock levels are considered **adequate**.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

Bycatch levels for Exmouth Gulf are relatively low by tropical trawl fisheries standards, with few species of significance to other fishing sectors being taken. Bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) are mandatory, with all boats required to fish with a ‘grid’ and a secondary fish escape device (FED) fitted in each net. Secondary bycatch reduction devices (square mesh panels) were implemented in all nets in 2005. All boats also use hoppers (in-water catch sorting systems), which add another level of improvement for bycatch survival and

product quality. An examination of bycatch composition between 2015 and 2017 was undertaken as part of the second MSC annual audit for this fishery. This examination compared a subset of the sites sampled in 2004 in both trawled and untrawled areas. The results indicated that the majority of the most common 20 species of fish and invertebrates recorded in 2004 were still generally amongst the top 20 in these recent samples. There also was no major change in overall faunal species composition. **Low risk**.

Protected species

Sea snakes, sawfish, syngnathids and turtles are encountered in the trawls (Exmouth Gulf Prawn Table 1). Most are typically returned alive (Kangas *et al.* 2015). Grids keep captures of turtles and other large animals low. The increase in reported species numbers, in particular sea snakes and sawfish, in recent years is due to an increase in awareness, education and commitment from both crew and skippers to improve reporting. **Low risk**.

EXMOUTH GULF PRAWN TABLE 1.

Protected species interactions recorded in the daily logbooks during 2019

Species	Alive	Dead	Unknown
Turtle	20	0	0
Sea Snake	944	50	0
Syngnathids	5	1	0
Saw Fish	13	0	0

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

Owing to the predominantly mud and sand habitats of the trawl grounds, the trawl gear has relatively little physical impact. Overall, the nature of this fishery and controls on effort indicate that its environmental effect is likely to be low (Kangas *et al.* 2015). Performance measures for habitat impact relate to the spatial extent of trawling within the licensed area of the Exmouth Gulf fishery. In 2019, the performance measure was met as the total area trawled, at approximately 342 square nautical miles (30.1%) of trawlable grounds in Exmouth Gulf, was below the 50% target level. **Low risk**.

Ecosystem

The impact of the catch on local food chains is unlikely to be significant given the high level of natural mortality, extent of the non-trawled areas and, variable biomass levels of prawns resulting from changing environmental conditions such as cyclone events. **Low risk**.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

The estimated employment in the fishery in 2019 was 18 people including skippers and other crew. Additional support staff are based in Exmouth and Fremantle. Within the Exmouth area, the fishery is an important regional employer contributing to the economic viability of the Exmouth township. Ex-vessel (beach) prices for prawns vary, depending on the type and quality of product and the market forces operating at any one time. In this fishery there is a high degree of vertical integration, with the licensee undertaking direct marketing of the product into domestic and overseas markets. For this reason, the prices quoted for prawns and byproduct are provided by the licensee on an overall average price taking into account each grade landed. The total estimated value of the fishery, including byproduct is \$9.9 million for 2019.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The fishery is managed in accordance with the EGP Harvest Strategy, which was amended in 2018 to include blue endeavour prawns as a target species (DPIRD 2018). The primary management objective is to maintain the spawning stock biomass of each target species at a level where the main factor affecting recruitment is the environment.

The key stock indicator for each primary species was above their respective target levels hence no changes to management arrangements will occur for 2020.

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels

Total landings of brown tiger and blue endeavour prawns were within the catch tolerance ranges. The western king prawns were within the revised catch tolerance range. The annual fishing level is considered **acceptable**.

EXMOUTH GULF PRAWN TABLE 2.

Annual catch tolerance levels (acceptable)

Total Prawn Catch	Revised 436–1,347 t
Western King Prawns	100-450 t
Brown Tiger Prawns	250–550 t
Blue Endeavour Prawns	120–300 t
Banana Prawns	1–60 t

Compliance

It is a requirement that all vessels in the fishery are fitted with an Automatic Location

Communicator (ALC). The implementation of an ALC enables the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (the Department) to monitor the fleet using a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and manage compliance with temporal and spatial closures. The Department also undertakes regular vessel inspections to ensure fishing is being undertaken in accordance with the governing legislation (e.g. gear requirements, catch reporting).

Consultation

The Department, in conjunction with the Industry Consultation Unit of the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), holds Management Meetings (MM) for this fishery. The MM is an opportunity for the Department, WAFIC and industry to discuss research outcomes, initiatives, management of the fishery and industry issues. Season arrangements are developed each year in consultation with the licence holder. During the season, the Department and the licence holder undertake collaborative in-season management to ensure the protection of smaller prawns and to maintain the spawning stock biomass.

The Department has an industry/department steering group for managing MSC conditions.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

Management initiatives for 2020 include undertaking work to address MSC recertification. An Ecological Risk Assessment of the fishery was conducted in September 2019 to support a review of the EGP Harvest strategy and Bycatch Action Plan, and these are being reviewed in 2020/21.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

External drivers for this fishery include economic and environmental factors.

Most of the economic drivers were positive for 2019. The costs to fish have stabilised and the lower dollar value has increased export potential. The Chinese market demand for prawn product has increased, whether it is wild caught or aquaculture grown. Therefore, the price difference between farmed (tiger prawn) and wild caught prawns almost reached parity. Traditional export markets remained stable. Prawn demand in the domestic market was reasonable although prices were reduced. The focus of the fishing strategy remains on targeting larger prawns during high catch rate periods to maximise fishing efficiency.

Cyclones appear to have a significant effect on the productivity of Exmouth Gulf and can either have a positive or negative impact on prawns

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depending on the timing and severity of the cyclone, the species of prawn and their location in the fishery.

Brown tiger prawns were ranked as a **high** risk to climate change effects and western king prawns as **moderate-high**, so both these species need to be monitored closely (Caputi *et al.* 2015a and b). The heat wave event of 2010/11 may have contributed to the recent extremes in abundance

of brown tiger prawns in Exmouth Gulf. The causes of low recruitment periods appear to be related to nursery habitats and environmental factors (including temperature).

Higher than average water temperatures also appear to be having a negative effect on western king prawn catches (Caputi *et al.* 2015a and b) and will continue to be investigated.

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WEST COAST¹ DEEP SEA CRUSTACEAN RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

J. How and L. Orme



OVERVIEW

The West Coast Deep Sea Crustacean resource consists primarily of Crystal (snow) (*Chaceon albus*), Champagne (spiny) (*Hypothalassia acerba*) and Giant (king) (*Pseudocarcinus gigas*) crabs. The resource is accessed primarily by the commercial West Coast Deep Sea Crustacean Managed Fishery (WCDSCMF) which targets crystal crabs, with the West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery (WCRLMF) retaining a small amount of champagne crabs as by-product. The WCDSCMF is a 'pot' fishery using baited pots operated in a long-line formation in the shelf edge

waters (>150 m) of the West Coast and Gascoyne Bioregions (see How *et al.* 2015). The fishery is primarily managed using a total allowable catch. In 2016 the WCDSCMF achieved Marine Stewardship Council certification, confirming the sustainability credentials of the fishery. For more details on the fishery and assessment methodology see How *et al.* (2015) http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/wamsc_reports/wamsc_report_no_4.pdf.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery: (154 t TACC)	Total Catch 2019: 153.2 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (NA)		N/A
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Crystal crab (<i>Chaceon albus</i>)	Above threshold	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Low Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Low Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$7.7 m)	Medium Risk	Acceptable
Social (low amenity)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Minor adjustments	Acceptable
External Drivers	Low Risk	Acceptable

¹ This is the official name of the fishery. Boundaries include Gascoyne.



DEEP SEA CRUSTACEAN FIGURE 1.
Map showing boundaries of the West Coast Deep Sea Crustacean Managed Fishery.

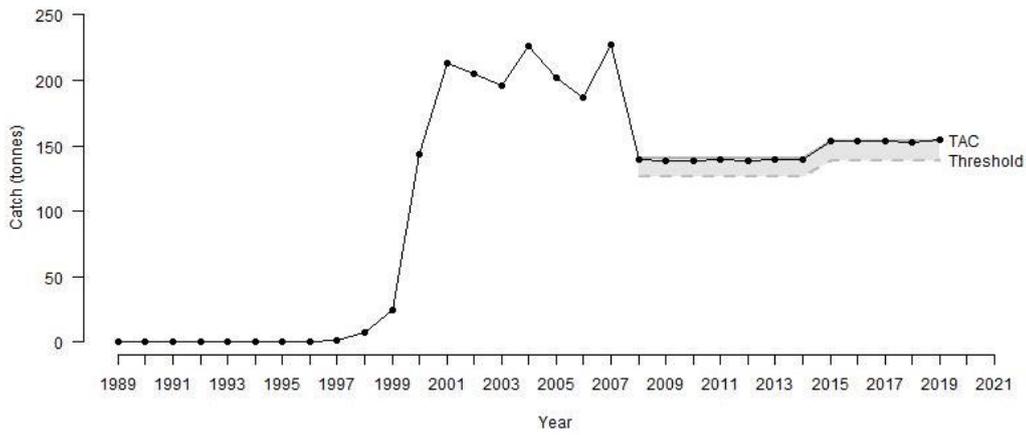
CATCH AND LANDINGS

The total landings from this west coast offshore resource in 2019 as targeted by the WCDSCMF was 155.7 t. Catches are dominated by crystal crabs, of which 99% of their TAC was landed (Deep Sea Crustacean Figure 2). In addition, 0.2 tonnes of giant crabs and 2.2 tonnes of champagne crabs were landed in 2019. Landings of crystal, champagne and giant crabs also occur off the south coast, as accessed by the South Coast Crustacean Managed Fishery (SCCMF). For more information on SCCMF landings see South Coast Crustacean Resource Status Report.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

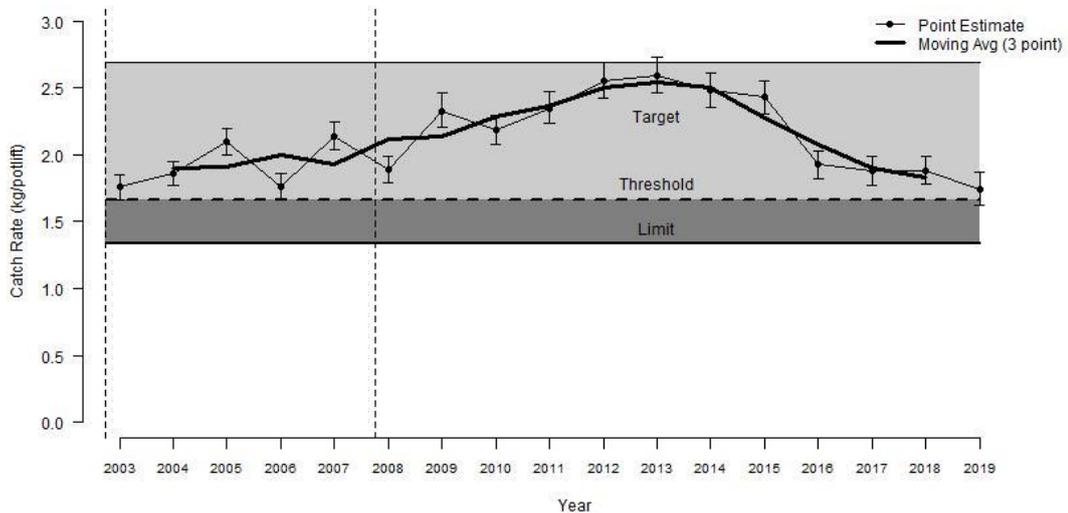
Crystal crab

All lines of evidence indicate that it is likely the stock biomass is above its threshold level and therefore **adequate**. The standardised catch rate of legal crystal crabs in 2019 was 1.7 kg/pot-lift (Deep Sea Crustacean Figure 3) slightly lower than the 2018 catch rates but still within the target range.



DEEP SEA CRUSTACEAN FIGURE 2.

Annual landings of crystal crab in the West Coast Deep Sea Crustacean Fishery and its associated total allowable catch (TAC, shaded) and catch threshold level (dotted).



DEEP SEA CRUSTACEAN FIGURE 3.

Annual standardised catch rate (kg / pot-lift) of legal crystal crabs (± 95 CI) and its 3-year moving average with their associated target (light grey) and threshold region (dark grey) and limit reference point.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTION

Bycatch

The gear used in this fishery generates minimal bycatch. **Negligible** risk.

Protected Species

There have been no reported interactions of WCDSC gear with protected species in 2019. **Low** risk.

The bycatch and protected species performance measures for the fishery are that:

- a) Fishing impacts are considered to generate an acceptable level of risk to all bycatch species' populations, i.e. moderate risk or lower;
- b) Less than three interactions with any particular ETP species in a year; and

c) Fishing impacts are considered to generate an acceptable level of risk to all ETP species' populations, i.e. moderate risk or lower.

All of the measures were met.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

Potting is also considered to have a low impact on the habitat over which the fishery operates. **Low** risk.

Ecosystem

The effects of the removal of deep sea crabs has been assessed for the WCDSCMF as having negligible food chain effects by the removal of crabs. Therefore, at current catch levels, it is

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unlikely that removal of crabs is likely to result in food chain effects. **Negligible** risk.

The habitat and ecosystem performance measures for the fishery are that:

- Fishing impacts are considered to generate an acceptable level of risk to ecological processes within the ecosystem, i.e. moderate risk or lower;
- Fishing impacts on each ecological resource / asset impacts are considered to generate an acceptable level of risk, i.e. moderate risk or lower.
- The area fished is ≤ 125 (10' x 10') blocks; and
- Fishing effort is $\leq 169\ 000$ trap lifts

All of the measures were met.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

The WCDSCMF is considered to have a low social amenity. This fishery is based on vessels that employ a skipper and two or three crew and there is no recreational fishery. The product is landed live at ports between Carnarvon and Fremantle, generating some additional economic activity and benefits. There were four vessels operating in 2019. **Low** risk.

Economic

The GVP (gross value of production) for the fishery was about \$7.7 million in 2019 with the majority of the catch sold live to Asian markets both locally and internationally. **Moderate** risk.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The West Coast Deep Sea Crustacean Harvest Strategy 2015-2020 (see Fisheries Management Paper No. 272) is the basis for the setting of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for the WCDSCMF. An updated harvest strategy has been developed and is currently out for consultation.

For 2019:

- The crystal crab TAC was achieved,
- The standardised catch rate of legal crystal crabs was within the target range, and

The catch of champagne and giant crab were both within their respective target ranges

Fishery-independent surveys have been initiated in collaboration with fishers to obtain improved

estimates of undersize and berried females as well as the legal size.

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels

For the 2019 season (1 January – 31 December 2019) the crystal crab quota was set at 154 t. With an annual tolerance range of $> 90\%$, and based on the catch of 153.2 t, the annual catch is **acceptable**. The quota of champagne (B Class Units) and giant crab (C Class Units) was set at 20 and 1 t respectively. The catch of these two species was 2.3 and 0.2 t respectively.

Compliance

The compliance program is developed using a risk assessment process, and intelligence led investigations, particularly TAC verification which is undertaken at unload inspections.

Consultation

Management Meetings are held between the Department and licensees, in conjunction with the Industry Consultation Unit of the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC). These meetings provide an opportunity for the Department, WAFIC and industry to discuss research outcomes and initiatives, management of the fishery and industry issues.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines

Annual surveillance audits are conducted by MSC and are attended by licence holders, the Department and WAFIC.

Management Initiatives

To address conditions raised as part of the MSC assessment process, B class units (combined champagne and giant crab) were split into B class (champagne crab) and C class (giant crab), with individually set TACC (20,020 tonnes and 980 kg respectively). This arrangement came into effect for the 2019 fishing season,

Management initiatives in 2020 will primarily focus on monitoring and assessing its implementation within the fishery. Additionally, a memorandum of understanding with the industry regarding the use of approved bait sources was established and implemented.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Given product is exported; fluctuation in the Australian dollar can have impacts on the economic performance of the fishery. The WCDSCMF is thought to be relatively resilient to environmental change due to the depth of fishing operations. **Low** risk.

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GASCOYNE DEMERSAL SCALEFISH RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

G. Jackson, S. Walters and S. Turner



OVERVIEW

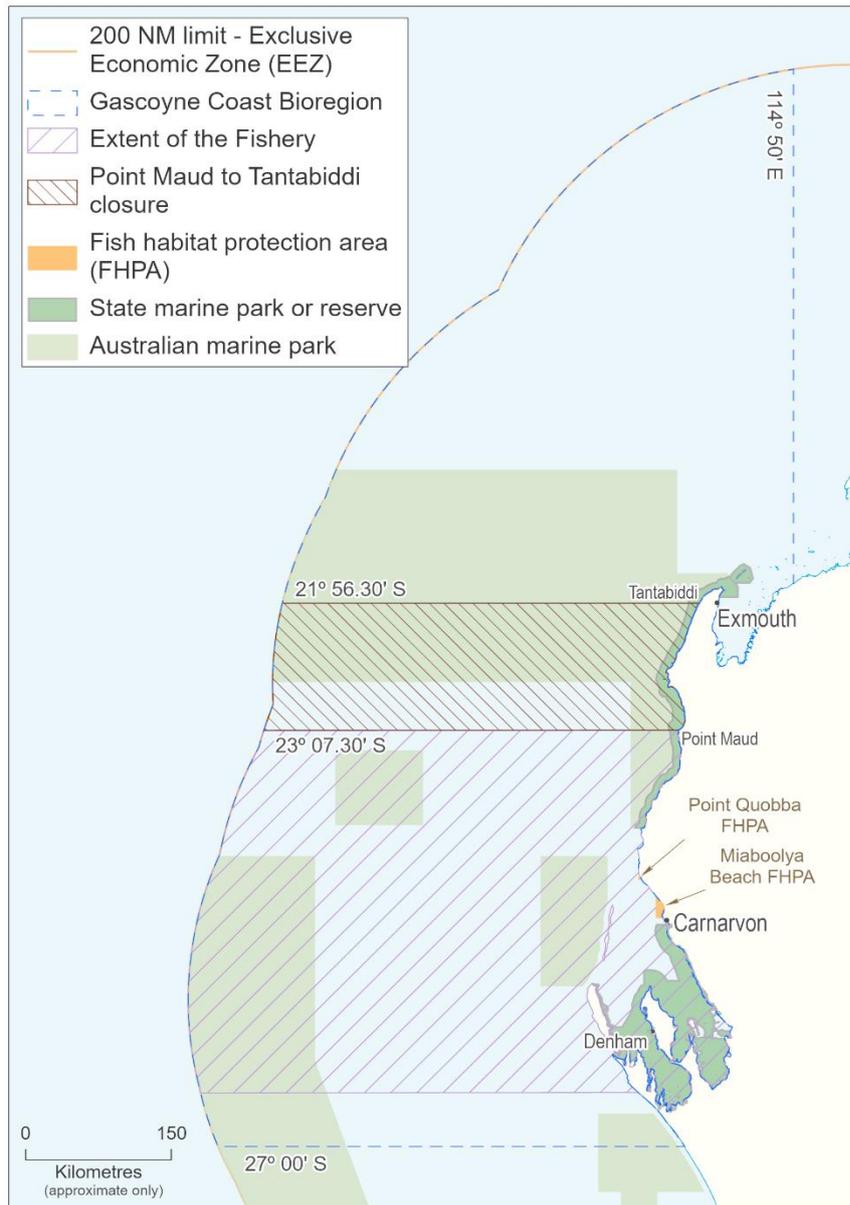
The Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Resource (GDSR) includes 60+ demersal species inhabiting marine waters deeper than 20 m in the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion. Commercial vessels in the Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Managed Fishery (GDSMF) fish with mechanised handlines and target pink snapper (*Chrysophrys auratus*) and goldband snapper (*Pristipomoides multidens*). Other demersal species caught include other

tropical snappers, emperors, cods, mulloway and trevallies. A limited number of licensed charter vessels and a large number of recreational vessels fish out of Denham, Carnarvon and around the Ningaloo-Exmouth area and catch a similar range of demersal species, including spangled emperor (*Lethrinus nebulosus*). More details on this resource can be found in Jackson *et al.* (2020).

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (Pink snapper 51 t, Other demersals 227 t)	Total Catch 2019: Pink snapper 33 t, Other demersals 139 t	Pink snapper = Acceptable Other demersals = Acceptable
Recreational fishery	Total Catch 2017/18: 82–110 t (boat-based only)	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Pink snapper	Biomass around Limit	Inadequate, Additional management action taken in 2018
Goldband snapper	Fishing mortality below & SPR above Threshold	Adequate
Spangled emperor	Fishing mortality below Threshold	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible Risk	Not an issue
Listed Species	Negligible Risk	Not an issue
Habitat	Negligible Risk	Not an issue
Ecosystem	Low Risk	Acceptable
Economic (GVP \$1-5 m)	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
Social (High amenity)	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
Governance	High Risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	High Risk	Acceptable

*Top 10 demersal species only from 2017/18 statewide survey (Ryan *et al.* 2019); ** Pink snapper and Goldband stocks only.



GASCOYNE DEMERSAL SCALEFISH FIGURE 1.

Waters of Gascoyne Coast Bioregion including Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Fishery, ‘Point Maud to Tantabiddi Well’ fishing closure and state and Commonwealth marine parks.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

In 2018/19, the total commercial catch reported by the GDSMF was 173 t, comprising 33 t pink snapper, 81 t goldband snapper and 59 t of other mixed species (Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Table 1).

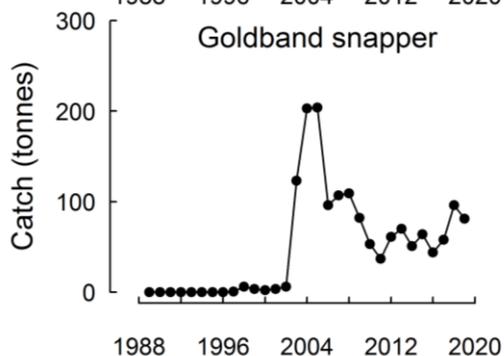
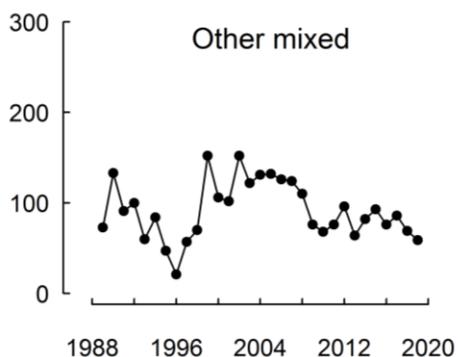
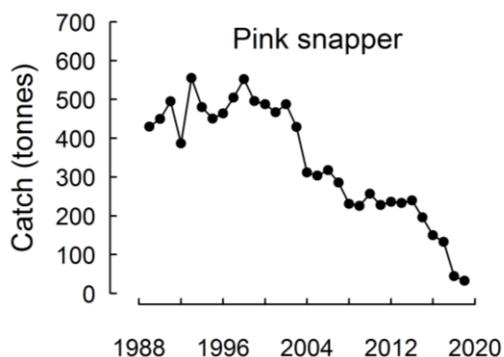
The top 10 demersal species in the Gascoyne Coast represented 81% of the boat-based recreational catch (kept by numbers) in 2017/18. The estimated recreational harvest range for the

top 10 demersal species (or groupings) in the Gascoyne Coast were steady at 96 t (95% CI 82–110) in 2017/18 compared with 99 t (95% CI 85–114) in 2015/16, 98 t (95% CI 85–111) in 2013/14, but lower than 144 t (95% CI 125–160) in 2011/12 (Ryan *et al.* 2019). The catch of pink snapper and goldband snapper in oceanic waters of Gascoyne reported by charter vessels in 2019 was 5 t and 10 t, respectively.

GASCOYNE DEMERSAL SCALEFISH TABLE 1.

Total catches of scalefish (excluding mackerel and tunas) taken by GDSMF in the previous five years.

Species	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Pink Snapper	195.8	149.8	133.3	45.1	33.2
Goldband Snapper	63.5	43.6	58.2	95.7	80.6
Other Jobfish	4.3	4.4	6.2	9.4	9.2
Red Emperor	10.9	10.0	13.5	10.0	9.2
Ruby Snapper	5.1	1.2	1.8	2.6	2.5
Other Snappers	1.7	1.5	2.5	1.4	1.3
Spangled Emperor	2.5	2.6	2.3	1.2	1.3
Redthroat Emperor	10.9	8.0	9.3	6.6	4.6
Other Emperors	1.3	0.6	<1.0	<0.5	<0.5
Rankin Cod	8.0	10.5	10.8	6.8	6.9
Other Cods	11.3	10.7	12.1	9.5	6.3
Eightbar Grouper	1.9	1.6	2.2	2.4	0.9
Mulloway	9.0	6.4	4.6	2.7	3.3
Trevallies	7.9	3.6	2.4	<1.0	0.8
Other Species	18.6	15.1	17.2	15.2	12.3
Total	352.7	269.5	277.2	209.5	172.8



GASCOYNE DEMERSAL SCALEFISH FIGURE 1.

Commercial catches of Pink snapper, Goldband snapper and other mixed demersal species taken by GDSMF vessels in oceanic waters of the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion from 1988/89-2018/19.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Pink snapper Oceanic Stock (Inadequate)

The most recent integrated assessment (2017), that incorporated age composition data up to 2014/15, and catch rate data up to 2015/16, indicated that the spawning biomass had declined to around the limit (20% of unfished level). Based on this assessment and the weight of evidence, the status of the oceanic pink snapper stock is **inadequate**.

Additional management action was taken in 2018 to assist recovery and rebuild the oceanic stock to the target level within two generation-times (i.e. by 2038).

Goldband snapper (Adequate)

The most recent assessment (2017) that included age composition data collected during 2010-2013, indicated that fishing mortality was below the threshold level and spawning potential ratio was well above the threshold level. Based on this assessment and the weight of evidence, the status of the goldband snapper stock in the Gascoyne is **adequate**.

Spangled emperor (Adequate)

The most recent assessment (2012) that included age composition data collected during 2007-2008, indicated that while local depletion was occurring in the northern area of the bioregion (i.e. north of Point Maud outside of the Ningaloo sanctuary zones), fishing mortality for the stock overall was below the threshold level.

Based on this assessment, the status of the spangled emperor stock in the Gascoyne is **adequate**.

BYCATCH and PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

The GDSMF catch consists of a large number of demersal species of medium to high market value with very few species captured that are not retained and therefore is a **negligible risk**.

Protected Species

As line fishing is highly selective, direct interactions with protected species by commercial, charter and recreational fishers in the waters of the GDSMF are a **negligible risk**.

HABITAT and ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

Line fishing for demersal scalefish by the commercial, recreational and charter sectors has virtually no direct impact on benthic habitats and therefore represents a **negligible risk**.

Ecosystem

Food chain effects due to commercial line fishing for demersal species are considered to be low because the quota system restricts overall GDSMF catches to a relatively small percentage of the total biomass available.

The juvenile components of demersal fish stocks are likely subject to large, mostly-environmentally driven fluctuations in abundance even in the absence of fishing, resulting in significant variability in annual recruitment strength. The fishery therefore represents a **low risk**.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

In 2019, only 9 GDSMF vessels fished at some point during the season (13 in 2018), 6 of which fished for more than 10 days during the traditional peak (pink snapper) season (7 in 2018), typically with a crew of 2-3. Commercial fishing and associated fish processing are still important sources of local employment in Denham and Carnarvon.

Shark Bay and Ningaloo are popular recreational fishing destinations especially during the winter months and school holidays. The annual estimated boat-based recreational fishing effort in the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion was steady in 2017/18 (42,186 boat days, SE=3,078) compared with 2015/16 (43,237 boat days, SE=3,152) and 2013/14 (53,832, SE=3,603), but lower than 2011/12 (58,123, SE=3,672) (Ryan *et al.* 2019).

The GDSR provides a high social amenity and represents a **moderate risk**.

Economic

The estimated GVP of GDSMF was in the range \$1-5 million in 2019 which represents a **moderate risk**. Product from this fishery entirely supplies domestic fish markets, mostly in Perth.

The value of recreational fishing to the WA economy was recently estimated at \$2.4 billion per year (McLeod and Lindner 2018) with recreational fishing in the Gascoyne region estimated to be worth \$27.5 million per year.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

A formal harvest strategy for the Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Resource (GDSR) was developed by a stakeholder based working group in 2016/17. It defines the ecological, economic and social objectives and establishes the explicit rules that determine the appropriate catch levels for the GDSR. The GDSR Harvest Strategy was approved by the Minister for Fisheries in 2017.

A recovery plan for GDSR oceanic pink snapper was approved by the Minister for Fisheries in June 2020. This establishes explicit performance levels that represent an appropriate rate of recovery for the Gascoyne oceanic pink snapper spawning stock. This rate of recovery is consistent with the vulnerability and productivity of oceanic pink snapper and the dynamics of the commercial, recreational and charter fisheries that target the GDSR.

The primary ecological objective of the GDSR Harvest Strategy is to maintain spawning stock biomass of each retained species above B_{MSY} to maintain high productivity and ensure the main factor affecting recruitment is the environment.

The current harvesting strategy for the GDSMF is based on a *constant catch approach* (where catch is kept constant) where a stock is in recovery, and a *constant exploitation approach* (where the catch varies in proportion to variations in stock abundance) where the stock is close to the target.

In line with this harvesting approach, the GDSMF is primarily managed using output controls via an ITQ system with a separate pink snapper TACC, and a combined TACC for other demersal scalefish species. The fishers also have to comply with gear restrictions, spatial closures and size limits that are in place for some species.

The recreational and charter fishery in the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion is also primarily managed using output controls, including size limits for some species, and daily bag and possession limits. Recreational fishers operating from a boat are required to hold a current Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence. Charter operators are also required to hold a Fishing Tour Operators Licence. Allowable Catch/Catch Rate Tolerance Levels

Commercial

Pink snapper – Following the under-performance of the pink snapper component of the GDSR between 2014/15 and 2016/17, and outcomes of the most recent assessment (2017) that indicated that the spawning biomass was around the limit level and therefore at **high risk**, substantial additional management measures were introduced in May 2018 that included an 81% reduction in the TACC (from 277 t to 51 t). This

combined with recreational catches (including charter) and additional cyptic sources mortality (e.g. related to barotrauma, shark depredation) results in total mortality of <100 t.

In 2018/19, the landed commercial pink snapper catch was 33 t, i.e. within this revised TACC, and therefore **acceptable**.

Goldband snapper – Within the combined TACC for other mixed demersal species (227 t) there is a maximum limit of 100-120 t for goldband. In 2018/19, the landed goldband catch was 81 t, and therefore **acceptable**.

Spangled emperor – Historically been a very minor component of the commercial mixed demersal catch. Within the combined TACC for other mixed demersal species (227 t), the landed spangled emperor catch was <2 t, and therefore **acceptable**.

Recreational

Catch tolerance levels and total mortality limits recreational and charter pink snapper catch are under development.

The seasonal pink snapper spawning closure (June-August) adjacent to northern Bernier Island also applies to recreational and charter fishers.

Compliance

The GDSMF is managed through a combination of area closures, gear restrictions and the use of input controls in the form of individual transferable quota allocations. Compliance with nomination requirements and area boundaries is effectively monitored through a satellite-based Vessel Monitoring System (VMS). The Department undertakes regular compliance inspections at sea and landing ports. Catch and Disposal Records (CDRs) must be lodged for pink snapper and other demersal scalefish separately at the designated landing ports (Coral Bay, Carnarvon and Denham only).

Consultation

A cross-sectoral working group was formed in 2016 to develop the Harvest Strategy for this resource, which was finalised and published in late 2017.

Following its implementation, a GDSR Harvest Strategy Reference Group (reference group) was formed to provide advice on strategies aimed at meeting objectives of the GDSR Harvest Strategy.

Management Meetings are held between Fisheries and licensees, in conjunction with the Industry Consultation Unit of the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC). These meetings provide an opportunity for the Department, WAFIC and industry to discuss research outcomes and initiatives, management of the fishery and industry issues.

Focused recreational consultation occurs with Recfishwest. Broader recreational consultation processes are facilitated by Recfishwest under an SLA.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

The 2017 stock assessment indicated that the oceanic pink snapper spawning stock was around the limit level. In accordance with the GDSR Harvest Strategy, a management review was undertaken. The reference group that included representation from all fishing sectors was convened to provide recommendations on management strategies to recover pink snapper.

Consultation on management proposals occurred in February-March 2018 and resulted in agreement on a range of additional measures that included a 3-month pink snapper spawning closure adjacent to Bernier Island and an 81.5% reduction in the commercial pink snapper TACC (from 277 t to 51 t).

In May 2018, these management proposals were approved by the Minister for Fisheries and implemented prior to the 2018 pink snapper peak spawning period (June-August) to help rebuild the pink snapper oceanic spawning stock.

In 2019, the Department worked with the reference group to develop a recovery plan for

pink snapper that establishes explicit performance levels that represent an appropriate rate of recovery for Gascoyne oceanic pink snapper in accordance with the GDSR Harvest strategy. The Minister for Fisheries approved the recovery plan in June 2020.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Under the Offshore Constitutional Settlement, commercial vessels licensed by the Commonwealth may operate in state waters off the Gascoyne coast, outside the 200 m isobath, as part of the Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery (WDWTF) which in these waters targets deepwater bugs (*Ibacus* spp.) and eteline snappers (e.g. ruby snapper, *Etelis carbunculus*) (Hart and Curtotti 2018). While no fishing activity in these waters had been recorded by WDWTF vessels since the early 2000s, there was some very limited activity off Shark Bay in 2018 and 2019 with a total of <10 days fishing recorded (AFMA unpublished data).

Pink snapper were previously assessed as at high risk due to the effects of climate change, particularly in the Gascoyne (Caputi *et al.* 2015). An FRDC-funded project that is currently underway will investigate whether there have been any changes to stock connectivity and biology of pink snapper related to climate change driven changes in oceanic conditions. These external drivers represent a **high risk**.

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GASCOYNE INNER SHARK BAY SCALEFISH RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020



G. Jackson, C. Lyttleton, S. Walters and S. Turner

OVERVIEW

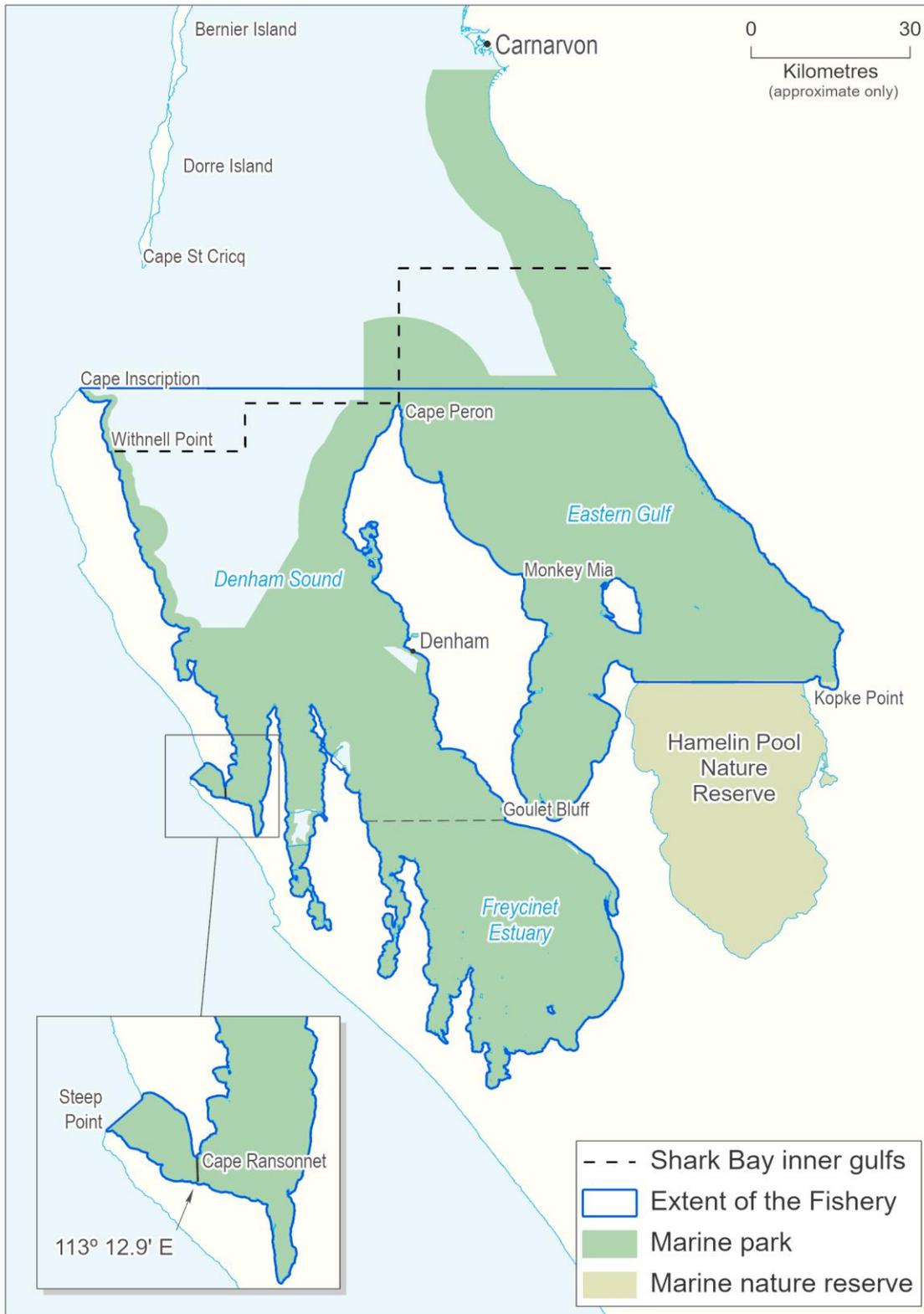
The Inner Shark Bay Scalefish Resource (ISBSR) comprises 20-30 scalefish species taken by commercial and recreational fishing in the waters of the Eastern Gulf, Denham Sound and Freycinet Estuary in inner Shark Bay. The commercial fishery uses beach seine netting to target four species/groups: whiting (yellowfin *Sillago schomburgkii* and goldenline *S. analis*), sea mullet (*Mugil cephalus*), tailor (*Pomatomus saltatrix*) and western yellowfin bream (*Acanthopagrus morrisoni*). Most recreational fishing in Shark Bay

is boat-based using hook and line to catch pink snapper (*Chrysophrys auratus*, three separate stocks), grass emperor (*Lethrinus laticaudis*), whiting (*Sillago spp.*), mackerel (*Scomberomorus spp.*, *Grammatorcynus bicarinatus*), blackspot tuskfish (*Choerodon schoenleinii*), goldspotted rockcod (*Epinephelus coioides*), western butterflyfish (*Pentapodus vitta*) and tailor. A limited number of licensed charter vessels operate out of Denham and Monkey Mia.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (235-335 t)	Total Catch 2019: 175 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (Pink snapper, 26 t)	Total Catch 2018: Pink snapper only, 22 t* (boat-based only, includes charter)	Acceptable in Eastern Gulf, Denham Sound Unacceptable in Freycinet Estuary
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Commercial fishery - Whiting	Fishing mortality below threshold (2014)	Adequate
Recreational fishery – Pink snapper (3 stocks)	Biomass of all 3 stocks above target (2015)	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low Risk	Acceptable
Listed Species	Negligible Risk	Not an issue
Habitat	Negligible Risk	Not an issue
Ecosystem	Low Risk	Acceptable
Economic (GVP \$1-5 m)	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
Social (High amenity)	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	High Risk	Acceptable

*Based estimates from on-site boat ramp survey conducted 2018/19 (Taylor et al. 2019)



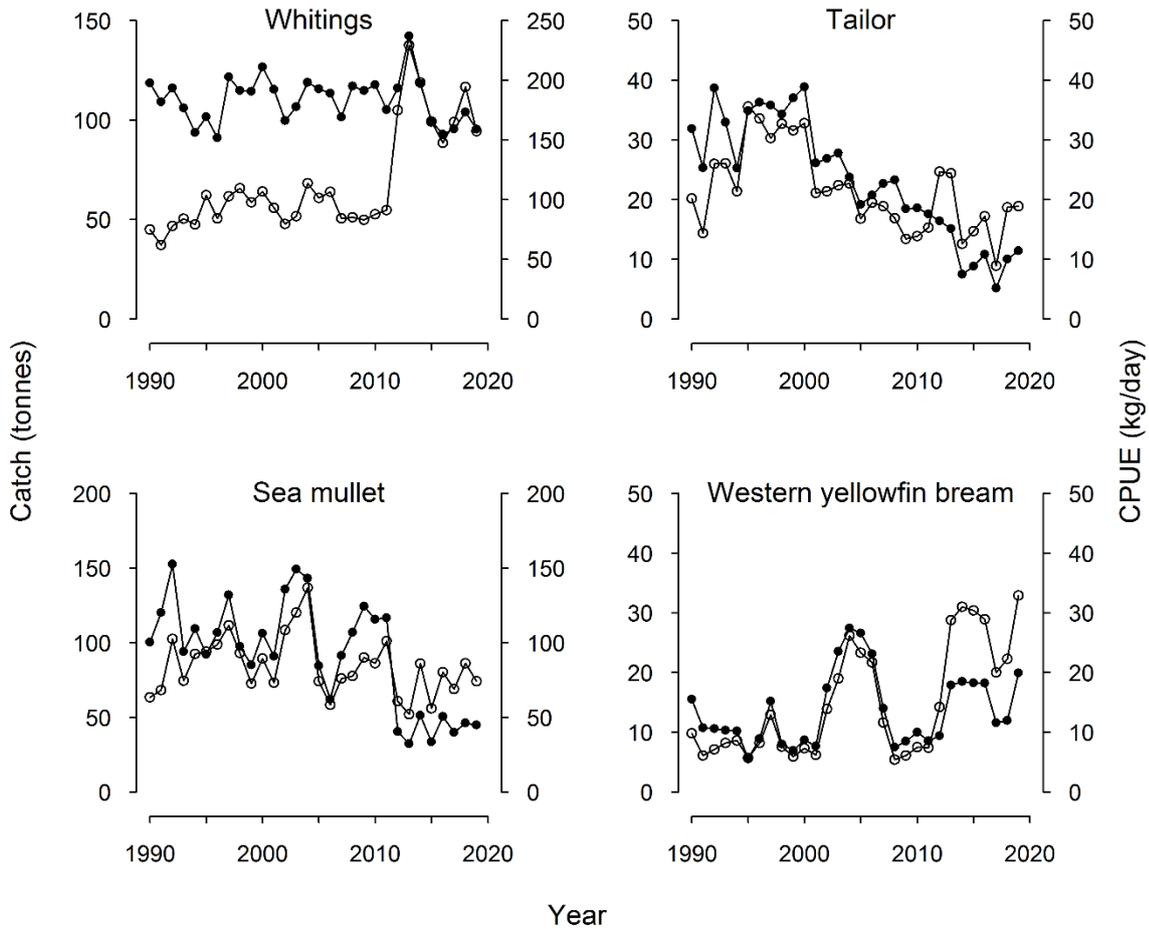
GASCOYNE INNER SHARK BAY FIGURE 1.
Commercial and recreational fishing areas of inner Shark Bay.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

In 2019, the total catch reported by the commercial fishery (Shark Bay Beach Seine and Mesh Net Managed Fishery [SBBSMNF]) was 175 t, comprising 95 t of whiting, 45 t of sea mullet, 20 t of western yellowfin bream, 11 t of tailor and 8 t of other mixed species including 1 t of pink

snapper. The total catch of pink snapper reported by charter vessels in 2019 was 2.6 t (all three areas combined). The total estimated recreational catch of pink snapper in 2019 was assumed to be similar to that in 2018 (i.e. 18 t, all three areas combined) (Taylor *et al.* 2019).

GASCOYNE BIOREGION



GASCOYNE INNER SHARK BAY FIGURE 2.

Commercial catches (●) and CPUE (○) of whiting, tailor, sea mullet and western yellowfin bream taken by SBBSMNF 1990-2019.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Pink snapper Inner Gulf Stocks (Adequate)

The three separate biological stocks found in inner Shark Bay (i.e. Eastern Gulf, Denham Sound, Freycinet Estuary) are predominantly fished by the recreational and charter sectors. Commercial catches of pink snapper in the inner gulfs are relatively small (1-2 t) and limited to bycatch taken by the SBBSMNF.

Recreational fishing in inner Shark Bay steadily increased from the 1960s through to the 1990s with all three snapper stocks becoming over-exploited. Reductions in catch levels were generated by the additional management progressively introduced from 1998 onwards, this included notional Total Allowable Recreational Catches (TARCs) implemented in each area in 2003.

The most recent stock assessments (2015) that incorporated age composition data up to 2013 indicated that the spawning biomass of all three stocks was estimated to be above the target (40% unfished level) in 2015. More recent Catch-MSY analyses (2020) indicated that all three stocks

have continued to build under existing management arrangements and that stocks are well above target levels. On the basis of the evidence available, these pink snapper stocks are **adequate**.

Yellowfin whiting (Adequate)

In 2019, the commercial catch of yellowfin whiting taken by the SBBSMNF was 95 t, which is within the target catch range (93-127 t), with Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) at 157 kg/boat day well above the threshold catch rate (75 kg/boat day). The commercial catch of yellowfin whiting in inner Shark Bay has been relatively stable at ~90-120 t since 1990 (Inner Shark Bay Figure 2). Whiting (mostly yellowfin) are the third most retained scalefish species group taken by boat based recreational fishers in inner Shark Bay (Taylor *et al.* 2019).

A stock assessment based on biological data collected in 2014 indicated that fishing mortality was above threshold level. Based on the evidence available, the yellowfin whiting stock in inner Shark Bay is classified as **adequate**.

Sea mullet (Adequate)

In 2019, the commercial catch of sea mullet taken by the SBBSMNF was 45 t and remains well below the target catch range (77-144 t). This maintains the trend in catches observed since 2000, down from the higher levels reported 1990-2010 that typically ranged from 100–150 t. The CPUE in 2019 declined to 74 kg/boat day but remained well above the threshold catch rate (62 kg/boat day). While the low landings of sea mullet in more recent years reflect higher levels of fishing effort directed at the more valuable whiting, there may also be some effect of changing environmental conditions, including the 2011 marine heatwave, on stock abundance.

The sea mullet catch in inner Shark Bay represents approximately a quarter of the total commercial catch taken in WA with the majority taken in the West Coast Bioregion (West Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Resource Status Report).

Based on the evidence available, the sea mullet stock in inner Shark Bay is classified as **adequate**.

Tailor (Adequate)

In 2019, the commercial catch of tailor taken by the SBBSMNF was 11 t, and remains well below the target catch range (25-40 t). This maintains the declining trend in tailor catches observed since around 2000. The CPUE in 2019 was steady at 19 kg/boat day which is around the threshold level (21 kg/boat day). While the low landings of tailor that have been a feature of the fishery in recent years are partly attributed to local processing restrictions, there may also be some effect of changing environmental conditions, including the 2011 marine heatwave, on stock abundance.

The tailor catch in inner Shark Bay represents approximately half of the total commercial catch taken in WA with the remainder taken in the West Coast Bioregion (West Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Resource Status Report).

Based on the evidence available, the tailor stock is classified as **adequate**.

Western yellowfin bream (Adequate)

In 2019, the commercial catch of western yellowfin bream taken by the SBBSMNF was 20 t, that is well above the target catch range (7-15 t). The CPUE at 32 kg/boat day was again well above the threshold catch rate (5 kg/boat day), as has been the case since 2013. Large variation in catches of yellowfin bream since 1990 are attributed to highly variable recruitment typical of this species that is mostly environmentally driven. The recent increase in both catch and CPUE reflect another strong year class passing through

the fishery, as was previously observed in 2002-2007 and more recently, 2013-2016.

Based on the evidence available, the western yellowfin bream stock in inner Shark Bay is classified as **adequate**.

BYCATCH and PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

Bycatch is minimal in the SBBSMNF because netting operations selectively target specific schools of fish and is therefore **low risk**.

Protected species

As nets are actively set and hauled, if any listed species such as dugongs, dolphins or marine turtles are caught (rare events) they are immediately released and therefore such interactions are a **negligible risk**.

HABITAT and ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Seine netting over shallow sand banks and other naturally dynamic nearshore environments combined with the low frequency of fishing in any one location represents a **negligible risk**.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

In 2019, six vessels operated in the SBBSMNF, employing around ~14 fishers. Commercial fishing and associated fish processing are still important sources of employment and income in Denham.

Shark Bay is a very popular recreational fishing destination especially during the winter months and school holidays. The annual total boat-based recreational fishing effort in inner Shark Bay between March 2018 and February 2019 was estimated at 8,596 boat trips which is within historical levels observed since 2000 (Taylor *et al.* 2019).

The Inner Shark Bay Scalefish Resource therefore provides a high social amenity with **moderate risk**.

Economic

The estimated GVP of the SBBSMNF in 2019 was in the range \$1-5 million that represents a **moderate risk**. Product from this fishery entirely supplies domestic fish markets (Perth and Sydney). The value of recreational fishing to the

GASCOYNE BIOREGION

WA economy was recently estimated at \$2.4 billion per year (McLeod and Lindner 2018) with recreational fishing in the Gascoyne region estimated to be worth \$27.5 million per year.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The harvesting strategy for the SBBSMNF is based on a *constant exploitation approach* (where the catch varies in proportion to variations in stock abundance).

The SBBSMNF is managed through input controls in the form of limited entry, gear restrictions (e.g. vessel size, net length and mesh size) and permanently closed waters.

The recreational and charter fishery in Shark Bay is managed using a combination of output controls including daily bag, possession, size and gear limits. Recreational fishers operating from a boat are required to hold a current Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence (RFBL) while net fishers require a Recreational Net Fishing Licence. Pink snapper stocks are managed to notional maximum acceptable catch levels (TACC and TARC, set in 2003): Eastern Gulf (11.25 t recreational; 3.75 t commercial), Denham Sound (11.25 t recreational; 3.75 t commercial) and Freycinet Estuary (3.75 t recreational; 1.25 t commercial).

Annual Catch/Catch Rate Tolerance Levels

Commercial:

Total fishing effort in the SBBSMNF was 606 boat days in 2019, slightly higher than in 2018 but still around the lowest levels on record. While the total commercial catch in 2019 at 175 t was below the target catch range (235–335 tonnes), when viewed against the historically low levels of current effort, the commercial catch level is considered **acceptable**.

In 2019, the commercial catch of snapper taken by the SBBSMNF was 1 t, well within the notional TACC (9 t all three areas combined).

Recreational:

Recreational (includes charter) catch tolerance levels are only currently in place for pink snapper.

Recreational catches of pink snapper in 2019 were assumed to be similar to those in 2018 that were estimated at 2.1 t [95% CI 0.8-3.4] in the Eastern Gulf, 4.6 t [95% CI 3.4-5.9] in Denham Sound, and 11.5 t [95% CI 4.3-18.7] in Freycinet Estuary (Taylor et al. 2019).

In 2019, a total of ~3 t were reported by charter vessels (Eastern Gulf <0.5 t, Denham Sound 1.3 t, Freycinet 1.2 t).

Recreational catches in **Eastern Gulf** and **Denham Sound** were within the respective notional TARCs, and therefore **acceptable** however in **Freycinet** were well above the TARC and therefore **unacceptable**.

Compliance

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development undertakes regular compliance inspections at-sea and on-land.

Consultation

Fisheries undertakes consultation directly with licensees on operational issues. Industry Management Meetings are convened by the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who are also responsible for statutory management plan consultation under a Service Level Agreement with Fisheries'.

Consultation processes are facilitated by Recfishwest under a Service Level Agreement although the Department undertakes direct consultation with the community on specific issues.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

A harvest strategy for the nearshore scalefish resource in the Gascoyne Coast bioregion more broadly - includes the main species targeted by the SBBSMNF, the Exmouth Gulf Beach Seine Fishery and the Carnarvon Open Access Fishery but excludes demersal scalefish species such as pink snapper - is currently being developed. Consultation with key stakeholders and the community in relation to this harvest strategy is planned for early 2021.

The development of a separate harvest strategy for demersal scalefish in Inner Shark Bay – includes pink snapper, grass emporor and tuskfish - in consultation with key stakeholders and the local community, is scheduled to be progressed in 2020/21.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

The Inner Shark Bay system has been considered relatively stable as a result of its typically low-rainfall and arid environment. However, extreme but occasional events including cyclone-related riverine floods (occurred in the Gascoyne and Wooramel Rivers in 2010-2011 and more recently in 2018) and a marine heatwave (summer of 2010/11) had significant impacts on some marine habitats (e.g. temperate seagrasses) (Arias-Ortiz et al. 2018) and important invertebrate species (e.g. blue crabs and scallops) (Pearce et al. 2011, Caputi et al. 2014). The impact of these events

on key scalefish species in Inner Shark Bay is unknown.

Pink Snapper had previously been assessed as high risk, and Grass emperor and Tailor as

medium risk due to the effects of climate change, particularly in the Gascoyne (Caputi *et al.* 2015).

These external drivers represent a **high risk**.

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NORTH COAST BIOREGION

ABOUT THE BIOREGION

The oceanography of the North Coast Bioregion (North Coast Overview Figure 1) includes waters of Pacific Ocean origin that enter through the Indonesian archipelago bringing warm, low salinity waters polewards via the Indonesian Throughflow and Holloway Currents which flow seasonally and interact with Indian Ocean waters. The Integrated Marine and Coastal Regionalisation for Australia (IMCRA V 4.0) scheme divides this Bioregion into 10 meso-scale regions: Pilbara inshore, Pilbara offshore, North West Shelf, Eighty Mile Beach, Canning, King Sound, Oceanic Shoals and Kimberley (North Coast Overview Figure 1).

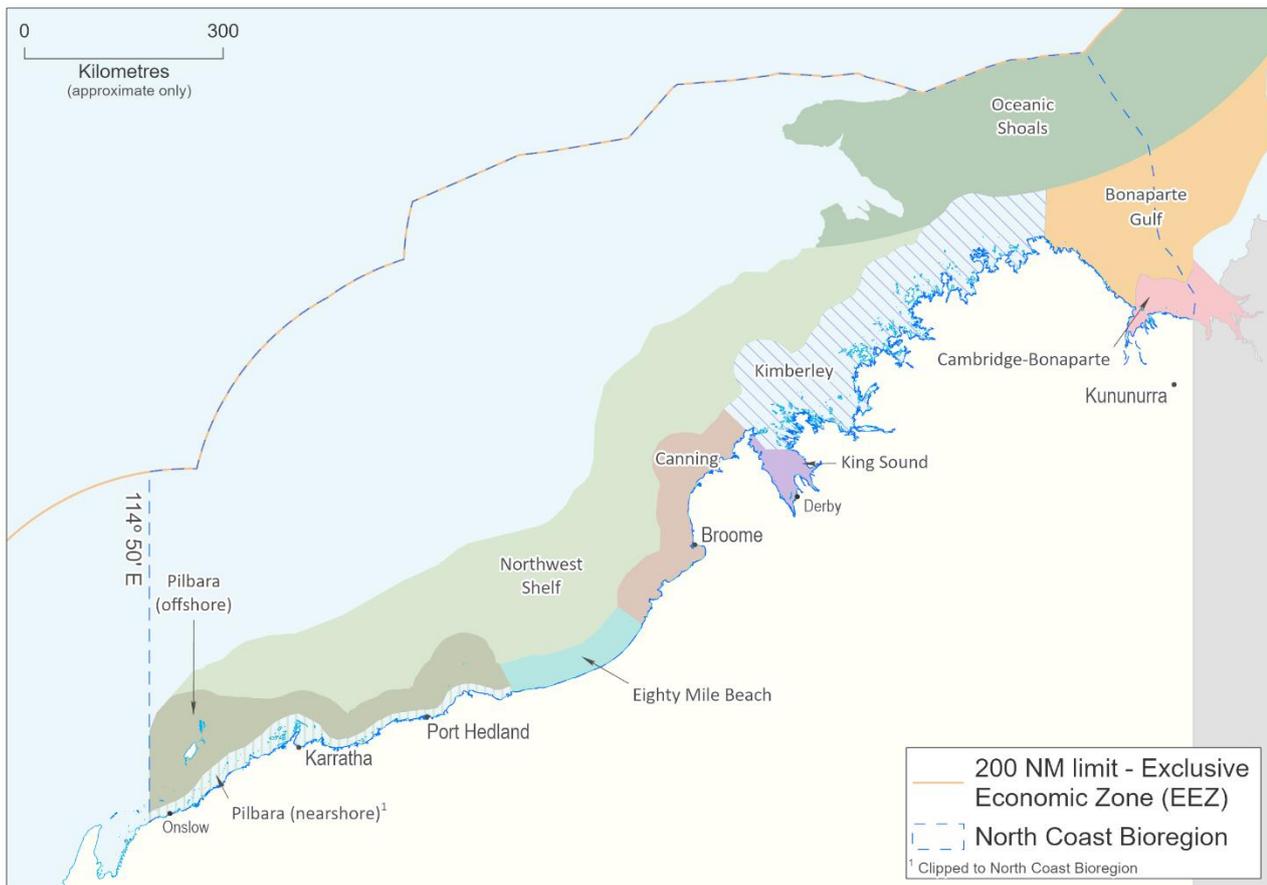
Ocean temperatures range between 22°C and 33°C, with localised higher temperatures in coastal waters, particularly along the Pilbara coastline. Fish stocks in the North Coast Bioregion are entirely tropical, with most having an Indo-Pacific distribution extending eastward through Indonesia to the Indian subcontinent and Arabian Gulf regions.

Coastal waters are generally low-energy in terms of wave action, but are heavily influenced by

macro-tides and are seasonally influenced by intense tropical cyclones, storm surges and associated rainfall run-off. These cyclone events generate the bulk of the rainfall, although the Kimberley section of the coastline does receive monsoonal rainfall over summer.

Significant river run-off and associated localised coastal productivity can be associated with cyclone events, with run-off ceasing during winter. Despite localised areas of high productivity the region is generally oligotrophic and large areas of the coastline receive no riverine input. The entire North Coast region is subject to very high evaporation rates (3 metres per year), although the Pilbara coastline is more arid than the Kimberley.

The macro-tidal regime is a result of the wide continental shelf and the convergence of ocean currents. Spring tides range from greater than 11 metres along the Kimberley section of the coast and are more than 2 metres in the West Pilbara.



NORTH COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 1

Map showing the North Coast Bioregion and IMCRA (V 4.0) meso-scale regions: Pilbara nearshore, Pilbara offshore, North West Shelf, Eighty Mile Beach, Canning, King Sound, Oceanic Shoals and Kimberley. Also shown is the MOU box area, established in a bilateral agreement between Australia and Indonesia.

As a result of these factors, the generally tropical low-nutrient offshore waters can, in the few small locations with large adjacent rivers, be significantly influenced by rainfall run-off and tidal mixing to generate varying water quality in different sections of the North Coast Bioregion. Along the Kimberley coastline, waters are turbid and in areas locally productive, while the Pilbara Coast with its lower run-off and lesser tidal influence has the clear, low productivity waters more typical of the tropics.

The coastal geography of the various sections of the coastline also differs. The Kimberley Coast is complex, with bays and estuaries backed by a hinterland of high relief. Broad tidal mudflats and soft sediments with fringing mangroves are typical of this area. The eastern Pilbara Coast is more exposed than the Kimberley, with few islands and extensive intertidal sand flats. Softer sediments and mangroves occur around the river entrances. The western Pilbara coastline is characterised by a series of significant but low-relief islands including the Dampier Archipelago, Barrow Island and the Montebello Islands. Nearshore coastal waters include rocky and coral reef systems, creating significant areas of protected waters. West Pilbara shorelines also include areas of soft sediment and mangrove communities.

The potential threats and risks to IMCRA ecosystems are often similar. For simplicity, risk ratings were allocated by grouping the ecosystems into two broad groups; estuarine or marine. However, if a particular ecosystem is unique and/or is exposed to different or significant threats, risks were allocated to these ecosystems separately.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES POTENTIALLY IMPACTING THE BIOREGION

Climate Change

Some of the key environmental trends that may be affecting ecosystems in WA include:

- Increasing frequency of *El Niño*/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events;
- More years with a weaker Leeuwin Current;
- Increase in water temperature off the lower west coast of WA;
- Increases in salinity, which includes large annual fluctuations;
- Change in the frequency and location of storms (and rainfall) affecting the lower west coast; and
- Change in the frequency of cyclones (and summer rainfall) affecting the north-west coast.

The North Coast Bioregion is predicted to have relatively minor impacts from climate change, especially in the coming decade, compared to more southerly locations (Fletcher and Santoro 2012). The variables expected to drive climate change impacts include changes in water temperature, ocean currents, winds, rainfall, sea level, ocean chemistry and extreme weather conditions (e.g. cyclones and tropical storms).

Climate change will impact the biological, economic, and social aspects of many fisheries, potentially in both positive and negative ways. Climate change can influence biological systems by modifying the timing of spawning, range and distribution, composition and interactions within communities, exotic species invasions and impacts, and the structure and dynamics of communities, including changes in productivity. Species distribution shifts are the most commonly reported changes and are often the easiest to recognise and measure. Changes in the distribution of key species are monitored in a national citizen-science program (www.redmap.org.au) in which the Department is a collaborator.

Commercial Fishing

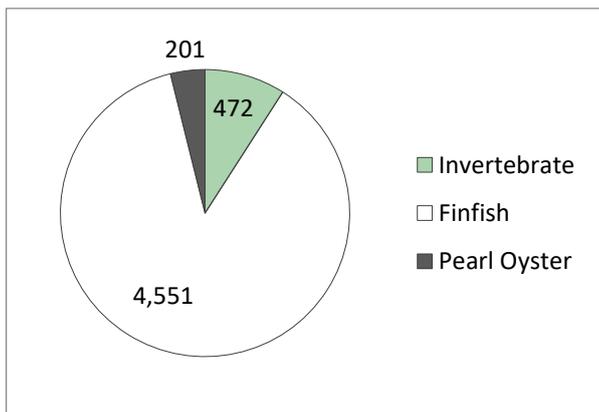
There are a diverse range of resources within the North Coast Bioregion (e.g. Pearl Oyster; Northern Demersal Scalefish; Northern Estuarine, Nearshore and Embayment Scalefish and Invertebrates; Hand Collection; Northern Invertebrates) that support a wide range of State-managed commercial fisheries. These fisheries target a variety of species including finfish, crustaceans, molluscs and echinoderms (North Coast Overview Figure 2). The principal commercial fisheries in the North Coast Bioregion focus on tropical finfish, particularly the high-value emperors, snappers and cods that are taken by the Pilbara trap, line and trawl fisheries and the Northern Demersal Scalefish Fishery (trap and line). The typical catch is up to 3,000-4,000 t annually, making these fisheries the most valuable finfish sector in the State, with an estimated annual value of more than \$10 million. A number of other finfish fisheries operate in the Bioregion, including near-shore beach seining and gillnetting for barramundi and threadfin salmon (the Kimberley Gillnet and Barramundi Managed Fishery) and surface trolling for Spanish mackerel (the Mackerel Managed Fishery).

Another significant commercial fishery in this Bioregion is based on the collection of pearl oysters (*Pinctada maxima*) for use in the aquaculture production of pearls. These are collected from fishing grounds primarily off Eighty Mile Beach, with smaller catches being taken around the Lacepede Islands (north of Broome).

NORTH COAST BIOREGION

The North Coast Bioregion also has a number of small, limited-entry trawl fisheries for prawns, producing about 200-500 t annually. These fisheries include the Onslow, Nickol Bay, Broome and Kimberley Prawn Managed Fisheries (collectively referred to as the North Coast Prawn Managed Fisheries). Two small trap-based crab fisheries also exist in the Bioregion, targeting blue swimmer crabs in the Pilbara (the Pilbara Developing Crab Fishery) and mud crabs in the Kimberley (the Kimberley Developing Mud Crab Fishery). Sea cucumbers (also known as *bêche-de-mer* or *trepang*) are collected by hand by divers and waders throughout the Kimberley region as part of the *Bêche-de-Mer* Fishery. Catches are mainly comprised of two species, sandfish (*Holothuria scabra*) and redfish (*Actinopyga echinites*). The Trochus Fishery is a small fishery based on the collection of a single target species, *Tectus niloticus* from King Sound and the Buccaneer Archipelago. This fishery is operated by the Bardi Jawi and Mayala Aboriginal Communities, who have traditionally collected trochus in this area.

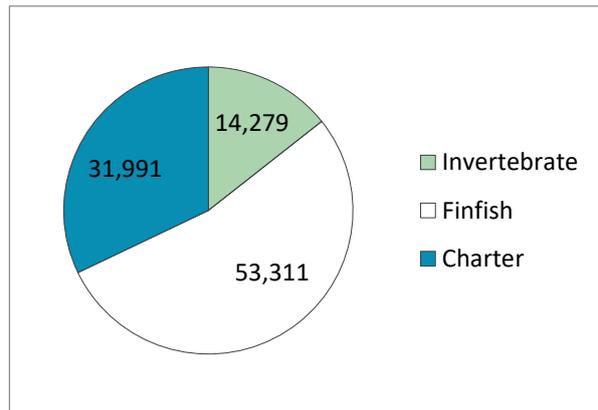
A traditional artisanal fishery also exists in an area south of Roti Island, encompassing Scott Reef, Browse island, Cartier Island and Ashmore Reef known as the MOU box. The MOU Box within the Australian EEZ over which there is a bilateral agreement between the Governments of Australia and Indonesia. The MOU allows Indonesian fishers to continue fishing using traditional methods within Australian waters of the MOU Box under an agreement formalised in 1974.



NORTH COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 2
Contribution of finfish and invertebrates to the total commercial wild fishery catch originating from the North Coast Bioregion. Numbers represent total catch (in tonnes) based on all major assessed fisheries identified in the Overview section of this report (Overview Table 1, North Coast).

Recreational Fishing

Recreational fishing in the North Coast Bioregion has a distinct seasonal peak in winter when the population is increased by significant numbers of intra-state and inter-state tourists travelling through the area visiting the Onslow, Dampier Archipelago and Broome sections of the coastline. This adds to the increased recreational fishing effort resulting from people employed in the operation of major developments in this region. Owing to the high tidal range, much of the angling activity is boat-based, with beach fishing limited to periods of flood tides and high water. The numerous creek systems, mangroves, rivers and beaches provide shore and small boat fishing for a variety of finfish species including barramundi, tropical emperors, mangrove jack, trevallies, sooty grunter, threadfin, cods and catfish, and invertebrate species including blue swimmer crabs, mud crabs and squid (North Coast Overview Figure 3). Offshore islands, coral reef systems and continental shelf waters provide recreational fishing opportunities for species including tropical snappers, cods, coral and coronation trout, sharks, trevally, tuskfish, tunas, mackerels and billfish.



NORTH COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 3
Recreational catches (by number) in the North Coast Bioregion. Finfish and invertebrate catches were as assessed in the statewide survey of boat-based recreational fishing in 2017/18¹. Charter boat catch is for the same period. Estimates of shore based recreational catch are unavailable.

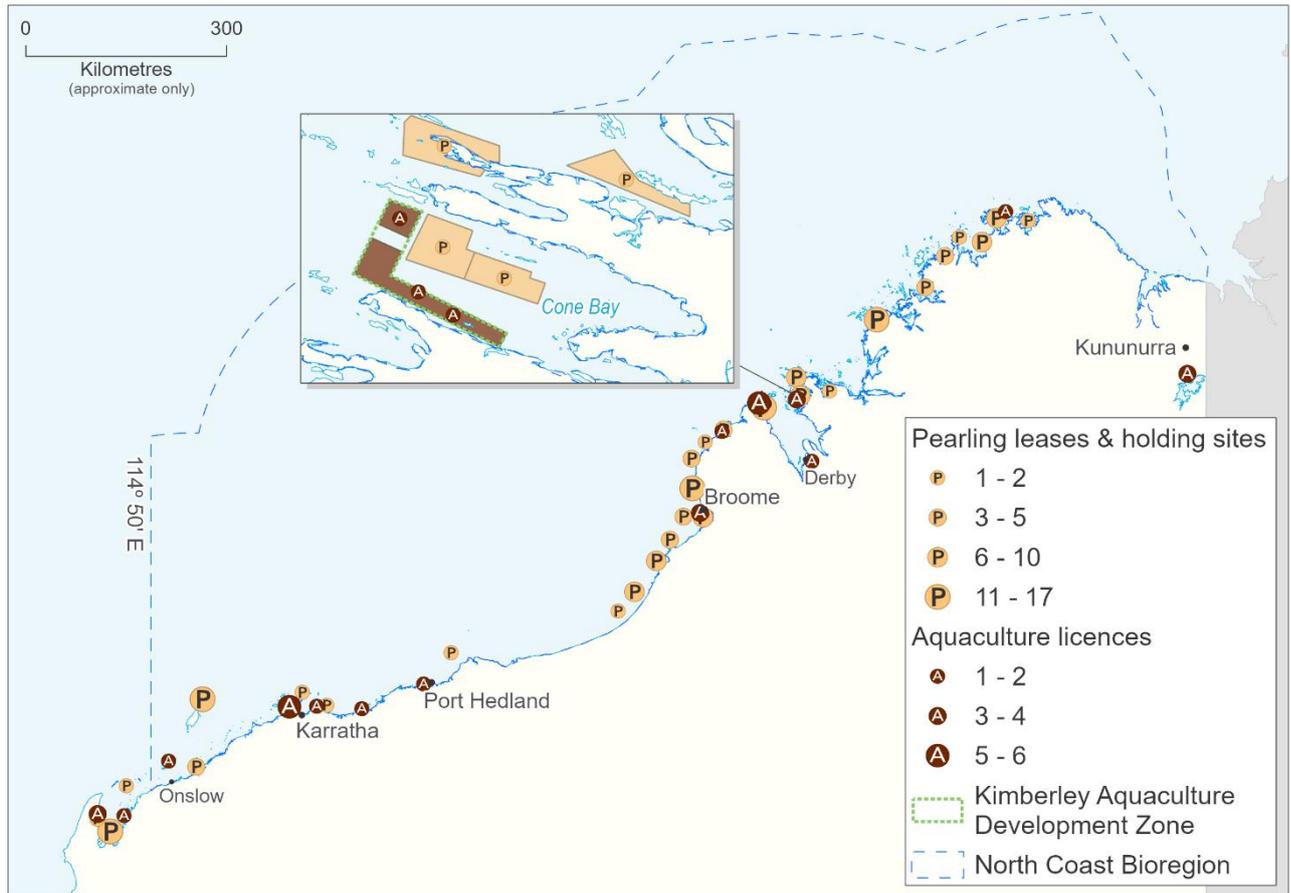
Aquaculture

Aquaculture in the North Coast Bioregion is dominated by the production of pearls from the species *Pinctada maxima*. An overview of aquaculture activities in the Bioregion is detailed in North Coast Overview Figure 4. A large number of pearl oysters for seeding is obtained from wild stocks and supplemented by hatchery-produced oysters, with major hatcheries operating at

¹ Ryan KL, Hall NG, Lai EK, Smallwood CB, Tate A, Taylor SM, Wise BS 2019. Statewide survey of boat-based recreational fishing in Western Australia 2017/18. Fisheries

Research Report No. 297, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia.

Broome and the Dampier Peninsular. Pearl farm sites are located mainly along the Kimberley coast, particularly in the Buccaneer Archipelago, in Roebuck Bay and at the Montebello Islands.



NORTH COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 4

Overview of aquaculture activity in the North Coast Bioregion, detailing locations of licensed finfish aquaculture facilities (A) and pearling leases (P). Also indicated is the Kimberley Aquaculture Development Zone.

Finfish aquaculture in the Kimberley region is dominated by barramundi farming within the Kimberley Aquaculture Development Zone, which was declared in August 2014. Located about 200 kilometres north-east of Broome, this zone encompasses almost 2,000 hectares of coastal waters within Cone Bay. The zone was declared after the completion of a strategic environmental study, which demonstrated the zone would be capable of producing 20,000 tonnes of finfish annually without significant environmental impact. MPA Fish Farms Pty Ltd, already established within the zone, has been granted an aquaculture licence to grow up to 15,000 tonnes of barramundi and other marine finfish per year on a 1,344-hectare site. A second aquaculture licence has been granted to Aarli Mayi Aquaculture Project Pty Ltd, which is authorised to grow 5,000 tonnes per annum.

A focus of aquaculture development is supported by the Departments' Broome Tropical Aquaculture Park, which houses a commercial pearl oyster

hatchery and the Kimberley Training Institute aquaculture training facility.

An indigenous project at One Arm Point operates a marine hatchery that focuses on a variety of ornamental and edible marine species.

Tourism

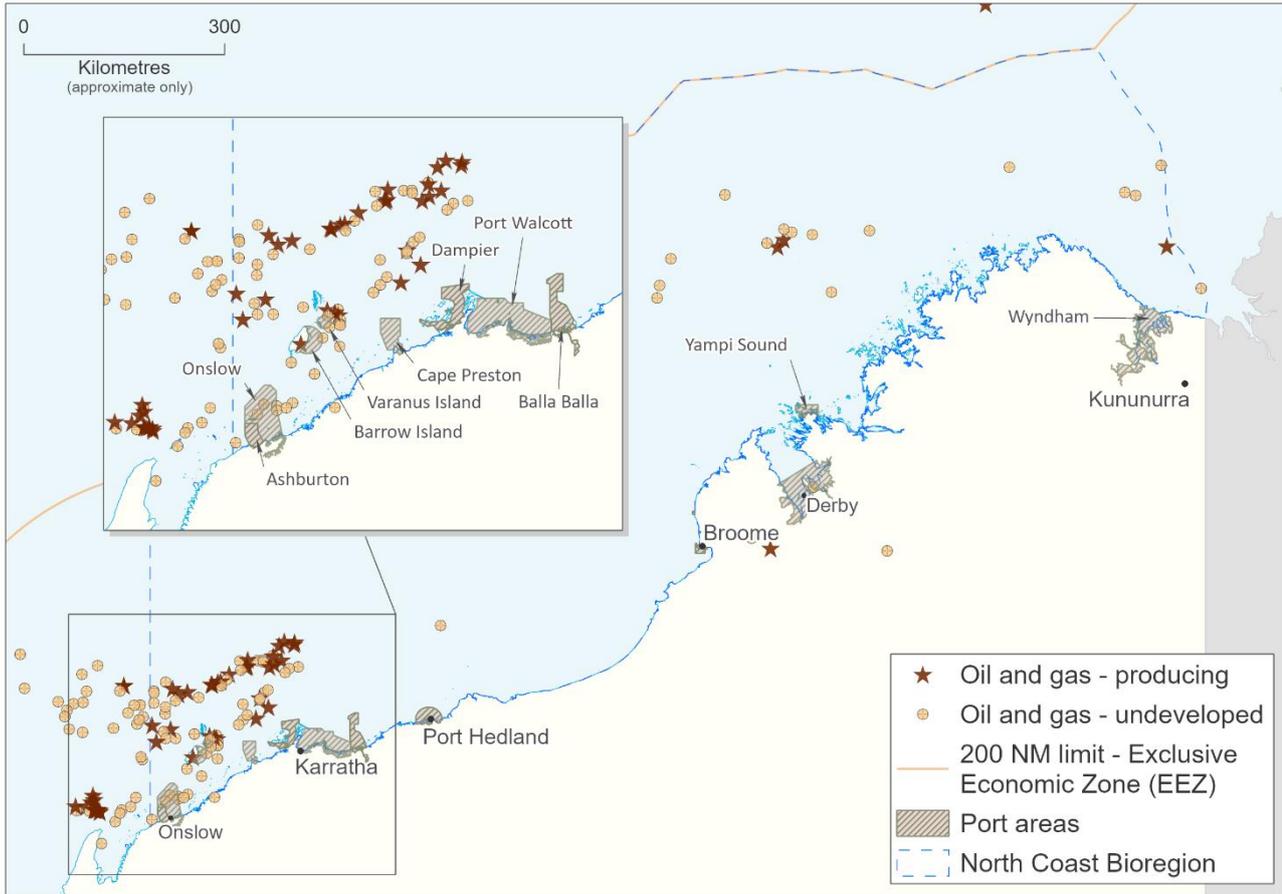
The marine tourism industry has experienced significant growth within the North Coast Bioregion, particularly along the Kimberley coast in recent decades. As coastal access is limited, tourists generally access the coast by boat from major population centres, such as Broome and Wyndam. Activities include charter fishing, diving, snorkelling, whale, turtle and dolphin watching and sightseeing cruises.

Sites of greatest interest to tourists include places to fish, areas for sightseeing and secluded locations for general relaxation. Luxury cruises take tourists along the coastline and increasingly

NORTH COAST BIOREGION

out to isolated coral atolls for fishing and diving. Primary dive locations include the Rowley Shoals,

Scott Reef, Seringapatam Reef, Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island.



NORTH COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 5
North Coast offshore oil and gas production sites and major ports.

Oil and Gas Activity

Offshore oil and gas is a large and growing industry in the North Coast Bioregion. Within the Bioregion, the Northern Carnarvon, Browse and Bonaparte Basins hold large quantities of gas, and multiple projects are in various stages of development, production and exploration (North Coast Overview Figure 5). The upcoming decommissioning of older facilities is leading to proposed projects on the value of this infrastructure to commercial and recreational fisheries. The main disturbances associated with oil and gas exploration and production include noise pollution from seismic surveys, potential for fish movement/impact arising from seismic surveys, disturbance to the marine habitat through drilling and/or dredging activities, release of produced formation water, shipping and transport activities and oil spills.

Shipping and Maritime Activity

There are three major ports in the North Coast Bioregion: Broome, Dampier and Port Hedland (North Coast Overview Figure 5). The Port of

Broome provides vital support for the Browse Basin offshore oil and gas industry. Other business includes livestock export, cruise liner servicing, coastal trading vessels, pearling, fishing and tourism charters. The Port of Dampier services both the land-based iron ore reserves and the offshore gas fields of the Carnarvon Basin. The Port of Port Hedland is the world's largest bulk exporter, with 99 % of the total cargo volume constituting exports. The port primarily exports iron ore, along with salt, livestock and petroleum products. There are eight other non-Port Authority ports in the North Coast Bioregion. In general, these ports and related export facilities are operated by resource companies. Most handle raw bulk commodity exports such as iron ore, crude oil and salt. An increase in shipping and port expansion associated with growth of the resources sector has potential implications for the marine environment. Potential threats include loss or contamination of marine habitats as a result of breakwater construction, dredging and sea dumping, oil spills, interactions between vessels and listed species and the introduction of marine pests.

BIOREGIONAL SPECIFIC ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Within each Bioregion there are a range of management measures that have been implemented to manage the potential impact of activities (See the Ecosystem Management Section for an overview). Management measures specific to the North Coast Bioregion include:

Climate Change

Extensive work has been undertaken as part of a three-year FRDC-funded project (Caputi *et al.* 2015a, b) that assessed the effects of climate change on the marine environment and key fisheries, as well as management implications. Although these studies focused on Bioregions more susceptible to increases in sea surface temperature (SST) to the south, there were no significant effects expected from climate change on the species selected (Caputi *et al.* 2015a, b). However, if a southward expansion in the range of Narrow-Barred Spanish Mackerel occurred then it is possible that the total biomass of this species in Western Australia may increase due to various factors associated with breeding and availability of suitable habitats (Caputi *et al.* 2015b).

Spatial Closures

Extensive fisheries closures in coastal and most offshore waters have been introduced to manage finfish trawling by Australian vessels (North Coast Overview Figure 6). However, trawling is still permitted in a small number of limited locations, which in total represent less than 11% of the shelf waters (North Coast Ecosystem Management Table 1; see specific commercial trawl fishery reports elsewhere in this volume). This activity is carefully managed to ensure that impacts are acceptable. The trawling is subject to Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) requirements in accordance with the Commonwealth Government 'Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries' under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999. The extent of these areas means that 41%

of the entire shelf region of the North Coast Bioregion could be classified as a marine protected area with an IUCN category of IV or higher (as per Dudley, 2008 and Day *et al* 2012¹; North Coast Ecosystem Management Table 1).

In addition to these habitat-related marine protected area closures, the Bioregion has a number of other marine protected areas with various management objectives, summarised in North Coast Overview Figure 7. These include the Montebello and Barrow Islands and the Rowley Shoals proclaimed under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (see North Coast Ecosystem Management Figure 2), and closures to fishing under section 43 of the Fish Resources Management Act 1994 at Point Samson and the wreck of the Kunmunya Samson II (Delambre Reef). The Department of Fisheries has also participated in the marine conservation reserve planning process in this Bioregion and has established baseline and ongoing monitoring and research to underpin ecosystem management. There is considerable interest in developing further marine protected areas within the Kimberley region, and the State Government is developing management plans, Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA) and zoning arrangements for marine protected areas at Eighty Mile Beach, Roebuck Bay, Horizontal Falls and the North Kimberley. The proposed Dampier Archipelago marine conservation reserves are still under consideration by Government. The Department continues to work closely with relevant agencies and stakeholders to develop strategies to minimize environmental impacts in the marine environment. This includes participation in the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy developed with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and collaboration on relevant Western Australian Marine Science Institute (WAMSI) Kimberley Marine Research Program projects.

The Commonwealth Government has recently implemented its marine bioregional planning which includes a number of protected areas in Commonwealth waters between Shark Bay and the Northern Territory border (see North Coast Overview Figure 7).

¹ Dudley N. (editor) 2008. Guidelines for applying protected area management categories. IUCN. Gland, Switzerland.

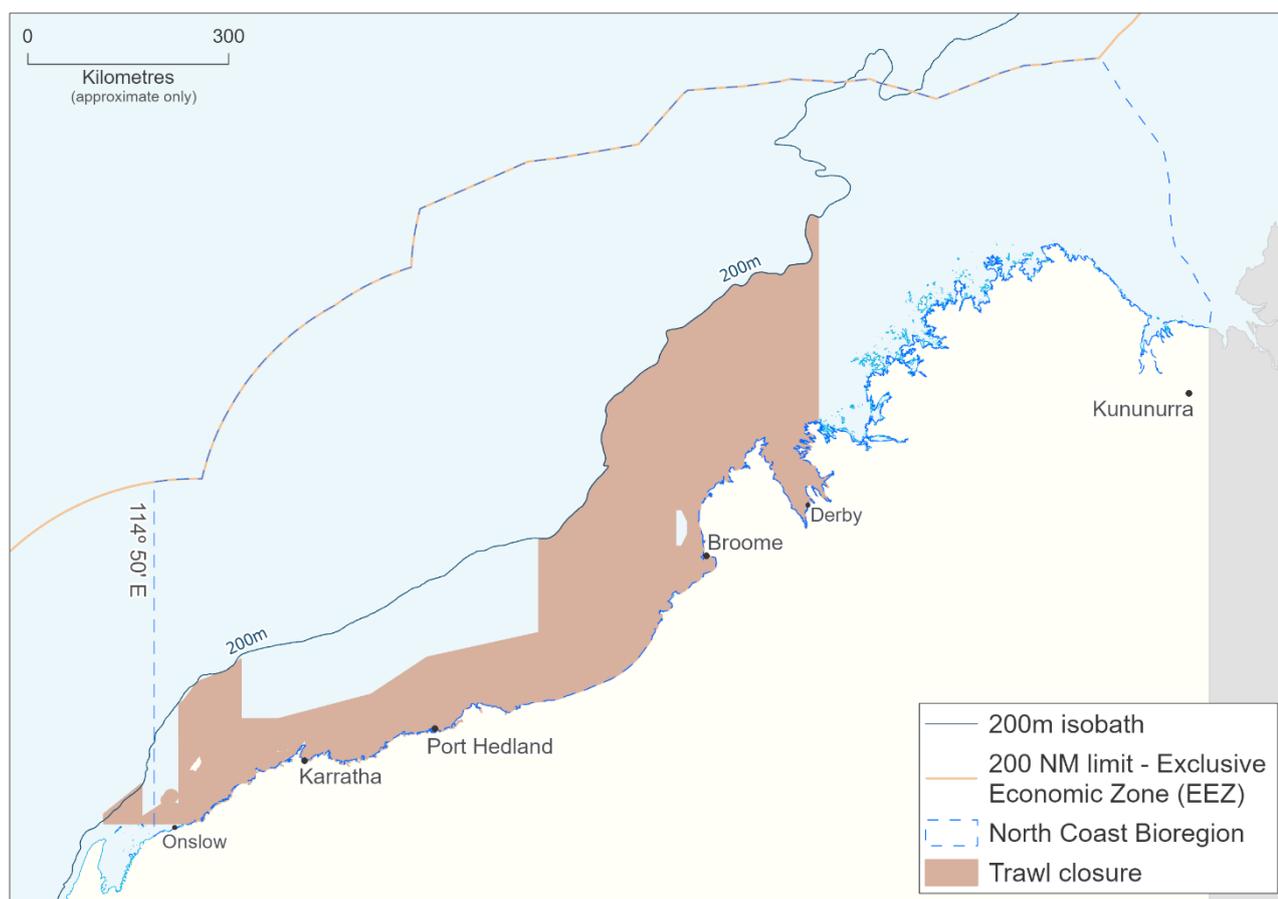
Day J, Dudley N, Hockings M, Holmes G, Laffoley D, Stolton S, and Wells S. 2012. Guidelines for applying the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories to Marine Protected Areas. IUCN. Gland, Switzerland: 36pp.

NORTH COAST BIOREGION

NORTH COAST ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT TABLE 1

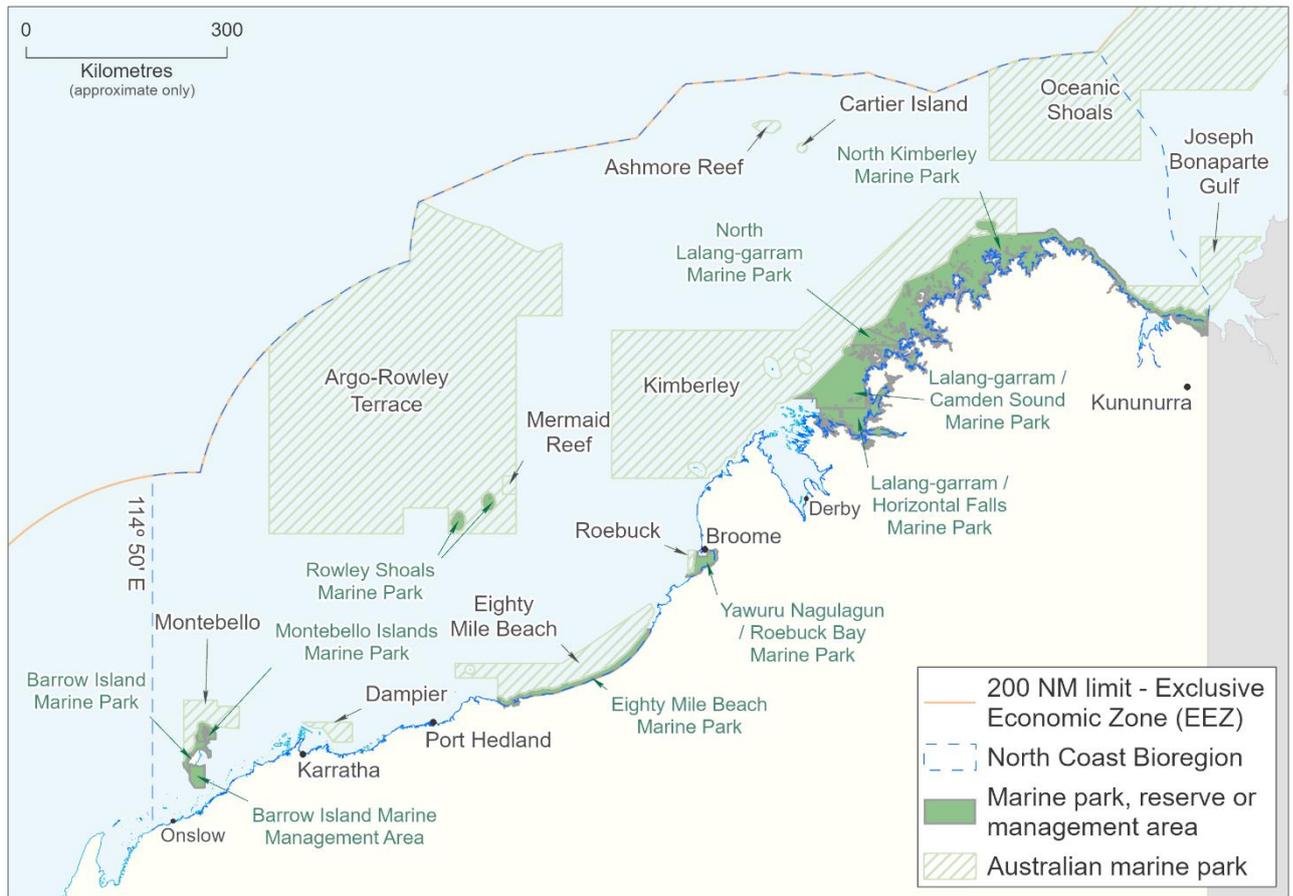
The areas and proportions of the North Coast Bioregion making up State Waters and all continental shelf waters, out to 200 m depth, which are consistent with the IUCN criteria for classification as marine protected areas. This table does not yet include the closures that may be implemented by the Commonwealth as part of their marine planning zones.

IUCN category or equivalent	State Waters only (65,400 km ²)				All Waters (837,500 km ² (including State waters))			
	Fisheries km ²	%	Existing MPA km ²	%	Fisheries km ²	%	Existing MPA km ²	%
I	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,300	< 1
II	0	0	1,900	3	0	0	1,900	< 1
III	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IV	19,100	29	3,500	6	149,200	18	3,500	< 1
V	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VI	36,800	56	4,100	6	677,500	81	4,100	< 1



NORTH COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 6

Map showing the North Coast Bioregion and areas closed to all trawling. The areas permanently closed to trawling are consistent with IUCN marine protected area category IV.



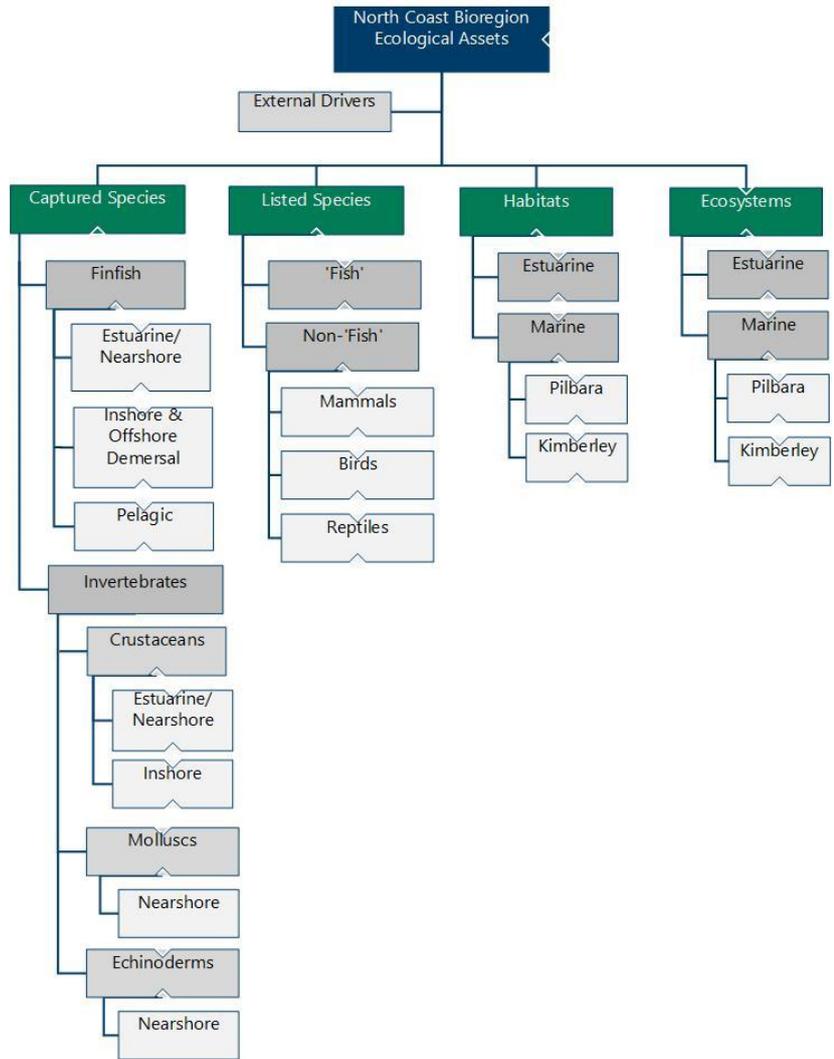
NORTH COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 7

Map showing the North Coast Bioregion and current and proposed state and Commonwealth marine parks and reserves along the northern WA coast.

ECOSYSTEM MONITORING AND STATUS

In order to assess the adequacy of management arrangements aimed at ensuring sustainability of the ecological assets within the North Coast Bioregion, the Department must identify and monitor trends in the condition of these resources. This is achieved through application of an Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) framework (Fletcher, *et al.*, 2010) to identify, in a

hierarchical manner, the key ecological resources that require ongoing monitoring and assessment. (See How to Use section for more details). These key ecological assets identified for the North Coast Bioregion are identified in North Coast Overview Figure 8 and their current risk status reported on in the following sections.



NORTH COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 8

Component tree showing the ecological assets identified and separately assessed for the North Coast Bioregion.

External Drivers

External factors include factors impacting at the Bioregional-level that are likely to affect the ecosystem as whole and may not fall within the direct control of Fishery legislation (e.g. climate change). An understanding of these factors, which are typically environmental (cyclones, ocean currents) is necessary to fully assess the performance of the ecological resource. The main external drivers identified with potential to affect the North Coast Bioregion include climate, introduced pests and diseases¹ and oil and gas development activities.

Climate

External Drivers	Current Risk Status
Climate	MODERATE

The North Coast Bioregion is predicted to have relatively minor impacts from climate change in

the coming decade, compared to more southerly Bioregions.

Oil and Gas Development Activity

External Drivers	Current Risk Status
Oil and Gas Development	LOW

While there are a number of specific oil and gas related offshore developments that are proposed in this region, at the overall ecosystem level there is only a low risk that the ecosystem will be altered measurably. Some of the risks identified (e.g. increased turbidity) are being examined under WAMSI 2 projects. In addition, State and Commonwealth marine parks, including totally protected zones, are currently in place or planned.

¹ Biosecurity issues are now reported by the Biosecurity pillar of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Captured Species

FINFISH

The principal fisheries in the North Coast Bioregion focus on tropical finfish, particularly the high-value emperors, snappers and cods. These species are taken by the Pilbara Demersal Scalefish Fishery (trawl, trap and line sectors) and the Northern Demersal Scalefish Fishery (trap and line). The typical catch is in the order of 3000-5,000 t annually at an estimated annual value of more than \$10 million, making these fisheries the most valuable finfish sector in the state. A number of other finfish fisheries operate in the Bioregion, including near-shore beach seining and gillnetting for barramundi and threadfin salmon (the Kimberley Gillnet and Barramundi Managed Fishery) and surface trolling for Spanish mackerel (the Mackerel Managed Fishery).

Indicator species which reflect the characteristics of the broader exploited stocks are monitored in order to assess ecological risk to the ranges of species targeted.

Estuarine/ Nearshore (0-20 m depth)

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Estuarine/Nearshore	MODERATE

The Kimberley Gillnet and Barramundi Managed Fishery (KGBF) is the only commercial finfish fishery operating in the nearshore and estuarine zones of the North Coast Bioregion. The primary target species are barramundi and threadfin salmon. Stocks of barramundi and threadfin salmon are considered to be at acceptable levels. Changes to marine reserves in the region are expected, which may affect commercial fishing activities in the region.

Inshore and Offshore Demersal

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Inshore and Offshore demersal	MODERATE

There are four State-managed commercial fisheries which use multiple methods to target demersal fish stocks. These fisheries include: The Pilbara Fish Trawl (Interim) Managed Fishery (PFTIMF); The Pilbara Trap Managed Fishery (PTMF); The Pilbara Line Fishery (PLF); and The Northern Demersal Scalefish Managed Fishery (NDSF).

These fisheries all target the tropical demersal scalefish suite in the Pilbara and Kimberley Ecosystem and are collectively referred to as the Pilbara Demersal Scalefish Fisheries (PDSF) and Northern Demersal Scalefish Fishery (NDSF). The trawl fishery lands the largest component of the catch, comprising more than 50 scalefish species.

Pelagic

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Pelagic	LOW

There are a large number of species in the pelagic suite in this Bioregion. Spanish Mackerel are the only species heavily targeted (by the Mackerel Managed Fishery) and this stock is at an acceptable level. Few other pelagic species are exploited at any significant levels and these stocks are lightly impacted by fishing.

INVERTEBRATES

A significant commercial invertebrate fishery in this Bioregion, is the Pearl Oyster Managed Fishery, which is based on the collection of pearl oysters (*Pinctada maxima*) for use in the aquaculture production of pearls. The North Coast Bioregion also has a number of small, limited-entry trawl fisheries for prawns, typically producing approximately 500 t annually, valued at more than \$10 million. Two small trap-based crab fisheries also exist in the Bioregion, targeting blue swimmer crabs in the Pilbara (the Pilbara Developing Crab Fishery) and mud crabs in the Kimberley (the Kimberley Developing Mud Crab Fishery). Sea cucumbers (also known as bêche-de-mer or trepang) are collected by hand by divers and waders throughout the Kimberley region. Catches are mainly comprised of two species, sandfish (*Holothuria scabra*) and redfish (*Actinopyga echinites*). The Trochus Fishery is a small fishery based on the collection of a single target species, *Tectus niloticus* from King Sound and the Buccaneer Archipelago. This fishery is operated by the Bardi Jawi and Mayala Aboriginal Communities, who have traditionally collected trochus in this area.

Crustaceans

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Crustaceans (Crabs)	Estuarine/ Nearshore	LOW
Crustaceans (Prawns)	Inshore	MODERATE

There is a small amount of fishing for mud crabs and blue swimmer crabs in some estuarine and inshore areas and its ecological risk is considered to be low. Stocks of mud crabs are considered to be of significant value to the recreational sector and for social amenity.

There are a number of separate prawn stocks and fisheries within this Bioregion and each has limited entry, seasonal and area closures. Annual recruitment to these stocks is variable, which combined with the higher costs of operating in this region, has resulted in fishing effort being much lower in recent years.

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Molluscs

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Molluscs (Pearls)	Nearshore	MODERATE
Molluscs (Trochus)	Nearshore	MODERATE

The pearl oyster fishery only targets a very small section of the pearl oyster stock both spatially and within the available size range. The fishery achieved Marine Stewardship Council certification in 2017. Legislative structures for this fishery are currently being updated with the primary legislative instrument changing from the *Pearling Act* (1990) to the *Aquatic Resources Management Act* (2016).

The North Coast Trochus Fishery in King Sound is an indigenous fishery targeting the commercially important gastropod shell *Tectus niloticus*, commonly known as trochus. It is a hand collection fishery open to nominated fishers from the community.

Echinoderms

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Sea cucumbers	Nearshore	MODERATE

The majority of the effort for sea cucumbers has been expended in the Kimberley region, although there have been several years with substantial effort directed into the Pilbara region. In 2019, the Pilbara portion of the fishery for sandfish (*Holothuria scabra*) and redfish (*Actinopyga echinites*) achieved Marine Stewardship Council certification.

Listed Species

A number of endangered, threatened and protected¹ (ETP) species can be found within the North Coast Bioregion, including cetaceans, dugongs, marine turtles, sea snakes, elasmobranchs, seahorses and pipefish, crocodiles and seabirds and migratory shorebirds. These species are protected by various international agreements and national and state legislation. International agreements include:

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals 1979 (Bonn Convention);

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);

The Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of Japan for the Protection of Migratory Birds in Danger of Extinction and their Environment 1974 (JAMBA)²;

The Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the People’s Republic of China for the Protection of Migratory Birds and their Environment 1986 (CAMBA)²;

The Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Korea on the Protection of Migratory Birds 2007 (ROKAMBA)²; and

Any other international agreement, or instrument made under other international agreements approved by the environment minister including the EBPC Act 1999.

Primary pieces of national and Western Australian legislation include the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act* 1999 (EPBC Act), the *Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act* 1950 (WC Act), and the *Fish Resources Management Act* 1994 (FRMA).

Fisheries in the region that have reported interactions with ETP species include trawl fisheries (the Onslow Prawn Managed Fishery (OPMF), the Nickol Bay Prawn Managed Fishery (NBPMF), the Pilbara Fish Trawl Fishery(PFTF)) and the Kimberley Gillnet Barramundi Fishery (KGBF). ETP interactions with trawl fisheries are few, due to fishing arrangements, such as the use of bycatch reduction devices and the exclusion of trawling activities from most ETP species’ primary habitat. Similarly, fishers in the KGBF actively avoid capturing ETP species; however, a small amount of interactions have been reported with crocodiles and sawfish.

Fish

Listed species	Risk
Fish	MODERATE

The sawfish (Pristidae), speartooth shark (*Glyphis glyphis*) or the northern river shark (*Glyphis garricki*) are incidentally captured in small numbers by net fishing and trawlers in some areas of the Kimberley region. The area of these fisheries in which sawfish are vulnerable to capture is small relative to the total range of each species, suggesting limited impacts on each population. There are requirements for increased resolution regarding the nature and consequence of interactions with ETP elasmobranchs

Sea horses (syngnathids) and pipefish (solenostomids) are occasionally captured in trawl nets and fish/crab traps. The areas of each fishery in which syngnathids and solenostomids are vulnerable to capture is small relative to the total distribution of the species, which includes waters inshore of the fishery and fishery closed areas, as well as structured habitats where trawling does not occur.

¹ A listed species list does not automatically indicate that a species is either threatened or endangered.

² Further information on the CMS, JAMBA, CAMBA and ROKAMBA is provided at www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory/index.html

Recent video observations indicate that the potato cod is present in high numbers at discrete locations within the Kimberley region where the NDSF operates. Potato cod (*Epinephelus tukula*), a totally protected species, rarely enter fish traps due to their large size and girth limiting their capacity to pass through the entrance funnel into fish traps.

Non-Fish

Listed species	Risk
Mammals	LOW
Reptiles and Birds	MODERATE

Dolphins are incidentally captured by the PFTF. To assist in mitigation of shark, reptile and cetacean bycatch, species-specific responses to three bycatch reduction device (BRDs) configurations were investigated using both *in situ* subsurface and onboard observations. The upward inclined exclusion grid significantly improved the escape proportions for most sharks by 21-29 %. BRDs were highly effective in reducing turtles bycatch and moderately so for seasnakes, but ineffective for the few sawfish (n = 13) that became entangled in the anterior of the net. Cetacean (bottlenose dolphins only) interactions with BRDs were very rare (n = 7) despite high levels of attendance and depredation during trawling. Loss of targeted teleosts through the BRDs was also very rare (1.3 % of day trawls)¹. The study also provided evidence that the subsurface expulsion of megafauna in poor condition is negligible. The Pilbara fish trawl fishery operates under WTO with conditions around dolphin and sawfish interactions and monitoring.

Turtles are encountered occasionally in trawl catches but are typically returned to the sea alive. Grids BRDs are now compulsory on trawl nets, which has largely eliminated the capture of any turtle or other large animal.

Sea snakes are the largest component of the ETP bycatch in the trawl fisheries of this bioregion. Programs for identifying and reporting these interactions are currently in development and implementation stages with these and other fisheries.

Crocodiles are occasionally captured in nearshore/ estuarine fisheries' nets and are typically are released alive.

Habitats and Ecosystems

Coastal geography is extremely variable within the North Coast Bioregion and its identified meso-scale ecosystems include a range of key habitats in depths of less than 40 m (where the vast majority of relevant fisheries resources are located and fishing activities are undertaken in this Bioregion) which include:

Mangroves: Mangroves occur throughout the Bioregion, and within the Kimberley, are considered to be very well developed and relatively pristine. The mangrove communities of Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach have been listed as Ramsar Wetlands of International Significance mainly due to the numbers of migratory wading birds they support.

Seagrasses: Seagrasses are mainly tropical species. Twelve species have been identified throughout the North Coast Bioregion, including one endemic species (*Cymodocea angustata*). Within the Bioregion, seagrasses are generally found in shallow water environments near the mainland coast and offshore reefs and shoals.

Algae: Algal growth is restricted by the limited presence of hard substrates on the North West Shelf. Throughout the Kimberley, the effects of strong tidal currents and high turbidity result in low macroalgal diversity. Surveys in the Kimberley have identified 72 species of macroalgae in the southern Kimberley and 90 species (not including coralline algae) in the northern Kimberley, most of which are widespread tropical taxa.

Sponges and Filter-Feeding Communities: Sponges are found from tidal areas to the deep waters of the Abyssal Plain and generally occur as part of a mixed filter-feeding community. Species richness varies considerably throughout the Bioregion, with both relatively low-diversity communities (< 25 species, e.g. Rowley Shoals) and exceptionally rich communities (> 250 species, e.g. Dampier-Port Hedland regions). Sponge communities throughout the Bioregion are also broadly different. For example, a study by the Western Australian Museum found more than half the sponges identified at Mermaid, Scott and Seringapatam Reefs were unique to a single reef (WAM, 2006).

¹ Wakefield, C. B., Blight, S., Dorman, S. R., Denham, A., Newman, S. J., Wakeford, J., Molony, B. W., Thomson, A. W., Syers, C. and O'Donoghue, S. 2014. Independent observations of catches and subsurface mitigation efficiencies of modified trawl nets for endangered, threatened and protected megafauna bycatch in the Pilbara Fish Trawl

Fishery. Fisheries Research Report No. 244. Department of Fisheries, Western Australia. 40 pp.

NORTH COAST BIOREGION

Coral Reefs: Coral reefs in the Bioregion fall into two general groups: the fringing reefs around coastal islands and the mainland shore and large platform reefs, banks and shelf-edge atolls on the mid and outer shelf. North of Cape Leveque, the Kimberley supports extensive nearshore reef systems. Areas of fringing reef development include islands in the Buccaneer Archipelago, the Heyward island group, islands of the Bonaparte Archipelago and off mainland shores of Cape Voltaire and Cape Bougainville. Coral diversity is typically high, with surveys of the Buccaneer Archipelago having recorded 280 species of coral from at least 55 genera. Coral reefs are also well developed around offshore island such as Ashmore, Cartier, Hibernia, Seringapatam and Scott Reefs, Browse Island and the Rowley Shoals.

Sand/Mud: Embayments along the Kimberley are known to have extensive muddy tidal flats and the majority of the offshore area is dominated by soft sediment seabeds, which are mainly sand/mud with occasional patches of coarser sediments.

In depths beyond 40 m, ecosystems include hard- and soft-bottom benthic communities, sand banks and pelagic communities. Given the low levels of activities in these depths, there is little detailed information on these environments.

A high level of protection of the ecosystems and habitats within the North Coast Bioregion is ensured based on the limited area of the Bioregion that is available to commercial trawl fishing activity (North Coast Bioregion Overview Figures 6 and 7). If areas that are not trawled are taken into account, 89 % of statewide benthic habitats out to the 200 m isobath are protected and may never have been trawled (North Coast Ecosystem Management Table 1). In addition to fisheries-related closures, the North Coast Bioregion has a number of marine protected areas described under the preceding “spatial closures” section.

The Department identifies and monitors trends in the condition of ecosystems and their associated habitats to ensure the long term sustainability of both these key ecological assets and the fisheries that depend on them.

Habitats

Habitats	Aquatic zone	Current Risk Status
North Coast	Estuarine	LOW
Kimberley	Marine	LOW
Pilbara	Marine	MODERATE

The majority of these fishing activities occur in mud/sand habitats in estuaries, tidal creeks and embayments. Trawl activities are considered to have the highest relative impact of the methods used within the bioregion which also includes low impact activities of trap, gillnets and hand collection based fisheries. However, the spatial extent of trawling activities is small, and there are a variety of measures in place to manage any impacts. The spatial distribution of all fishing activities are also managed through the use of seasonal and area closures to protect sensitive habitats.

Ecosystems

Ecosystems	Aquatic zone	Current Risk Status
North Coast	Estuarine	NEGLIGIBLE
Kimberley	Marine	MODERATE
Pilbara	Marine	MODERATE

There are a number of oil and gas related offshore and onshore developments that exist or are proposed in this bioregion. While some specific areas may be locally impacted, these still only pose a low risk to the overall ecosystem of this Bioregion.

Given the large areas closed to both trawling and to all commercial fishing, there is a low risk that the level of fishing in this region is changing the regional-level community structure to an unacceptable level. Assessments of the community structure and trophic level of all commercially caught fish species in the region over the past 30 years found no evidence that there have been any systematic changes. (Hall and Wise 2011¹). The majority of catch from each fishery is comprised of the main target species, and catch compositions have remained stable throughout the history of each fishery. None of the main target species are known to be involved in any strong ecological interactions and their removal at current rates is unlikely to seriously or irreversibly alter community structure. Slight increases to the risk ratings for the Kimberly marine ecosystem are a reflection of increased monitoring and reporting requirements ensuing from changes to marine park management in the region.

1 Hall, N.G. and Wise, B.S. 2011. Development of an ecosystem approach to the monitoring and management of Western Australian fisheries. FRDC Report – Project 2005/063.

Fisheries Research Report No. 215. Department of Fisheries, Western Australia. 112 pp.

FISHERIES

NORTH COAST PRAWN RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

M. Kangas, S. Wilkin, M. Shanks, and S. Brown



OVERVIEW

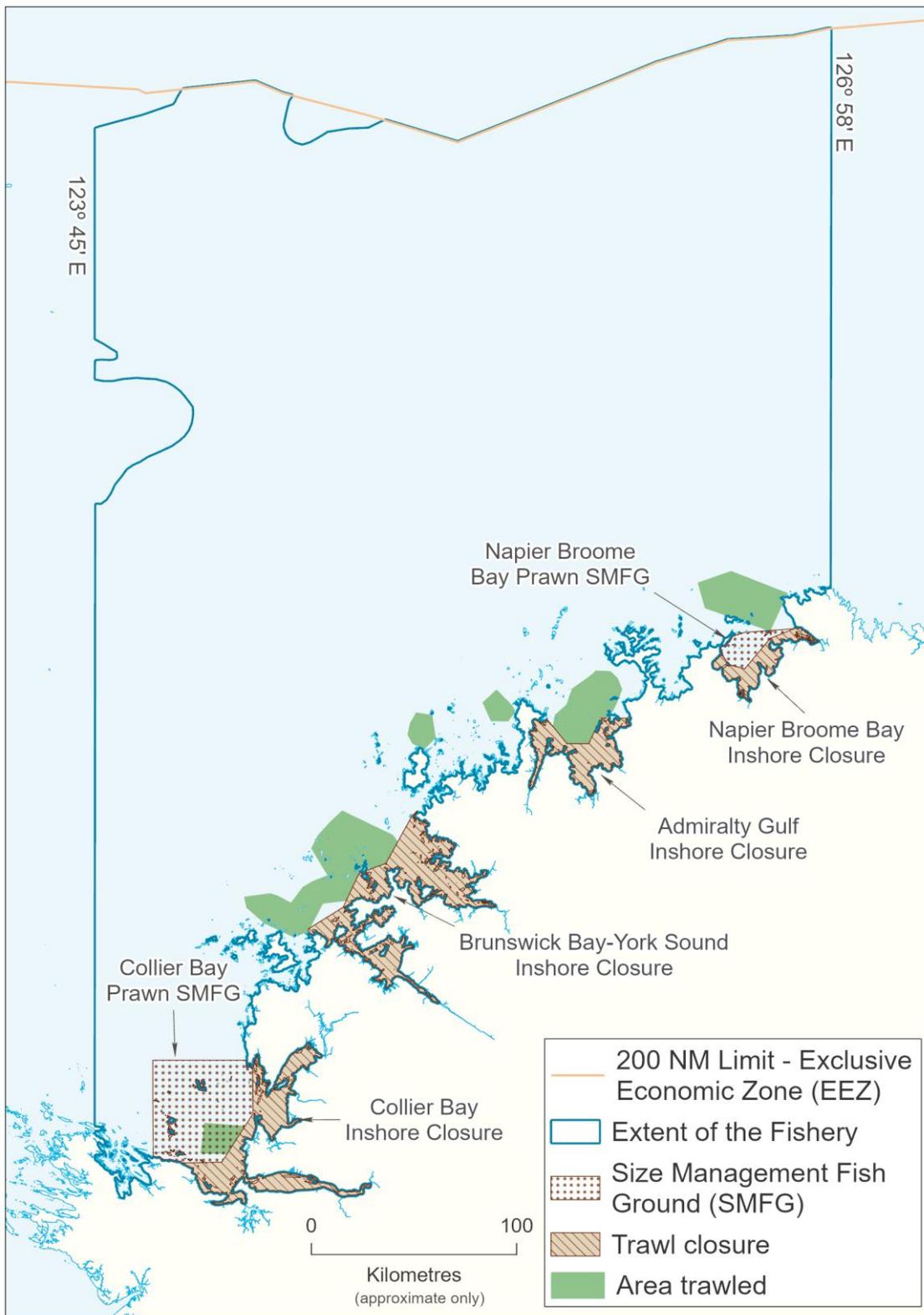
The four northern prawn managed fisheries (Kimberley, Broome, Nickol Bay and Onslow) all use low opening, otter prawn trawl systems to target western king prawns (*Penaeus latisulcatus*), brown tiger prawns (*Penaeus esculentus*), and blue endeavour prawns (*Metapenaeus endeavouri*). High opening, otter trawl systems are also used when targeting banana prawns (*Penaeus merguensis*) which is

the target species for Kimberley and Nickol Bay fisheries. Management of the north coast prawn managed fisheries is based on input controls, including limited entry, gear controls (maximum headrope units), seasonal and area openings and closures.

The fisheries have Commonwealth export approval until 2025.

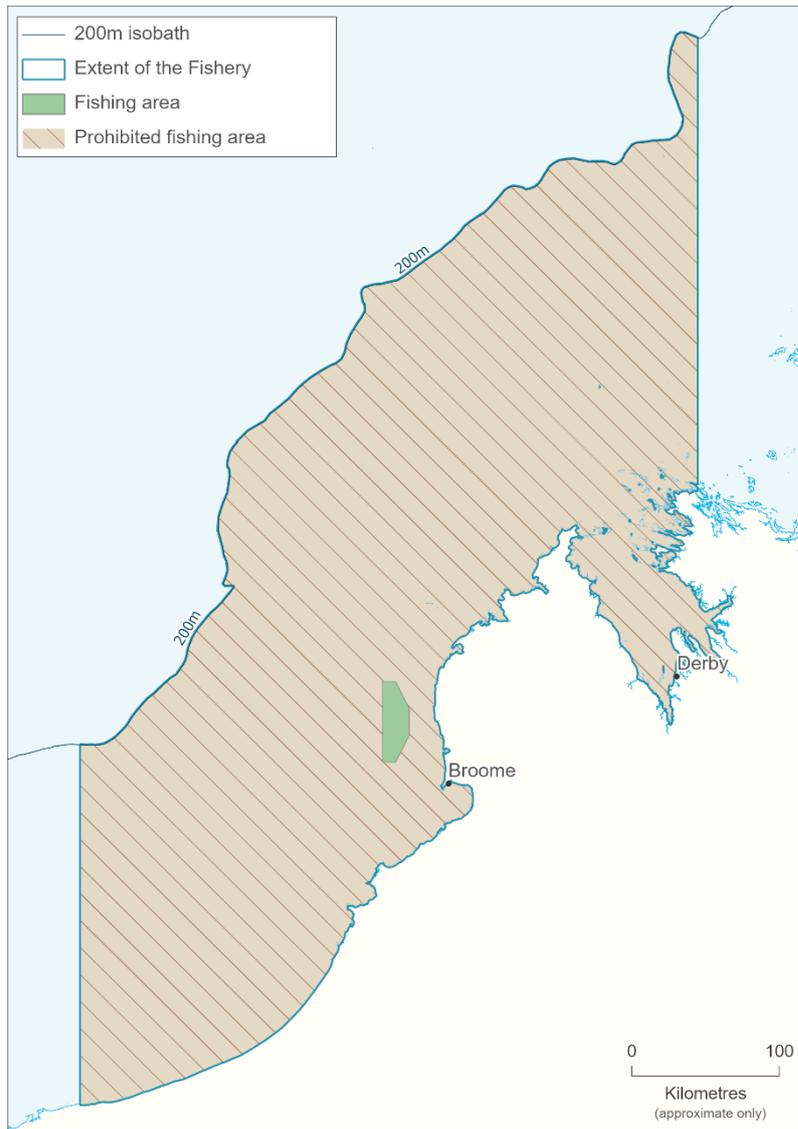
SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (2019)	Total Catch: 364 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (N/A)		
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Banana prawns (KPMF and NBPMF)	Moderate risk: Catches within predicted ranges	Adequate
Western king prawns (BPMF)	Low risk: Very low effort and catch	Adequate
Brown tiger prawns (OPMF)	Low risk: Low effort and catch	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Low risk	Adequate
Habitat	Low risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$3.8m)	High risk	Acceptable
Social (low amenity)	Low risk	Acceptable
Governance	Moderate risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	Moderate risk (climate)	

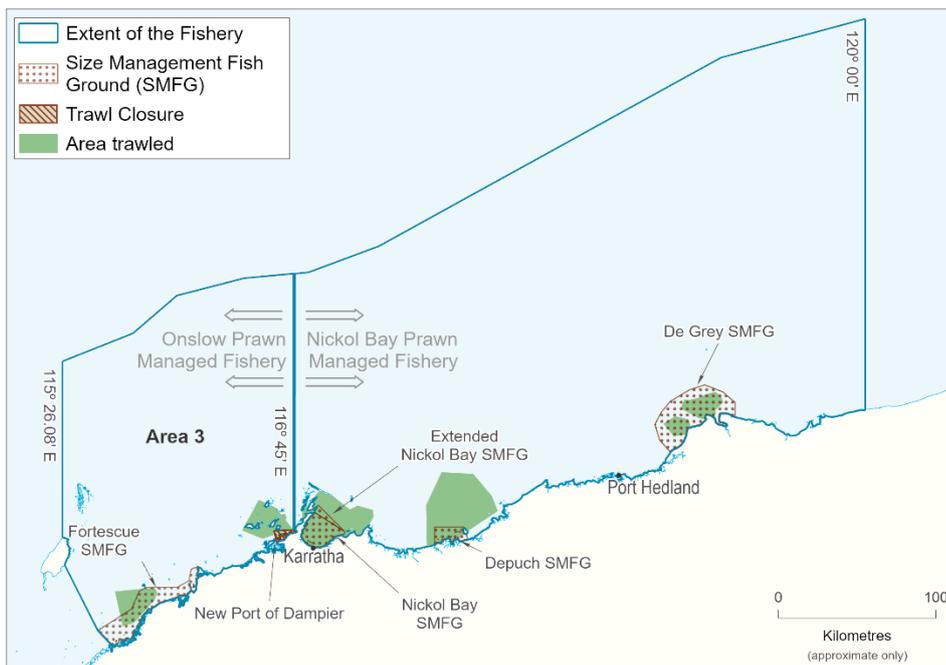


NORTH COAST PRAWN FIGURE 1.

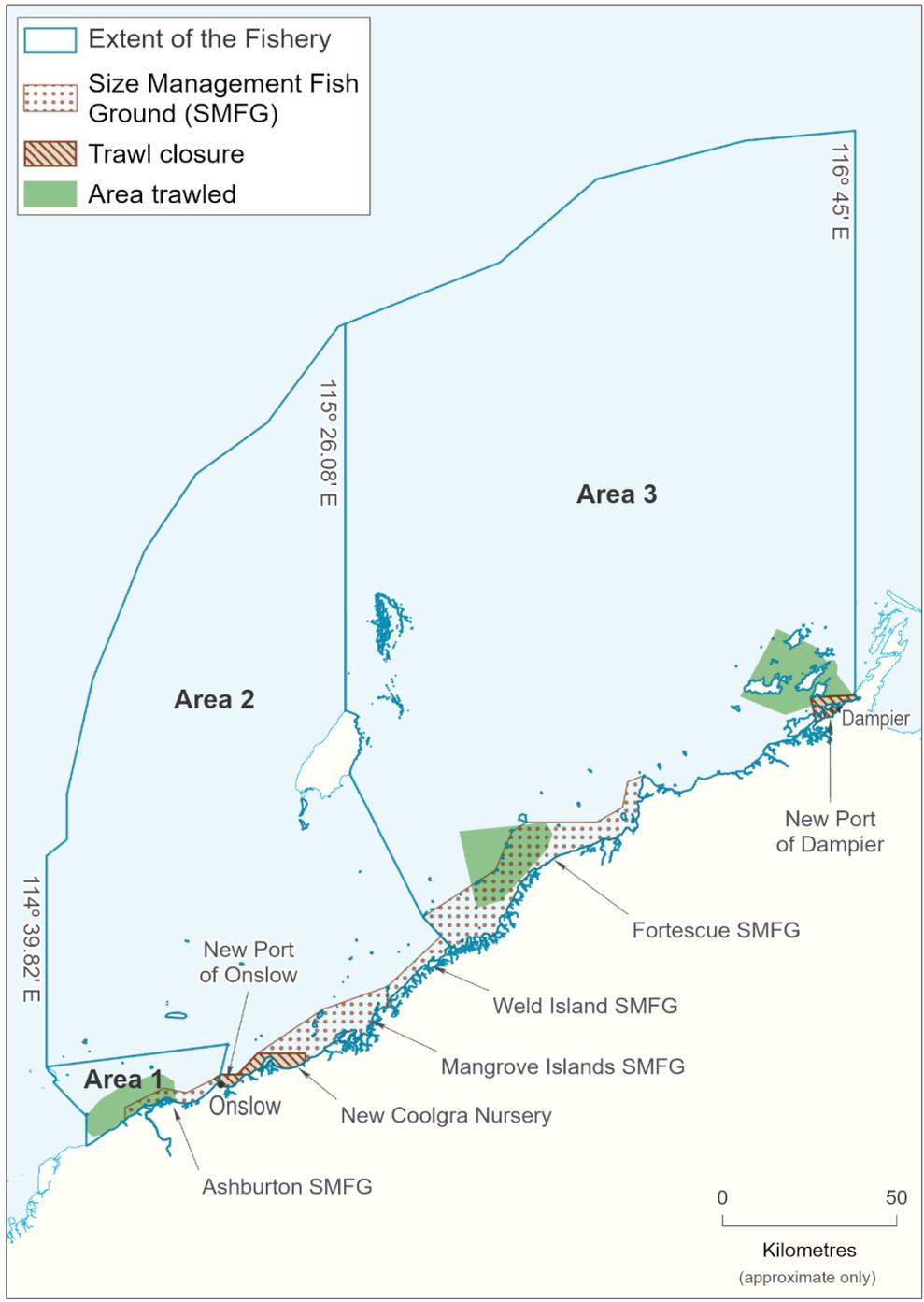
Map showing boundaries of the Kimberley Prawn Managed Fishery and areas fished in 2019.



NORTH COAST PRAWN FIGURE 2.
Map showing boundaries of the Broome Prawn Managed Fishery



NORTH COAST PRAWN FIGURE 3.
Map showing boundaries of the Nickol Bay Prawn Managed Fishery and areas fished in 2019.



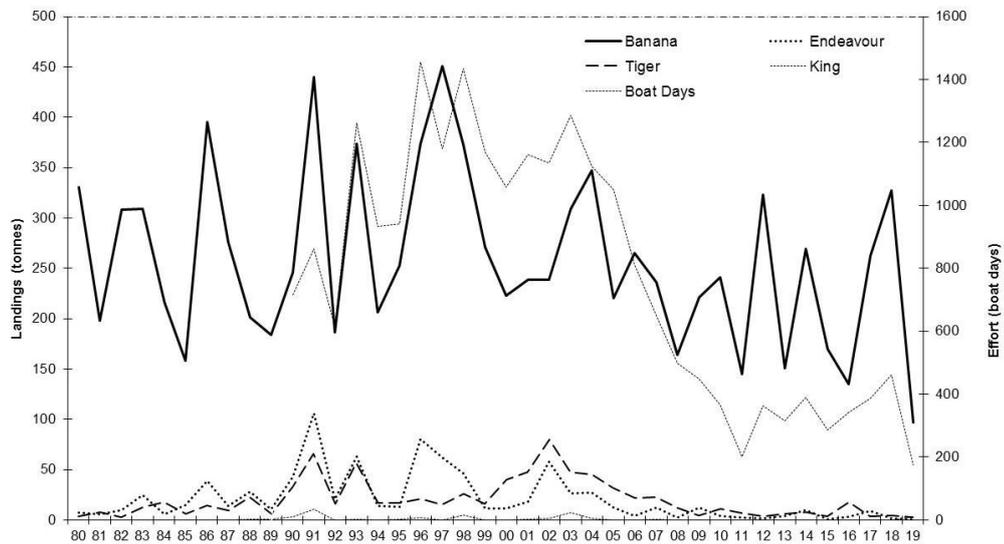
NORTH COAST PRAWN FIGURE 4.
Map showing boundaries of the Onslow Prawn Managed Fishery and areas fished in 2019.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

Kimberley Prawn Managed Fishery (KPMF)

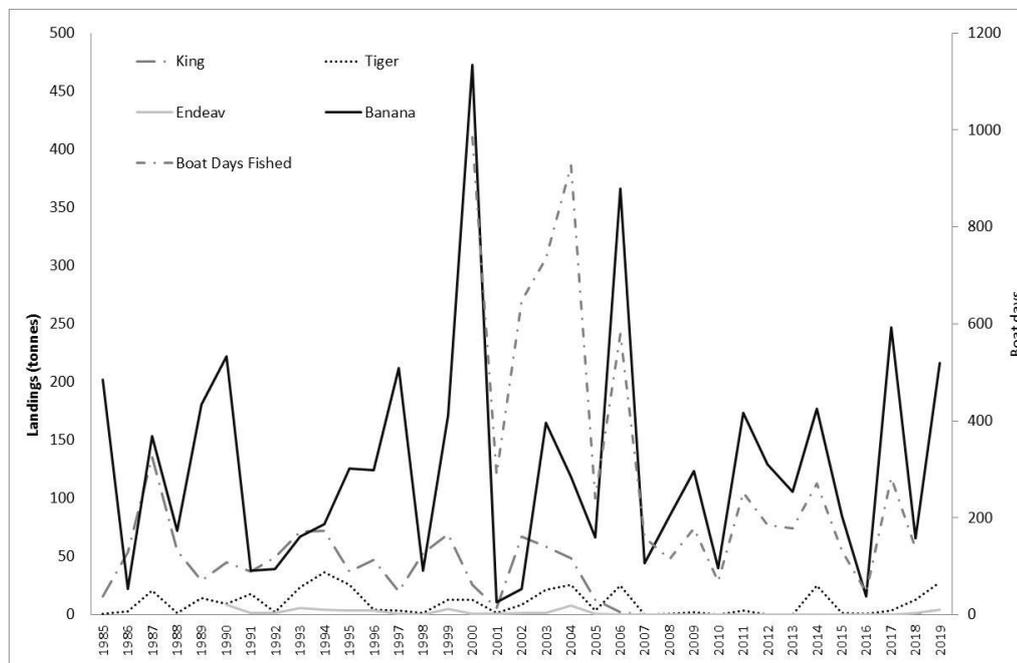
The total prawn landings in 2019 for the KPMF were 100 t. which was the lowest catch on record. The catch was primarily banana prawns (97 t), with 2 t of brown tiger prawns and 1 t of blue

endeavour prawns also taken (North Coast Prawn Figure 5). The banana prawn landings were below both the target catch range and the catch prediction. There are two fishing periods for the season (April to mid-June, then from August to the end of November) with around 90% of the total landings taken in the first fishing period. Negligible quantities of byproduct were reported.



NORTH COAST PRAWN FIGURE 5.

Annual prawn landings (t) and fishing effort (total adjusted hours) for the Kimberley Prawn Managed Fishery 1980-2019.



NORTH COAST PRAWN FIGURE 6.

Annual prawn landings (t) and fishing effort (total adjusted hours) for the Nickol Bay Prawn Managed Fishery 1985-2019.

Broome Prawn Managed Fishery (BPMF)

Extremely low fishing effort occurred as only one boat undertook trial fishing to investigate whether catch rates were sufficient for commercial fishing. This resulted in negligible landings of western king prawns with no byproduct recorded.

Nickol Bay Prawn Managed Fishery (NBPMF)

The total landings of major penaeids for the 2019 season were 254 t (North Coast Prawn Figure 6). This comprised 216 t of banana prawns, which was well above the predicted range (110 – 165 t), 28 t of brown tiger prawns, 4 t of blue endeavour

and 5 t western king prawns. Due to the expected higher landings of banana prawns in 2019 compared to 2018, fishing effort was greater at 353 days, compared to 284 boat days in 2018.

Onslow Prawn Managed Fishery (OPMF)

The total landings in 2019 were less than 50 t, below the target catch range. Twenty eight days of fishing effort (308 hours) was undertaken by one boat in 2019.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Kimberley Prawn Managed Fishery – Banana prawns (Sustainable-Adequate)

Due to a change associated with the fleet structure and economics of fishing, there has been a marked reduction in the number of fishers since 2005 with fishing effort (boat-days) below historical levels and at record-low levels in 2019 (North Coast Prawn Figure 5). However, total catches have generally been in line with seasonal catch predictions except in 2019 when landings were well below those predicted. On the basis of annual trends in catch, effort, and catch rates, the outputs of preliminary stock production models and a biomass dynamics model, it is considered that the stock is being fished at a sustainable level with the breeding stock considered **sustainable-adequate**.

Broome Prawn Managed Fishery – Western king prawns (Sustainable-Adequate)

No fishing takes place during the breeding season and there is minimal overlap of fishing on the breeding stock due to the widespread nature of this species and the current very low level of fishing effort. Higher average water temperatures appear to be having a negative effect on western king prawn catches in recent years in the north coast prawn fisheries. However, the breeding stock is considered **sustainable-adequate**.

Nickol Bay Prawn Managed Fishery – Banana prawns (Sustainable-Adequate)

On the basis of annual trends in catch, effort, and catch rates, the outputs of preliminary stock production models and a biomass dynamics model, it is considered that the stock is being fished at a sustainable level with the breeding stock considered **sustainable-adequate**.

Onslow Prawn Managed Fishery – Brown Tiger and Western King Prawns (Sustainable-Adequate)

One boat fished in the OPMF in 2019 whilst the other operators chose to fish elsewhere where catches were likely to be more profitable. So overall this fishery recorded relatively low effort and catch. Therefore, the breeding stocks of banana, brown tiger and western king prawns were protected and are considered **sustainable-adequate**.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

Bycatch levels for all these fisheries are relatively low by tropical trawl fishery standards, with few species of significance to other fishing sectors being taken. In addition to grids, fish escape secondary bycatch reduction devices (FEDs) (square mesh panels) were implemented in all nets in 2005. All boats also use hoppers (in-water catch sorting systems), which adds another level of improvement for bycatch survival and product quality. **Low** risk.

Protected species

While protected species including dugongs, turtles and sea snakes occur in the general area, only sea snakes and occasionally turtles are encountered in the trawl catches. Both species are typically returned to the sea alive. Grids have largely eliminated turtle and other large animal captures. **Low** risk.

Protected species interactions recorded in the daily logbooks for each fishery in 2019 are:

Kimberley: 59 sea snakes were recorded as being caught, with 3 being returned dead. Two saw fish were caught with one returned alive and one returned with status unknown.

Broome: The fishery operates in relatively deep water, this combined with very little fishing effort and restricted trawl area, results in minimal interaction, and no interactions were reported.

Nickol Bay/Onslow: There were 12 sea snakes caught and returned alive, 1 turtle was caught and returned alive, and 11 sawfish were caught and all returned to the sea alive.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

Owing to the predominantly mud and sand habitats of the trawl grounds, the trawl gear has relatively little physical impact. Overall, the nature of these fisheries and controls on effort indicate that its environmental impact is likely to be low. The area fished in the four northern prawn fisheries was 1.7% in the KPMF, 1.3% in the NBPMF to <1% in the BPMF and OPMF, within the boundaries of these fisheries. **Low** risk.

Ecosystem

Prawn species are generally managed at relatively moderate levels of annual harvest, and this has declined in recent years for economic reasons. Therefore, the impact of the catch on local food chains is unlikely to be significant in

view of the high natural mortality of prawns, the extent of non-trawled nursery areas in each fishery and variable biomass levels of prawns resulting from variable environmental conditions such as cyclone and rainfall events. **Low** risk.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

The estimated employment in 2019 was 50-80 people including skippers and other crew for all north coast prawn fisheries combined for a part of the year.

Economic

Ex-vessel (beach) prices for prawns vary, depending on the type and quality of product and the market forces operating at any one time. The total estimated value of the fisheries excluding byproduct are; KPMF - \$0.9 M, NBPMF - \$2.7 M, BPMF and OPMF - negligible.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

Management arrangements for all four fisheries are designed to keep fishing effort at levels that will maintain a sufficient spawning biomass of prawns. For the KPMF, an effort cap of 1500 vessel days is set for the two parts of the season. For the NBPMF, a conservative harvesting strategy of the banana prawn resource provides protection from recruitment overfishing, allowing adequate spawning biomass to survive to the key spawning period each year by opening the key fishing grounds in May. For the BPMF, trial fishing is undertaken to assess the stock level of western king prawns prior to commercial fishing commencing thus retaining spawning biomass. Bycatch reduction devices, including grids and FEDs are mandatory under the EPBC Act.

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels

KPMF: 240 - 450 t (**Acceptable**). All prawn species landings were below their allowable ranges.

BPMF: 55 -260 t (**Acceptable**). Minimal fishing occurred in 2019.

NBPMF: 90 - 300 t (**Acceptable**).

Banana prawns were within the allowable range but well above their predicted range, brown tiger prawns within their allowable range and western king prawns were below.

OPMF: 60-180 t (**Acceptable**). Effort and catch were low in 2019.

Compliance

It is a requirement that all vessels in these fisheries are fitted with an Automatic Location Communicator (ALC). The implementation of an ALC enables the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Department) to monitor the fleet using a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and manage compliance with temporal and spatial closures. The Department also undertakes regular vessel inspections to ensure fishing is being undertaken in accordance with the governing legislation (e.g. gear requirements, catch reporting).

Consultation

Biannual meetings between the Department, WAFIC and licence holders are held to consider the status of the stocks and recommend the opening and closing dates and fishing arrangements that operate within each season.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives/Outlook

The Department and industry are considering a management review of the KPMF. The review proposes to unitise effort days and introduce an individual transferable effort system. This will provide industry opportunity to consolidate entitlement, addressing latent effort and allow for improvements in the fishery's seasonal management arrangements.

Some members of industry commenced trialling different gear configurations for the Department to assess potential efficiency gains associated with their use.

There is consideration for entering the Kimberley Prawn and Nickol Bay prawn fisheries into formal Fisheries Improvement Programs under MSC.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

A positive relationship has been observed with summer rainfall and banana prawn landings, particularly in the NBPMF.

High water temperatures have had a negative effect on western king prawn catches in recent years (Caputi *et al.* 2015a, 2016) which may be impacting those northern prawn fisheries that target western king prawns. Brown tiger prawns were ranked as a **high risk** to climate change effects and western king prawns as **moderate-high** and will need to be monitored (Caputi *et al.* 2015a, 2015b).

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- Caputi N, Kangas M, Hetzel Y, Denham A, Pearce A, and Chandrapavan A. 2016. Management adaptation of invertebrate fisheries to an extreme marine heat wave event at a global warming hotspot. *Ecology and Evolution*. doi: 10.1002/ece3.2137. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ece3.2137/full>

NORTH COAST NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

S. Newman, G. Mitsopoulos, C. Skepper, L. Wiberg



OVERVIEW

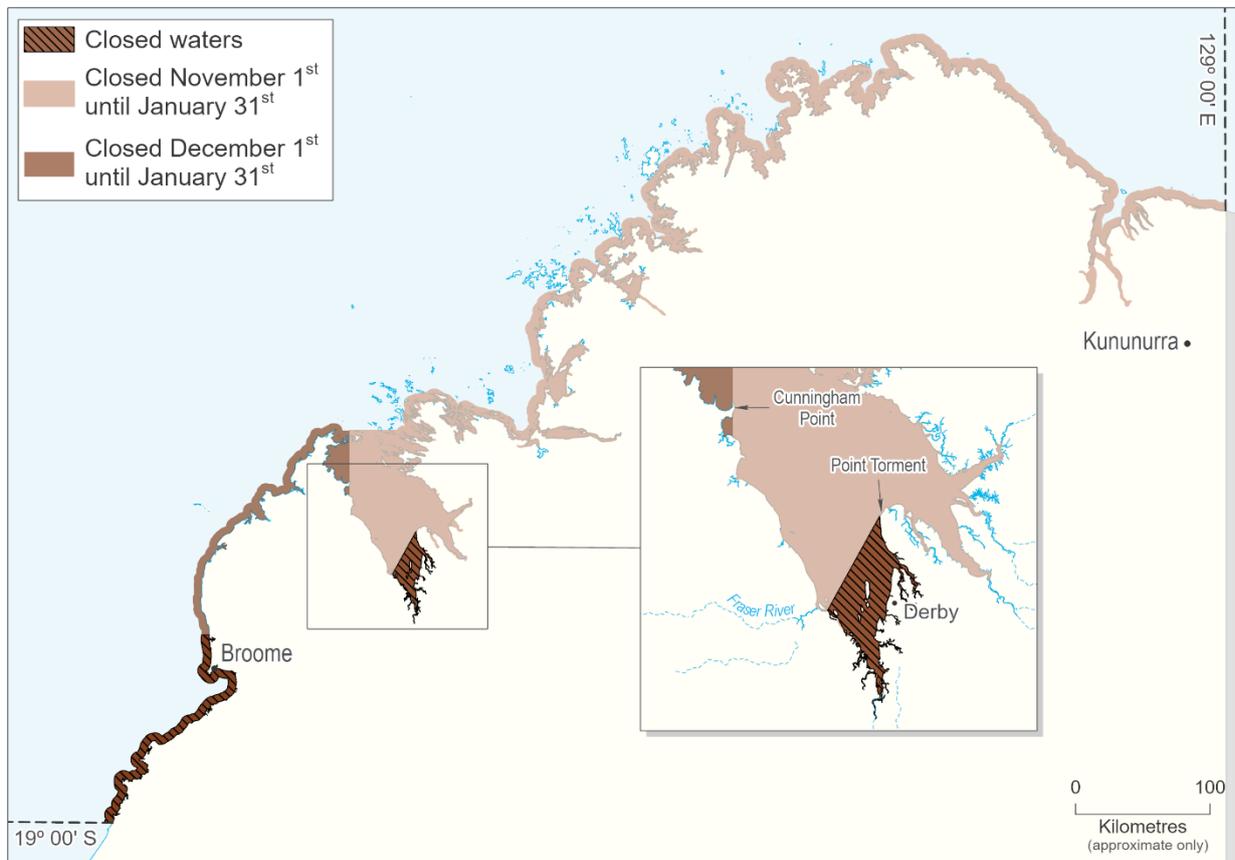
The Kimberley Gillnet and Barramundi Fishery (KGBF) operates in the nearshore and estuarine zones of the North Coast Bioregion and extends from the WA/NT border (129°E) to the top end of Eighty Mile Beach, south of Broome (19°S; North Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Figure 1). It encompasses the taking of any fish by gillnet in inshore waters and the taking of barramundi (*Lates calcarifer*) by any means. The principal species landed are barramundi (*Lates calcarifer*) and two species of threadfin (king threadfin *Polydactylus macrochir* and blue threadfin *Eleutheronema tetradactylum*). Small quantities of Elasmobranchs (sharks and rays), black jewfish (*Protonibea diacanthus*) and tripletail (*Lobotes surinamensis*) are also landed.

The main areas of operation for the commercial fishery are the river systems and tidal creek

systems of the Cambridge Gulf (including Ord River), the Ria coast of the northern Kimberley (six small river systems), and King Sound. Access to the KGBF is limited to four licences. Commercial fishing is now prohibited between the southern boundary of the fishery (19°00' S) to north of Willie Creek (17°44' S) and in King Sound South (North Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Figure 1). Fishing is also restricted to within three nautical miles of the high water mark for the remainder of the fishery. There are commercial fishing area closures around major town sites and recreationally important fishing locations, southern King Sound, encompassing Derby and the Fitzroy River, and all its creeks and tributaries south of 17°27' S, Whistle Creek and Admiral Bay, and the lower Ord River upstream of Adolphus Island.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (Barramundi 33-44t)	Total Catch 2019: 73.4t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery	Total Catch 2017/18: 15–26 t (boat-based only)	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
KGBF	Medium Risk	
Barramundi	Above target but within the limit catch range, catch rates remain high, effort is low	Adequate
King threadfin	Catches well below the average of 74.5 t for the 10-year period from 2004–2013	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Low Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$ (<\$1 m))	Low Risk	Acceptable
Social (low amenity)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	Low Risk	Acceptable



NORTH COAST NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE

Location and extent of the KGBF within the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Note: this map is indicative only.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

The total reported catch of all species in the KGBF in 2019 was 73.4 tonnes (t) (North Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Table 1). The total landings of barramundi in 2019 were 47t (North Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Table 1, Figure 2), a decrease on the 2018 catch of 60.1t which was the highest recorded catch since 1987. The 2019 landings of threadfin from the KGBF were 20.6t (North Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Table 1, Figure 2), slightly lower than the 23.9t reported in 2018.

The top 10 nearshore and estuarine species (or species groupings) in the North Coast represented 87% of the boat-based recreational catch (kept by numbers) in 2017/18. The estimated boat-based recreational harvest ranges for the top 10 nearshore and estuarine species in the North Coast were steady at 20 t (95% CI 15–26 t) in 2017/18 compared with 21 t (95% CI 15–28) in 2015/16, 14 t (95% CI 10–18) in 2013/14 and 19 t (95% CI 13–25) in 2011/12 (Ryan *et al.* 2019). No recent estimates of shore-based recreational catches are available.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Barramundi (Sustainable-Adequate)

The barramundi catch in 2019 was 47t, above the target catch range but within the limit range. The catch rate decreased slightly from 144.88 kg/block day in 2018 to 138.6 kg/block day in 2019 (North Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Figure 3).

NORTH COAST NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE TABLE 1

Summary of the reported catch (t) in the Kimberley Gillnet Barramundi Fishery in 2019 and the percentage composition of each of the major species retained.

Species	Catch (tonnes)	Composition %
Threadfin	20.6	28.1
Barramundi	47	64
Tripletail	0.4	0.6
Black jewfish	2.8	3.9
Sharks*	0.3	0.5
Other fish*	2.2	3
Total	73.4	100

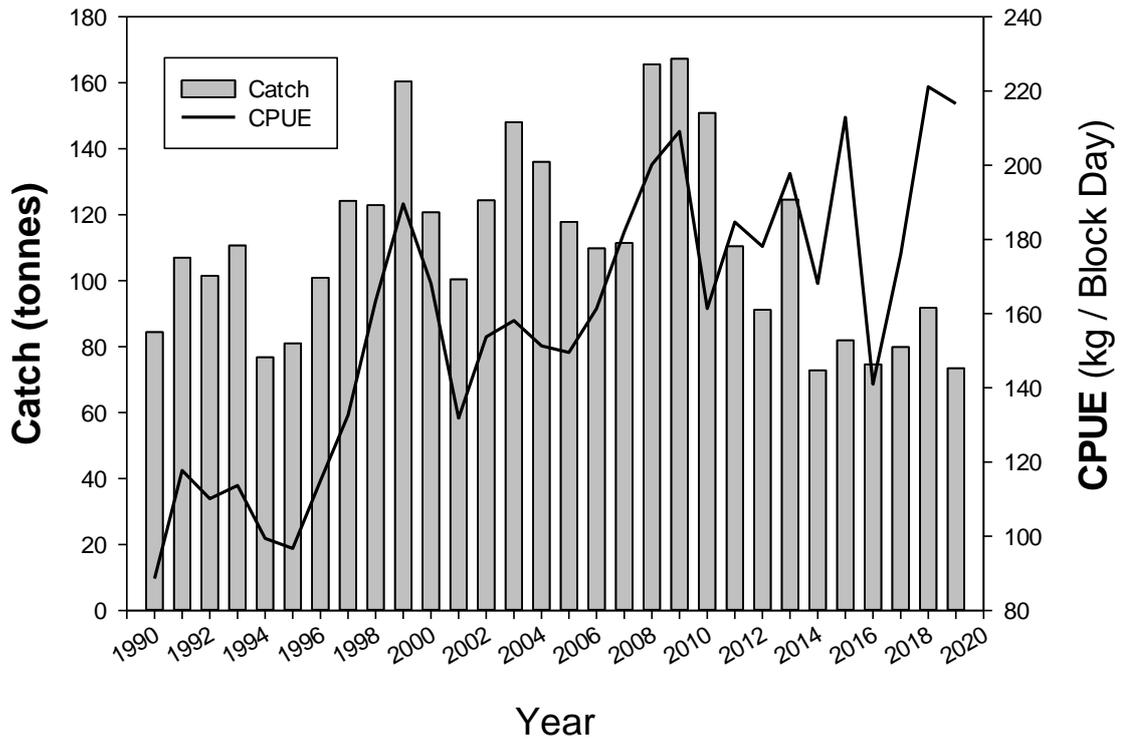
*Other fish includes general catfish, Giant queenfish, sea mullet and unspecified species. Shark species are not typically identified.

The above evidence indicates the biomass of these stocks is unlikely to be depleted and recruitment is unlikely to be impaired and that current levels of fishing mortality (catch) are unlikely to cause the stock to become recruitment impaired. Thus the breeding stock is classified as **sustainable-adequate**.

King threadfin (Sustainable-Adequate)

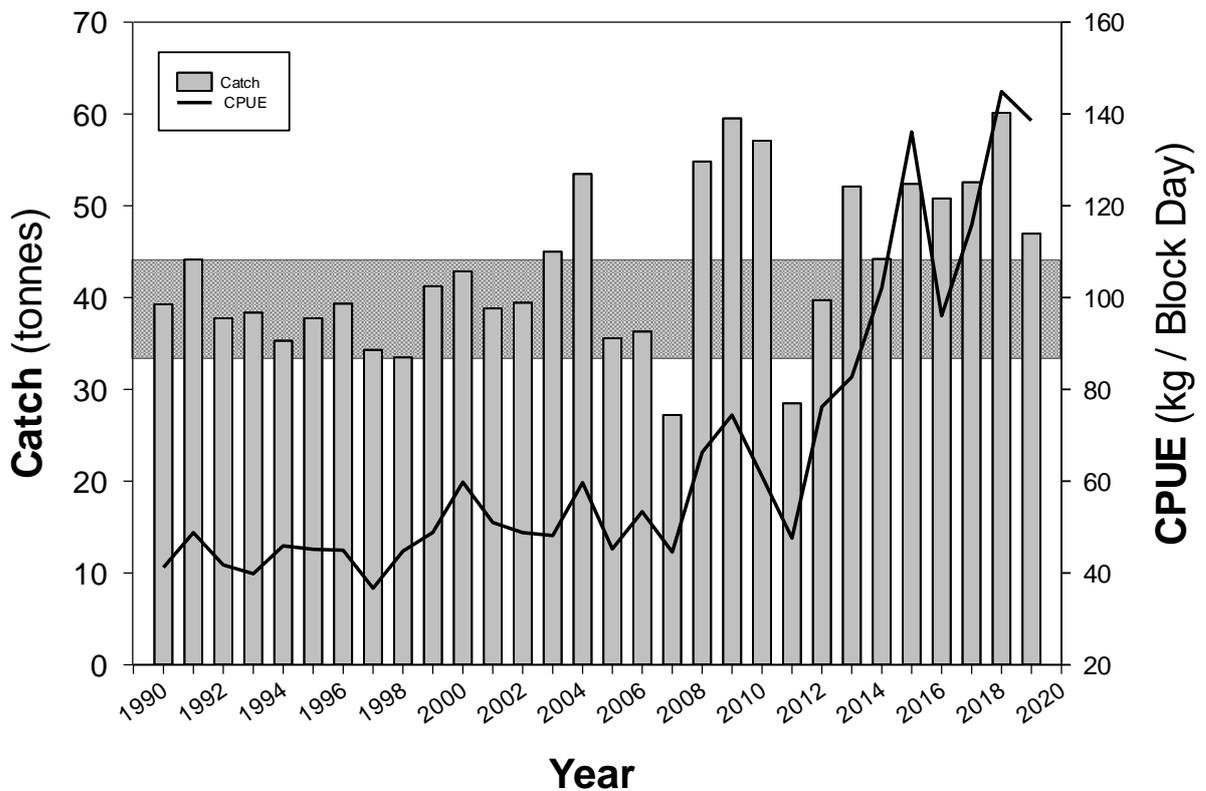
Threadfin catches are dominated by king threadfin. Catch of king threadfin in 2019 was 17.4t, a decrease from the 23.1t reported in 2018 and well below the average of 74.5t for the 10-year period from 2004–13. This is due to the low effort levels now demonstrated in the fishery, following the removal of two fishing licenses from the Broome coast area, with the area closed to commercial fishing in late-2013. The lower commercial catches in recent years (post closures) are relatively stable. King threadfin are landed by recreational and charter fishers, but only in small quantities (1t). The above evidence indicates the biomass of these stocks is unlikely to be depleted and recruitment is unlikely to be impaired and that current levels of fishing mortality (catch) are unlikely to cause the stock to become recruitment impaired.

On the basis of the evidence provided above, the breeding stock of King Threadfin is classified as **sustainable-adequate**.



NORTH COAST NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FIGURE 2

The annual total catch and catch per unit effort (CPUE, kg block day⁻¹), from all areas of the KGBF including sharks and rays over the period 1990 to 2019.



NORTH COAST NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FIGURE 3

The annual catch and catch per unit effort (CPUE, kg block day⁻¹) for barramundi from the KGBF over the period 1990 to 2019. The upper and lower bounds of the target commercial catch range for barramundi are shown by the shaded catch area between 33 and 44 tonnes.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

The fishery operates at a relatively low intensity over a wide area of the Kimberley region, specifically targeting barramundi and threadfin. The fishing gear uses large mesh sizes, and hence does not generate a significant bycatch of species important to other sectors, but does take some sharks and rays. Where practicable, sharks and rays are released alive. However, there is some mortality of sharks and rays associated with gillnet capture. Because of the low spatial density of fishing effort relative to the widespread distribution of these species and the size-selectivity of the permitted mesh sizes, these impacts impose a negligible risk to the stocks involved. **Negligible** risk.

Protected species

The fishing gear used for this fishery (gillnets) is known to result in the occasional bycatch of protected crocodiles (*Crocodylus porosus*) and sawfish (Family Pristidae). These species are generally released alive or avoided as far as is practicable. Because of the low effort levels and the low spatial intensity of fishing effort, these impacts are unlikely to pose a significant threat to the sustainability of the stocks of these species. In 2019, listed species interactions were reported for both crocodiles and sawfish.

Catches of the spartooth shark (*Glyphis glyphis*) or the northern river shark (*Glyphis garricki*), which are listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 as critically endangered and endangered, respectively, are rare in the KGBF. However, as these species look similar to other whaler shark species, they may be captured but misidentified. Given the fishery's overall low effort levels, particularly inside the freshwater drainages in which these species are most likely to occur, the fishing operations of the KGBF are unlikely to pose a significant threat to the sustainability of the stocks of these species. Effort levels inside freshwater drainages will be monitored. **Low** risk.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

This fishery poses a **negligible** risk on the nearshore and estuarine ecosystem of the Kimberley region due to the low spatial density of fishing effort. The fishing gear has minimal impact on the habitat. The area and habitat fished is subject to extreme tidal currents and associated effects and is typically mud flat areas.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

During the 2019 season (February to November), four vessels fished in the KGBF with an average crew level of approximately 2 people, with an estimate of at least eight people directly employed in the fishery. There was additional employment through local processors and distribution networks. The fishery provides fresh fish for local communities and the tourism industry throughout the Kimberley region.

A significant number of recreational and charter anglers also fished across the region. Recreational fishing attracts many visitors to the North Coast Bioregion, particularly in nearshore areas over the winter dry season (April – October). This provides employment through local charter fishing services and fishing tackle outlets around key population centres, as well as more remote charter operations offering wilderness fishing experiences in the north Kimberley region. The social amenity definition for the KGBF is important (this fishery is an important asset locally and/or the use or existence of the asset is important to the broader community).

Economic

The fishery's score value in 2019 was estimated to be Level 1 (i.e. Risk level – **Low**; Economic value – < \$1 million). The establishment of new marine parks may impact on the future economic viability of the KGBF.

Recreational fishers make a significant contribution to Western Australia's economy, and support economic activity in many regional towns on the coast and near inland fishing spots. These resources contribute in part to the \$2.4 billion attributed to the value of recreational fishing to the State's economy each year.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The harvest strategy for barramundi in the Kimberley Gillnet and Barramundi Managed Fishery in the Kimberley region of Western Australia is based on a constant commercial catch policy where the annual commercial catches of barramundi are allowed to vary within the target catch range, which is based on an historical catch range during which the fishery was stable and levels of exploitation were considered to be sustainable.

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels (Acceptable)

The target commercial catch range was calculated based on catch information from 1989 – 1999, a period during which the fishery was stable and levels of exploitation were considered to have been sustainable. However, the target catch range for barramundi has recently been revised to be consistent with the reference points and control rules adopted for other fisheries. The current approach specifies this range as the values within the minimum and maximum catches observed during the reference period. The threshold values for the target commercial catch range have been calculated as being within the range of 33 – 44t, with a limit reference range of 23-54t. Monthly catch and effort data from the commercial fishery are used to assess the status of barramundi populations targeted by the fishery. There is a need to further review the catch ranges within the fishery.

Compliance

The KGBF is managed primarily through input controls in the form of limited entry, seasonal and spatial area closures and gear restrictions. There is a closed season in which fishing is prohibited in the KGBF. In the southern KGBF (west of Cunningham Point, 123°08.23' E longitude) the closure extends from 1 December to 31 January the following year, while in the northern section of the KGBF (east of Cunningham Point) the closure extends from 1 November to 31 January the following year. There are also limits on the length of net and mesh sizes to be used in the fishery.

Recreational fishing activities are concentrated around key population centres, with a seasonal peak in activity during the dry season (winter months). Fish species in the North Coast Bioregion are assigned bag and size limits according to their ecological suite and the risk to sustainability. The bag and size limits are species-specific (e.g. barramundi) or species group specific (e.g. mullet) to ensure that stock levels are maintained. Recreational set and haul netting is prohibited in all waters of the North Coast Bioregion with the exception of haul netting in the waters of the Dampier Archipelago (between Cape Preston and Cape Lambert) with the following restrictions: haul nets must not exceed 30 metres in length; mullet are the only species to be retained and all other species must be returned to the water.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with licensees on operational issues. Industry

Management Meetings are convened by the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who are also responsible for statutory management plan consultation under a Service Level Agreement with the Department. Consultation processes for the recreational fishing sector are facilitated by Recfishwest under a Service Level Agreement with the Department, although the Department undertakes direct consultation with the community on specific issues.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

New State marine parks are currently being developed for the Kimberley region. The establishment of these new marine parks may impact on the future economic viability of the KGBF. This represents a **moderate** risk, with the Department continuing to monitor the development of marine parks.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

The barramundi stocks utilising the Kimberley river systems as nursery areas are expected to be reasonably resilient to fishing pressure. However, the impact of increasing exploitation from the charter and tourism sectors on barramundi stocks needs to be monitored.

Furthermore, the smaller, isolated stocks along the arid Pilbara coastline are likely to experience highly variable recruitment due to environmental fluctuations (e.g. the amount of rainfall).

The introduction of new marine parks across the Kimberley region has the potential to concentrate fishing effort from multiple sectors into those areas that remain open to fishing and are easily accessible, increasing risks of local depletion of barramundi and threadfin stocks.

In addition, inter-sectoral conflict between recreational and commercial fishing sectors in the Derby area surrounding access to the barramundi resource have resulted in the introduction of a commercial closure in the south of King Sound between Point Torment and Fraser River. This reallocation of the resource to the recreational fishing sector is reflective of the social value placed on barramundi, and is not due to any stock sustainability concerns.

Low risk.

NORTH COAST DEMERSAL RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

S. Newman, C. Wakefield, C. Skepper, D. Boddington and A. Steele



OVERVIEW

A range of commercial and recreational fisheries target demersal scalefish resources in the North Coast Bioregion (NCB) of Western Australia. The major demersal fish species in the NCB (in order of gross tonnage) are; goldband snapper (*Pristipomoides multidens*), bluespotted emperor (*Lethrinus punctulatus*), red emperor (*Lutjanus sebae*), saddletail snapper (*Lutjanus malabaricus*), crimson snapper (*Lutjanus erythropterus*), rosy threadfin bream (*Nemipterus furcosus*), brownstripe snapper (*Lutjanus vitta*), rankin cod (*Epinephelus multinotatus*), and spangled emperor (*Lethrinus nebulosus*).

Commercial fisheries landing demersal scalefish resources in the NCB include the Northern Demersal Scalefish Managed Fishery (NDSMF) in the Kimberley subregion, and the Pilbara Demersal Scalefish Fisheries (PDSF) in the Pilbara subregion (North Coast Demersal Figure 1). These fisheries are managed in accordance with the *Northern Demersal Scalefish Resource Harvest Strategy 2017-2021* (NDSR Harvest Strategy; DPIRD 2017).

The permitted methods in the NDSMF (Area 2 – offshore area) include handline, dropline and fish traps, but since 2002 it has essentially been a trap based fishery which uses gear time access and spatial zones as the primary management measures. The main species landed by this fishery in the Kimberley subregion are goldband snapper and red emperor. The inshore area of the

NDSMF (Area 1) permits line fishing only, between the high water mark and a line approximating the 30 m isobath.

The PDSF include the Pilbara Fish Trawl (Interim) Managed Fishery (PFTIMF), the Pilbara Trap Managed Fishery and the Pilbara Line Fishery. The PDSF collectively use a combination of limited entry, effort allocations (time), gear limits, plus spatial zones (including extensive trawl closures) as management measures. The main species landed by the fisheries in the Pilbara subregion are bluespotted emperor, red emperor and rankin cod.

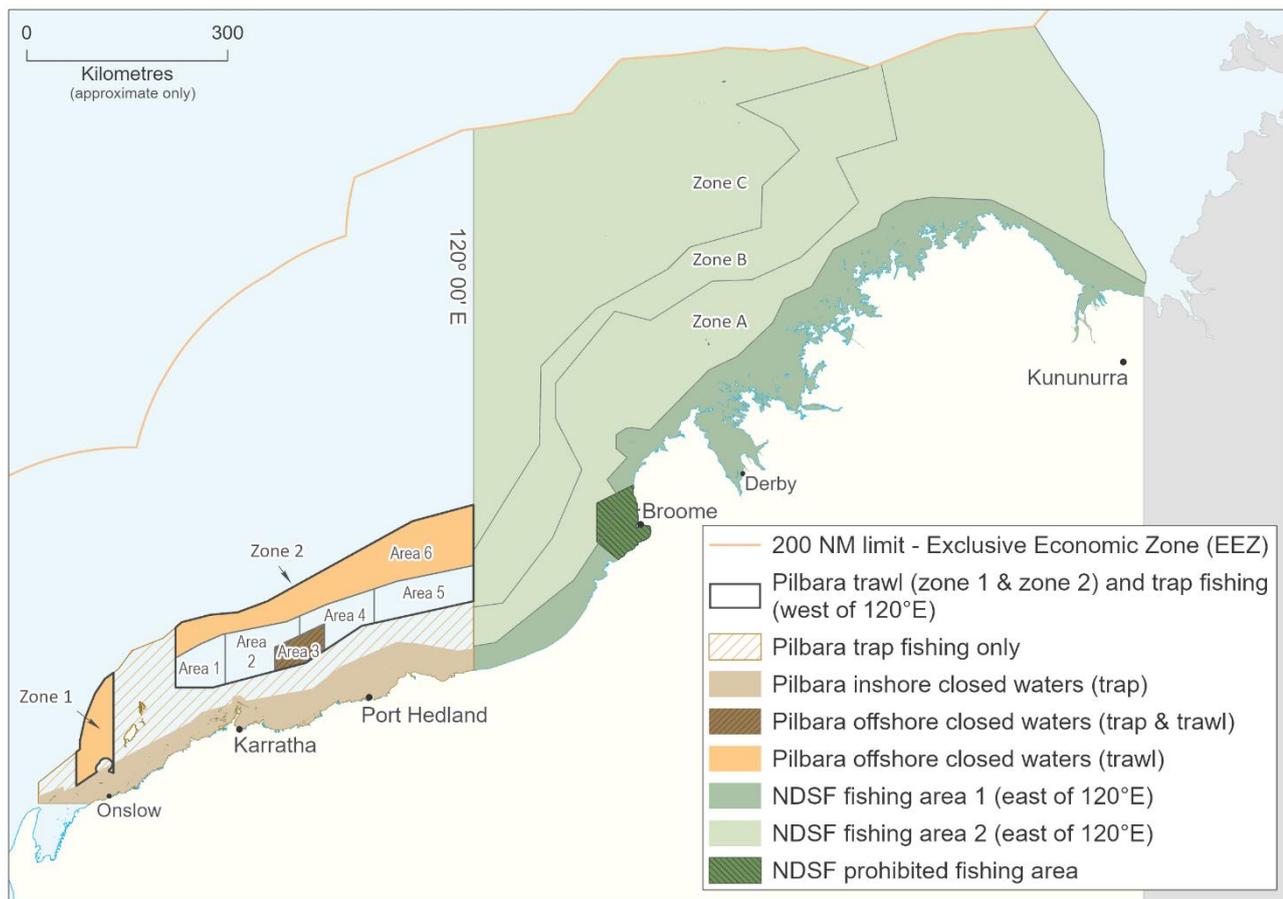
Recreational fishing activities in the NCB are mostly line-based fishing from private boats and charter vessels with effort concentrated around key population centres. The recreational fishery for demersal fish is managed through the use of input controls (e.g. recreational licences) and output controls (e.g. bag and/or boat limits, size limits). The recreational and charter sectors do not catch significant quantities of most demersal scalefish species targeted by the commercial fisheries.

Further details can be found in the RAR at https://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/resource_assessment/resource_assessment_report_013.pdf

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery: NDSF PDSF	Total Catch 2019: 1,507 t Total Catch 2019: 2,980 t	Acceptable Acceptable
Recreational fishery	Total Catch 2017/18: 63–88 t (boat-based only)	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
NDSMF Goldband snapper Red emperor	Medium Risk Biomass above threshold (B_{MSY}) Biomass around target ($1.33 B_{MSY}$)	Acceptable Acceptable
PDSF Red emperor Rankin cod Bluespotted emperor	Medium Risk Biomass above threshold (B_{MSY}) Biomass above target ($1.33 B_{MSY}$) Biomass above target ($1.33 B_{MSY}$)	Acceptable Acceptable Acceptable
Ecological		
Bycatch NDSMF PDSF	Negligible risk Low risk	Adequate
Listed Species NDSMF PDSF	Negligible-Low risk Low-Moderate risk	Adequate Adequate
Habitat NDSMF PDSF	Negligible risk Moderate risk	Adequate Adequate
Ecosystem NDSMF PDSF	Negligible risk Low risk	Adequate Adequate
Economic NDSMF (GVP \$10-20 m) PDSF (GVP \$10-20 m)	Medium risk Medium risk	Acceptable Acceptable
Social (low amenity) NDSMF PDSF	Low-Medium risk Low-Medium risk	Acceptable Acceptable
Governance NDSMF PDSF	Low risk Low risk	Acceptable Acceptable
External Drivers	Low risk	Acceptable

NORTH COAST BIOREGION



NORTH COAST DEMERSAL FIGURE 1.

Demersal scalefish fisheries of the North Coast Bioregion of Western Australia. In the Pilbara subregion: Areas 1 to 6 refer to the management regions in Zone 2 of the trawl fishery. Zone 1 has been closed to trawling since 1998. In the Kimberley subregion: Zones A, B and C lie in Area 2 of the NDSF.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

Kimberley

Since 2008, NDSMF annual catches have exceeded 1,000 t. The 2019 catch of 1,507 t is the largest reported catch across the whole fishery. The majority of the catch is landed from Zone B, with a catch of 1,313 t in 2019. The level of catch in Zone B is the highest reported since zoning was implemented in 2006. A breakdown of the landed weight by the major species in the NDSMF is reported in North Coast Demersal Table 1.

Pilbara

The PDSF annual catches from the domestic fish trawl, trap and line fisheries peaked at 3,600 t in 1996. In 2008, following declining catch rates and relatively high levels of fishing mortality for red emperor in the western areas of the PFTIMF, effort was reduced for the PFTIMF in these areas. In 2016, the PDSF annual catches exceeded 2,000 t for the first time since effort reductions in 2008. Of the total commercial catches of demersal scalefish in the Pilbara in 2019 (2,980 t), 72% (2,152 t) were landed by the trawl sector, with 23% (680 t) taken by the trap sector and 5% (148 t) taken by the line sector. A breakdown of the

landed weight by the major species in the PDSF is reported in North Coast Demersal Table 1.

Total annual trawl catches have reduced from an annual average of approximately 2,500 t during the period 1995-2004 to an annual average of 1,159 t from 2008-15, in response to the effort reductions imposed on the PFTIMF since 2008. The total demersal scalefish catch in the PFTIMF in 2019, despite having the same annual effort allocations as those imposed since 2008, exceeded the acceptable catch range (i.e. 940-1,416 t). These increasing catch rates (combined with fishing mortality spawning biomass estimates) suggest effort reductions since 2008 have resulted in increased fish abundance and stock rebuilding in the PFTIMF.

The total annual catch taken by the trap and line sectors have remained relatively consistent over the past decade, averaging 479 t and 108 t per year, respectively. The total catch of the trap fishery exceeded the acceptable catch range in 2019 (i.e. 241-537 t), and also exceeded the acceptable catch range for the line fishery (36-127 t).

The top 10 demersal species in the North Coast represented 79% of the boat-based recreational catch (kept by numbers) in 2017/18. The estimated boat-based recreational harvest range for the top 10 demersal species (or groupings) in the North Coast was higher at 75 t (95% CI 63–88 t) in 2017/18 compared with 40 t (95% CI 34–46 t) in 2015/16, but steady with 55 t (95% CI 46–65) in 2013/14 and 78 t (95% CI 69–87) in 2011/12 (Ryan *et al.* 2019).

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Kimberley (Sustainable-Adequate)

Due to the resource comprising a large number of species, indicator species have been selected from the suite of demersal scalefish (based on their inherent vulnerability, management importance and overall risk to sustainability) for assessing the status of the overall resource. The demersal indicator species for the Kimberley region are red emperor (*Lutjanus sebae*) and goldband snapper (*Pristipomoides multidens*). The annual commercial catches of indicator species from the NDSMF are depicted in North Coast Demersal Figure 2.

A 2018 assessment of the two indicator species in the Kimberley estimated the median relative spawning biomass of both the red emperor stock and the goldband snapper stock to be **around** threshold level (which corresponds to B_{MSY}).

Representative age structure samples of each indicator species in the Kimberley region are scheduled to be collected again in late 2021/2022, and will be processed and used to update the stock assessments. The life history parameters for these species are also currently being reviewed and updated to better inform the assessment model.

The above evidence indicates that the current biomass of these stocks is unlikely to be depleted, recruitment is unlikely to be impaired, and current levels of fishing mortality (catch) are unlikely to cause the stock to become recruitment impaired.

On the basis of the evidence provided above, the biological stocks are classified as **sustainable-adequate**.

Pilbara (Sustainable-Adequate)

Due to the resource comprising a large number of species, indicator species have been selected from the suite of demersal scalefish (based on their inherent vulnerability and overall risk to sustainability) for assessing the status of the overall resource. The three demersal indicator species for the Pilbara region are red emperor (*Lutjanus sebae*), rankin cod (*Epinephelus multinotatus*), and bluespotted emperor (*Lethrinus punctulatus*). The annual commercial catches of these indicator species from the PDSF are depicted in North Coast Demersal Figure 2. The status of ruby snapper (*Etelis* sp) is also used as an indicator species for the offshore demersal scalefish resources targeted by the Pilbara Line Fishery. The stock status of the indicator species is assessed periodically (~ every 5 years) using a weight-of-evidence approach that considers all available information as described above.

A 2016 assessment of the three indicator species in the Pilbara estimated the spawning biomass of red emperor stock to be currently **above** the threshold level (which corresponds to B_{MSY}). The stocks of rankin cod, bluespotted emperor and ruby snapper are **well above** the target spawning biomass levels.

Representative age structure samples of indicator species in the Pilbara region collected in 2015 and 2019 will be processed and used to update the stock assessments in 2020/21. The life history parameters for these species are also currently being reviewed and updated to better inform the assessment model.

The above evidence indicates that the biomass of these stocks is unlikely to be depleted, recruitment is unlikely to be impaired, and current levels of fishing mortality (catch) are unlikely to cause the stock to become recruitment impaired.

On the basis of the evidence provided above, the biological stocks are classified as **sustainable-adequate**.

NORTH COAST DEMERSAL TABLE 1.

Summary of the commercial catches and the relative contribution (% composition of the total NCB demersal catches of each species) of each of the major species taken within the Pilbara and Kimberley subregions of the NCB in 2019.

Species	Pilbara (PDSF) catch		Kimberley (NDSMF) catch		Total catch tonnes
	tonnes	% total	tonnes	% total	
Goldband snapper (all <i>Pristipomoides</i> sp.)	231.1	28	607.7	72	838.8
Bluespotted emperor	430.9	89	54.2	11	485.1
Red emperor	232.5	55	192.5	45	425.0
Saddletail snapper	118.2	32	250.7	68	368.9
Crimson snapper	210.3	85	36.4	15	246.7
Rankin cod	118.3	65	62.9	35	181.2
Brownstripe snapper	196.1	96	8.9	4	205.0
Rosy threadfin bream	229.4	99.9	0.2	0.1	229.6
Spangled emperor	53	66	26.8	34	79.8
Moses snapper	45.5	83	9.1	17	54.6
Frypan snapper	63.5	99.9	<0.1	0.1	63.5
Barcheek coral trout	17.2	71	7.0	29	24.2
Ruby snapper	1.1	99.9	<0.1	0.1	1.1
Longnose emperor	6.5	58	4.8	42	11.3
Other demersal scalefish	1026.6	81	245.7	19	1272.3
Total all demersal scalefish	2980.1	66	1,507.0	34	4487.1

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS**Kimberley Trap / Pilbara Trap****Bycatch**

There is a limited quantity of non-retained bycatch in these fisheries. The most common bycatch species is the starry triggerfish (*Abalistes stellaris*), but the numbers taken are considered to pose a **negligible** risk to the sustainability of this species.

Protected species

Using trap gear in continental shelf regions is very unlikely to interact with listed species. Previous video observations indicate that the potato cod (*Epinephelus tukula*), a protected species, can be present in high numbers at discrete locations within the fishery. However, potato cod rarely enter traps because most individuals encountered are large in size and girth which limits their capacity to pass through the entrance funnel into the traps. One potato cod was captured in 2019, and was returned alive.

The Kimberley and Pilbara trap fisheries regularly capture sea snakes. In 2019, the Kimberley trap fishery reported ~63 sea snakes. Sea snakes are returned to the water alive.

Overall, the level of interactions with listed species is considered a **negligible** risk to their populations.

Pilbara Fish Trawl**Bycatch**

Species of teleosts caught as bycatch by the trawl fishery are typically small bodied and/or short lived. Such species are considered less vulnerable compared to longer-lived teleost species based on their population production potential. Thus, the indicator species used in the weight-of-evidence stock assessments for the Pilbara demersal scalefish resources are considered to provide an adequate indication for similar or less vulnerable retained and bycatch species. While a number of species that are caught are not retained during demersal fishing activities (including inedible species and undersized marketable species) may not all survive, this still represents a minor impact to their stocks and therefore a **low** risk.

Protected species

The use of Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs) has been mandatory in the PFTIMF since 2006. BRDs are highly effective in reducing reptile (turtles and sea snakes) bycatch. Bottlenose dolphin interactions with BRDs are rare (5.2 per 1,000 trawls) despite high levels of attendance and depredation during trawling. Loss of targeted teleosts through the BRD hatch is also rare (1.3% of fish during day trawls). Based on high levels of

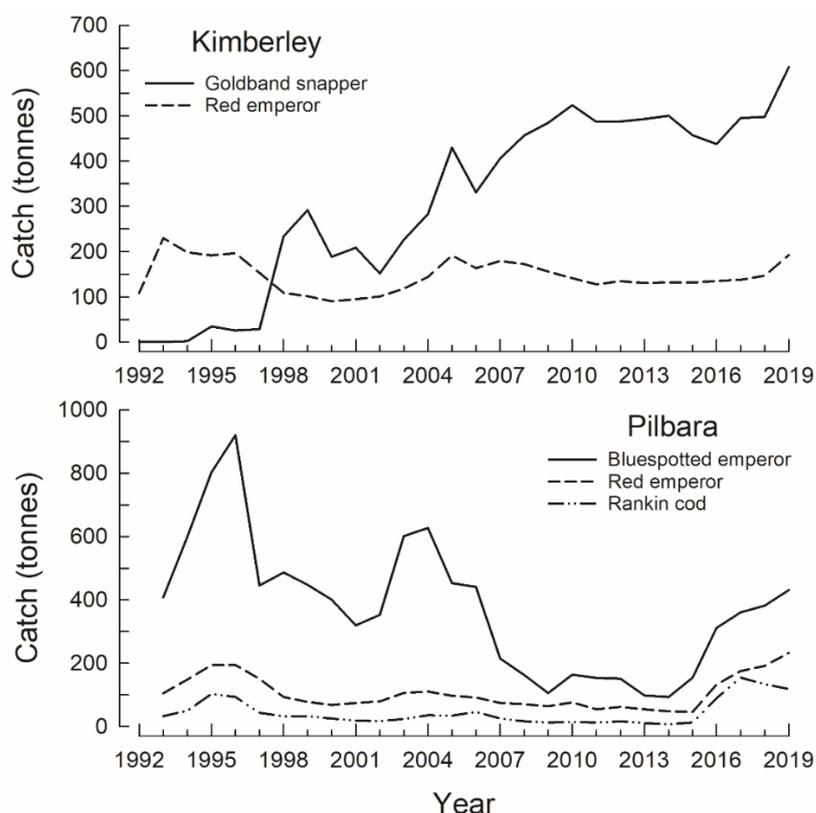
subsurface observer coverage in 2012 (60% of day trawls or 56% of day trawl hours), the subsurface expulsion of megafauna in poor condition was negligible (see Wakefield *et al.* 2014; Wakefield *et al.* 2016). Therefore, electronic monitoring of above deck records accurately reflects megafauna bycatch levels. The level of interactions with listed species is therefore considered **low-moderate** risk to their populations. The reported bycatch of listed species in the PFTIMF in 2019 is listed in North Coast Demersal Table 2.

The PFTIMF was re-accredited a Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) under the Commonwealth of Australia's *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1991* (EPBC) for three years from the end of 2018. The accreditation included specific conditions around the observing, reporting and mitigation of endangered, threatened and protected species interactions.

NORTH COAST DEMERSAL TABLE 2.

Reported bycatch of listed species by skippers in the PFTIMF in 2019. ^awhere the condition was not reported the status of the animal was considered to be unknown; ^bwhere the species of sawfish was not reported the animal was considered to be unknown sawfish.

Species	Number released Alive	Number deceased	Number unknown ^a	Total Reported
Bottlenose dolphins	2	11	0	13
Pipefish	1	32	0	33
Green sawfish	14	8	0	22
Narrow sawfish	3	2	0	5
Unknown sawfish ^b	0	1	0	1
Seahorses	5	5	0	10
Sea-snakes	46	12	0	58
Turtles	3	0	0	3



NORTH COAST DEMERSAL FIGURE 2.

Annual commercial catches of indicator species from the Kimberley and Pilbara demersal scalefish fisheries from 1993 to 2019.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Kimberley Trap / Pilbara Trap and Line

Habitat

As a result of the gear design, these fisheries have little impact on the habitat overall, although there may be some rare interactions with coral habitats which are not common in areas where these fisheries operate. Trap fishing is the main fishing method used in the NDSMF for demersal species, which has little physical impact on the benthic environment and hence **negligible** risk to benthic habitats.

Ecosystem

Hall and Wise (2011) demonstrated that there has been no reduction in either mean trophic level or mean maximum length in the finfish catches recorded within the Kimberley (i.e. no fishing down of the food web) over the past 30 years. The need to maintain relatively high levels of biomass for the species caught in this fishery to meet stock recruitment requirements results in a **negligible** risk to the overall ecosystem from the fishery.

Pilbara Fish Trawl

Habitat

The PFTIMF is restricted to less than ~2% of the North West Shelf (NWS; Amoroso et al. 2018). Area 3 and the waters inside the 50 m isobath are permanently closed to fish trawling, Zone 1 is closed to fish trawling, and Area 6 has had no fish trawling since 1998.

Within the areas actually trawled, monitoring has indicated that approximately 10% of the sessile benthic fauna (e.g. sponges) are detached per year. Considering effort for the trawl fishery is at historically low levels and the effective area trawled within the managed areas has been greatly reduced, it is likely that the trawl fishery imposes a **moderate** risk to the small amount of habitat in the Areas open to trawling (~2% of NWS) but a **negligible** risk to the total habitat in the North West Shelf.

Ecosystem

The PFTIMF operates with standard stern trawling gear (single net with extension sweeps) within an area previously trawled by foreign vessels. Previous research by CSIRO has suggested that the extensive Taiwanese Pair Trawl Fishery caused a significant decrease in the biomass of finfish on the North West Shelf, and a change in species composition towards smaller (shorter lived) species. The PFTIMF, which developed when the fish stocks had begun to recover, uses a much larger mesh size and much lighter ground gear, and operates at lower exploitation rates and only in restricted parts of the continental shelf. At the present levels of catch and effort by the fish

trawl, fish trap, and line fisheries, the broader effect on the trophic levels and community structure of the North West Shelf is considered to be at an acceptable level. Hall and Wise (2011) demonstrated that there has been no reduction in either mean trophic level or mean maximum length in the finfish catches recorded within the Pilbara (i.e. no fishing down of the food web) over the past 30 years and thus represents a **low** risk to the ecosystem.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

Kimberley: Six vessels fished in the 2019 fishing season, and at least 20 people (3-4 crew per vessel) were directly employed in the NDSMF. Approximately half the fish from this fishery are supplied to Perth metropolitan markets, while the other half is supplied to east coast metropolitan markets. There is currently a **medium level of** risk to these values.

Pilbara: It is estimated that ~10 fishers on 2 vessels were directly employed during 2019 in the trawl sector, and 8 fishers on 3 vessels in the trap sector, and at least ~15 fishers on 5 vessels in the line sector. Overall, at least ~33 people (e.g. 3-4 crew per vessel) were directly employed in the PDSF. There is currently a **medium level of** risk to these values.

Recreational fishing attracts many visitors to the North Coast Bioregion, particularly in inshore areas over the winter dry season (April – October). This provides employment through local charter fishing services and fishing tackle outlets around key population centres, as well as more remote charter operations offering wilderness fishing experiences in the north Kimberley region, including offshore locations such as the Rowley Shoals.

The annual estimated boat-based recreational fishing effort in the North Coast Bioregion was steady in 2017/18 (32,964 boat days, SE=2,574) compared with 2015/16 (31,375 boat days, SE=2,414), but lower than 2013/14 (45,604, SE=3,603) and 2011/12 (47,721, SE=3,778) (Ryan *et al.* 2019).

The North Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource provides a high social amenity to recreational fishing and diving and to consumers via commercial fish supply to markets and restaurants. There is currently a **low level of** risk to these values.

Economic

Kimberley: The NDSMF principally targets the higher-value species such as the goldband snapper and red emperor resulting in an economic value of \$10-20 million (Level 4). The social amenity value is that this is an important asset locally. There is currently a **medium** risk to this level of return.

Pilbara: Overall, the estimated economic value of the PDSF is \$10-20 million (Level 4). The fish trawl demersal scalefish catch is dominated by lower-valued species such as bluespotted emperor and threadfin bream. However, its value is estimated to be \$5-10 million (Level 3). For social amenity some of the species may be caught recreationally and/or there is some specific interest in the resource by the broader community. The fish trap and line catches are dominated by valuable species such as red emperor and goldband snapper. The demersal scalefish catch from these sectors was estimated to have an economic value of \$1-5 million (Level 2) and they also have social amenity value. There is currently a **medium** risk to this level of return. Social amenity is low because there is little recreational fishing for these offshore species and no specific broader community interests.

Recreational fishers make a significant contribution to Western Australia's economy, and support economic activity in many regional towns on the coast and near inland fishing spots. These resources contribute in part to the \$2.4 billion attributed to the value of recreational fishing to the State's economy each year.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The NDSR Harvest Strategy (DPIRD 2017) focuses on the exploitation and stock status of the indicator species in the Kimberley and Pilbara demersal scalefish fisheries. These indicator species include red emperor and goldband snapper in the Kimberley, and red emperor, bluespotted emperor, and rankin cod in the Pilbara. Periodic assessments of selected non-indicator species are also occasionally undertaken to validate the indicator species approach and ensure that the status of other retained species remains at acceptable levels. The assessment and harvest strategies of these species are primarily based on estimates of spawning stock biomass (or an appropriate proxy for biomass), relative to internationally accepted target, threshold and limit reference levels.

The commercial sectors are managed primarily through input controls in the form of a total allowable effort (TAE) allocation system via individually transferable effort (ITE) allocations. The recreational and charter sector are primarily

managed using size limits for some species, and daily bag and possession limits. Recreational fishers operating from a boat are required to have a current Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence (RFBL). Charter operators are required to have a Fishing Tour Operators Licence. Allowable Catch Tolerance Levels (Acceptable)

Kimberley

For the 2019 calendar year, the total allowable effort was set at 986 standard fishing days in Zone B of the fishery, and 616 and 1,100 standard fishing days in Zone A and C of the fishery, respectively. At these levels of total effort and at recent catch rates, the total catch of the fishery is expected to be in the range of 903–1,332 t. The total 2019 catches were above the **acceptable** catch range and this has triggered a review of likely risks to sustainability.

Pilbara

The total catch of the trawl fishery slightly exceeded the acceptable catch range in 2018 despite having the same (reduced) annual effort allocations as those imposed since 2008. This increased catch represents an increase in stock abundance following nine years of reduced effort in the western trawl managed areas. The total catch in 2018 of the trap fishery also slightly exceeded the **acceptable** catch range, and that of the line fishery was within the acceptable catch range.

Compliance

The primary management measures of gear time usage and spatial zone access for NCB trap and trawl fisheries are monitored and enforced using a satellite-based vessel monitoring system (VMS). The annual fishing effort capacity limits the amount of effort available in the fishery to achieve the notional target total allowable catch. Additional management measures include size limits, and limits on the numbers of fish that can be taken by individual recreational fishers and by recreational fishers fishing from boats.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with licensees on operational issues. Industry Management Meetings are convened by the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who are also responsible for statutory management plan consultation under a Service Level Agreement with the Department. Consultation processes for the recreational fishing sector are facilitated by Recfishwest under a Service Level Agreement, although the Department undertakes direct consultation with the community on specific issues.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives/Outlook Status

Kimberley

The Northern Demersal Scalefish Fishery Operators Guide to the Management Arrangements 2016 (DoF 2016) was published in July 2016, and is a plain English guide to the management arrangements, designed to assist licence holders.

Pilbara

In 2016/17, the Department collaborated with permit holders in the Pilbara Fish Trawl Interim Managed Fishery to address the conditions of the re-accredited Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) approval; this included a logbook validation program, through electronic monitoring.

In 2018/19, the Department will be working with the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy and Pilbara Trap licence holders to complete an assessment of the Pilbara Trap Fishery under the EPBC for export approval to secure a new WTO.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

The Commonwealth's North-west Marine Parks Network came into effect on 1 July 2018 and introduced marine reserves, including sanctuary zones which prohibit fishing. This will restrict access to fishing in parts of the NCB to all sectors, i.e. commercial, recreational and charter.

Under the Offshore Constitutional Settlement, commercial trawl vessels licensed by the Commonwealth may operate in waters outside of a line that represents the 200 m isobath as part of the North West Slope Trawl Fishery (NWSTF).

Climate change and climate variability has the potential to impact fish stocks in a range of ways including influencing their geographic distribution (e.g. latitudinal shifts in distribution). However, it is unclear how climate change may affect the sustainability risks to North Coast demersal fisheries.

Low risk.

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PEARL OYSTER MANAGED FISHERY RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

A. Hart, D. Murphy, A. Steele

OVERVIEW

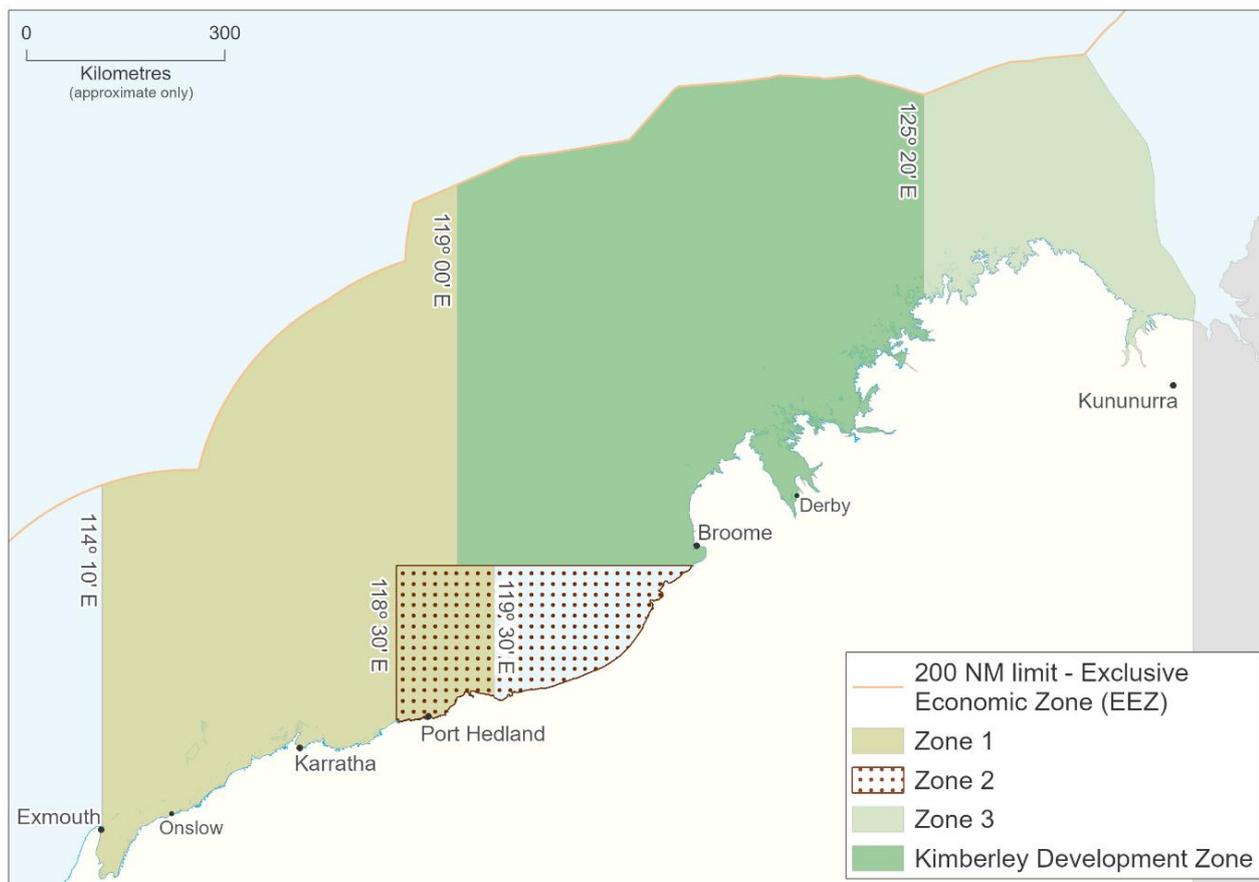
The Western Australian pearl oyster fishery (fishery) is the only remaining significant wild-stock fishery for pearl oysters in the world. It is a quota-based dive fishery, operating in shallow coastal waters along the north coast bioregion and targets the silver lipped pearl oyster (*Pinctada maxima*). The fishery is currently managed under the *Pearling Act 1990* and uses output controls in the form of a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) divided up into individually transferable quotas (ITQs). Fishing for *P. maxima* is one component of the pearling industry's activities, along with seeding and grow-out of pearl oysters to produce pearls.

This fishery has been accredited for export under the EPBC Act for a period of ten years (re-assessment in 2025) and was certified under the MSC certification process in 2017. Further information can be sourced from Hart *et al.* (2016).



SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery	Total catch 2019: 611,816 shells	Acceptable
Recreational fishery	NA	NA
EBFM		
Assessment Indicator		
Silver lipped pearl oyster (<i>Pinctada maxima</i>)	Performance indicator above Target	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Economic (Level 4: GVP \$64 M)	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
Social	Low Risk	Acceptable
Governance	MSC certification.	Acceptable
External Drivers	Moderate Risk	Acceptable



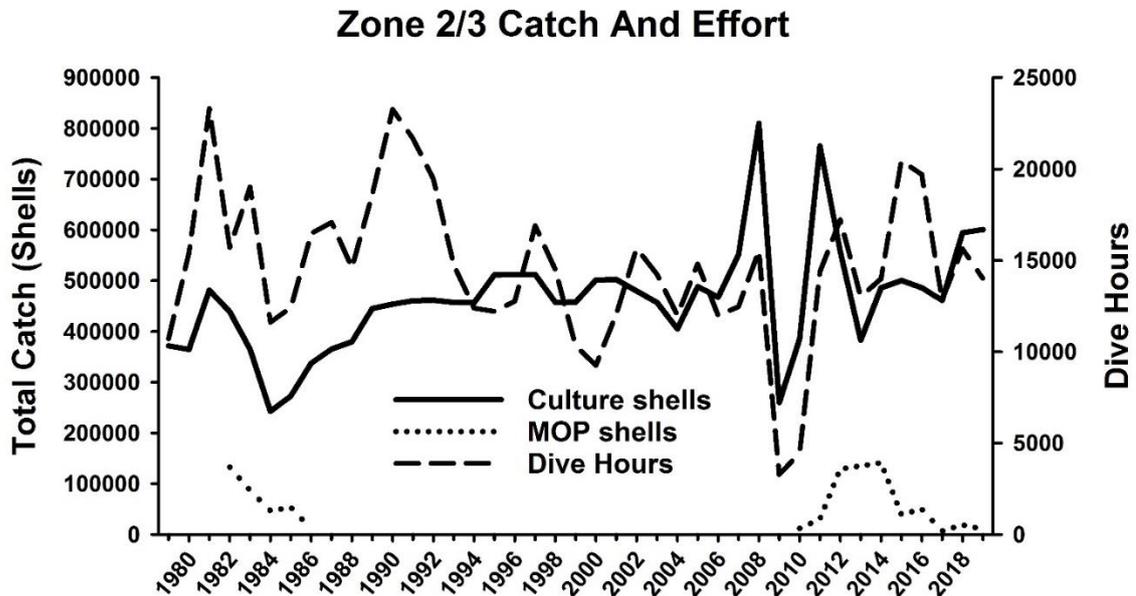
PEARL FIGURE 1.

Map showing boundaries of the Pearl Oyster Managed Fishery and the Kimberley Development Zone.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

In 2019, catch was taken in Zone 2 only with no fishing in Zones 1 or 3. The number of wild-caught pearl oysters was 611,816 comprising of 600,838 culture shells and 10,978 Mother of Pearl (MOP) shells (oysters ≥ 175 mm) (Pearl Figure 2). Total effort was 14,022 dive hours (Pearl Figure 2), a

decrease of 10% from the 2018 effort of 15,637 hours. Of this total effort, 13,268 hours was focused on culture shell fishing, and the remaining 754 hours was applied to MOP fishing. No fishing has occurred in Zone 1 from 2017 to 2019 with only 4,594 culture shells taken in 2016.



PEARL FIGURE 2:

Total pearl shell catch (all areas) and effort (Zone 2/3). 'Culture shells' are pearl oysters ≥ 100 and < 175 mm shell length, 'MOP shells' are pearl oysters ≥ 175 mm.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Zone 1 *Pinctada maxima* (Sustainable - Adequate)

Based on the information and analyses available, there is currently a **Low** risk to pearl oysters in Zone 1. The low risk reflects the minimal levels of fishing mortality. All the lines of evidence are consistent with a low level of risk, hence the overall weight of evidence assessment indicates the status of the Zone 1 pearl oyster stock is adequate and that current management settings are maintaining risk at acceptable (low) levels.

Zone 2 *Pinctada maxima* (Sustainable - Adequate)

Based on the information and analyses available, there is currently a **Medium** risk to pearl oysters in Zone 2. The medium risk reflects the controlled levels of fishing mortality. Current lines of evidence show an increasing abundance due to higher than average recruitment, catch rates above the threshold level, and size-structure of harvested oysters having returned to the long

term average. Overall, the weight of evidence assessment indicates the status of the Zone 2 pearl oyster stock is adequate and that current management settings are maintaining risk at acceptable (medium) levels

Zone 3 *Pinctada maxima* (Sustainable - Adequate)

Based on the information and analyses available, there is currently a **Low** risk to pearl oysters in Zone 3. The low risk reflects the minimal levels of fishing mortality. All the lines of evidence are consistent with a low level of risk, hence the overall weight of evidence assessment indicates the status of the Zone 3 pearl oyster stock is adequate and that current management settings are maintaining risk at acceptable (low) levels.

BYCATCH and PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

Divers have the ability to target pearl oysters. Pearl oysters brought to the vessel after hand collection are young and have relatively little epiphytic growth (fouling organisms). A small

NORTH COAST BIOREGION

number of over-sized or under-sized pearl oysters are returned to the substrate. Therefore bycatch impact imposes a **negligible** risk.

Protected species

There is no interaction between the pearl oyster fishing operation and protected species (Hart *et al.*, 2016).

HABITAT and ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

The fishery removes only a small proportion of the biomass of pearl oysters on the fishing grounds and is considered to have negligible impact on the food chain in the fishing area. Pearl divers have minimal contact with the habitat during fishing operations. The main habitat contact is by pearl oysters held in mesh panels on holding sites following capture. However, these sites cover a very small proportion of the habitat and the activity concerned is unlikely to cause any lasting effect.

Similarly, the pearl farming operation, which uses longline systems in areas of high tidal flow to culture pearls, has limited impact on the environment. Physical effects are limited to static anchoring systems in typically sand/mud habitats. Environmental management research has demonstrated that pearl farming has **negligible** impacts on habitat and environment.

Ecosystem

Based on the information available, there is currently a **negligible** risk to the ecosystems from pearling operations.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

Pearl oyster fishing vessels operate from the Lacepede Islands north of Broome to Exmouth Gulf in the south. The number of vessels in the fishing fleet has been slowly reducing from 16 in 1997 (overall), mostly due to increased fleet efficiency and increased reliance on hatchery-produced pearl oysters. The number of vessels fishing in 2019 was five. Most vessels presently operate 10 – 14 crew for the fishing of pearl oysters between March and August each year. These vessels also support pearl oyster operations and a number of other pearl oyster farm functions throughout the year.

Personnel employed in the pearling industry and current full-time FTEs is estimated around 300.

Low risk.

Economic

A precise estimate of the total industry value is difficult to achieve, owing to the variable time lags that occur between harvesting and sale to offshore buyers, and the costs incurred in marketing before sales take place. Based on information provided by the industry, the value of cultured pearls and by-products in 2019 was considered to be approximately \$63.5 million, which follows a similar trend to the value reported over the past five years.

Moderate risk.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels (Acceptable)

The overall TAC for the fishery for 2019 was 749,610 pearl oysters. This was comprised of a Zone 1 TAC of 54,970 pearl oysters and a Zone 2/3 TAC of 694,640 pearl oysters. The Zone 2/3 TAC is further broken down into an industry maximum harvest level of no more than 639,800 pearl oysters between 100 – 175mm and 54,840 MOP oysters.

Catch tolerance levels used in 2019 are for the Zone 2/3 “culture” fishery only.

TAC (646,000 “culture pearl oysters” in Zone 2/3 in 2019) to be caught in 14,071-20,551 dive hours.

Commercial catch (pearl oysters) for season 2019: 611,816 oysters at 14,022 dive hours.

Both the catch and effort levels were acceptable.

Harvest Strategy (Formal)

The harvest strategy for *P. maxima* is a constant exploitation approach, operationalised through an annual TAC, divided into ITQs. The TAC is set in proportion to overall stock abundance. Harvest control rules determine the TAC according to the relation of predicted catch rates in comparison to target, threshold, and limit reference levels (DoF, 2016).

The control rules in place ensure that the catch is reduced when predicted recruitment is low. This is in order to provide increased protection to the stock, but also allows the catch to be raised in years when predicted abundance is high.

Compliance

The pearling industry is highly regulated by the Department. Access to the wildstock pearl oysters is limited to holders of the relevant pearling (wildstock) licence and attached quota.

Companies who produce hatchery-reared pearl oysters must hold the appropriate hatchery licence(s); if they intend on seeding these pearl

oysters they must also hold a pearling (seeding) licence with appropriate hatchery quota.

Seeded pearl oysters, whether from the wild or hatchery-reared, must be held on a pearl oyster farm lease. Applications for a pearl oyster farm lease are reviewed and approval determined by the Department. The total area a company can hold is linked to the pearl oyster quota and/or stock holding held by that company.

Health certification and transport approvals also apply for certain activities within the fishery.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with the Pearl Producers Association (PPA) and licensees on operational issues. Formal licence holder engagement is convened by the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC) under a Service Level Agreement with the Department. The stock assessment and sustainable harvest levels are discussed by the Stock Assessment Working Group (SAWG) and with licence holders, the PPA and WAFIC at the Annual Management Meeting (AMM) each year. SAWG advice, a summary of discussions at the AMM and a PPA letter are provided to the Director General when determining the annual TAC for the pearl oyster fishery.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

A new State Act of Parliament to ensure the sustainability and management of all WA's aquatic biological resources is currently being considered by Parliament. The *Aquatic Resource Management Act 2019* will replace both the *Fish Resources Management 1994* and the *Pearling Act 1990*. The Department is reviewing the current legislative framework ahead of the introduction of the new Act to transition the pearl oyster fishery and activities associated with pearl culture.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

External influences include other activities and factors that occur within the pearl oyster fishery that may or may not impact on the productivity and sustainability of fisheries resources and their ecosystems. The main external influences included here are catch from other fisheries, environmental factors (i.e. cyclones and climate variation), market influences, tourism, liquid natural gas (LNG) exploration, disease and introduced species. Pearl oysters were ranked as at moderate-high risk to climate change effects due to environmental factors affecting the abundance of piggyback spat settlement.

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SEA CUCUMBER RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020



A. Hart, D. Murphy, and A. Steele

OVERVIEW

The Western Australian Sea Cucumber fishery is a commercial only fishery, with animals caught principally by diving, and a smaller amount by wading. It targets two main species: sandfish (*Holothuria scabra*) and redfish (*Actinopyga echinites*). Fishing occurs in the northern half of the State from Exmouth Gulf to the Northern

Territory border and is managed under Ministerial Exemptions. The WA Sea Cucumber Fishery (WASCF) is subject to input controls including limited entry, maximum number of divers, spatial closures, and gear restrictions. The Pilbara area of this fishery has achieved Marine Stewardship Council certification.

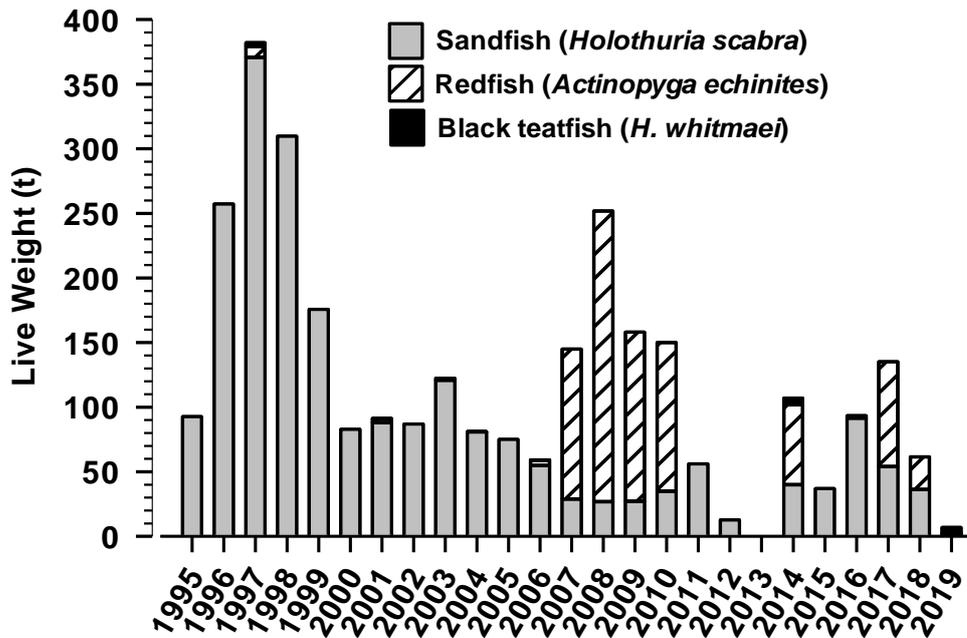
SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery	Total Catch 2019: 6.9 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery	Total Catch 2019: NA	
EBFM		
Assessment Indicator		
Sandfish Catch (Kimberley): 0-100 t	0 t	Adequate
Sandfish Catch (Pilbara): 0-80 t	2.1 t	Adequate
Redfish Catch (Pilbara): 0-150 t	4.8 t	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Low Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Economic (Level 1 GVP <\$1 million)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Social (low amenity)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Stable	Acceptable
External Drivers	Medium Risk	Acceptable

LANDINGS

In 2019, both species were targeted, with a total catch of 6.9 t (Sea Cucumber Figure 1). This catch comprised 2.1 t of sandfish (*H. scabra*) and 4.8 t of deepwater redfish (*A. echinites*). This was lower than the 2018 total of 61 t (sandfish - 36 t;

deepwater redfish – 25 t). The industry has adopted a rotational fishing strategy for both sandfish and redfish with limited catch taken for either species in 2012 and 2013, and no fishing for sandfish in the Kimberley in 2018 and 2019.



SEA CUCUMBER FIGURE 1:

Annual total retained catches (tonnes) in the Western Australian Sea Cucumber Fishery (WASCF) between 1995 and 2019.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Kimberley Sandfish (Sustainable - Adequate)

Based on the information and analyses available, the current risk level for Kimberley sandfish was estimated to be MEDIUM. This is consistent with previous assessments of the fishery. Therefore, the overall Weight of Evidence assessment indicates the status of the Kimberley sandfish stock is adequate and that current management settings are maintaining risk at acceptable (medium) levels.

Pilbara Sandfish (Sustainable - Adequate)

Based on the information and analyses available, the current risk level for Pilbara sandfish was estimated to be LOW. Therefore, the overall Weight of Evidence assessment indicates the status of the Pilbara sandfish stock is adequate and that current management settings are maintaining risk at low levels.

Pilbara Redfish (Sustainable - Adequate)

Based on the information and analyses available, the current risk level for Pilbara redfish was estimated to be LOW. This is consistent with previous assessments of the fishery. Therefore, the overall Weight of Evidence assessment indicates the status of the Pilbara redfish stock is adequate and that current management settings are maintaining risk at acceptable levels.

BYCATCH and PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Given the hand only method of fishing no bycatch is taken by the fishery and there are no known protected species interactions.

Negligible risk.

HABITAT and ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

Divers collect sea cucumber as they drift over the bottom of the seabed; there is minimal impact on the habitat as divers are highly selective in their fishing effort and no fishing gear or lines contact the seabed.

Negligible risk

Ecosystem

This fishery harvests only a small amount of sandfish and redfish per annum. The effect from this harvesting on the rest of the ecosystem, given that the catch is spread over a wide region, would be insignificant. Due to the toxins present in their body tissues, it is highly unlikely they are a major diet for higher-order predators.

Negligible risk.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social effects

Generally, 4 to 6 crew are employed on a vessel, comprising a master, deckhand and divers. Additional individuals are employed for the processing of the product. These activities are mostly located in the Northern Territory and Victoria where the fishing fleet is based.

Low risk.

Economic

The estimated annual value for 2019 was \$29,325 based on a total live weight of 6.9 tonnes and \$4.25 per kg. This is only a beach-price value and the processing sector adds significant value.

Low risk.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Annual Catch Tolerance Range (Acceptable)

Commercial: Sandfish(Kimberly): 0-100 t; Sandfish(Pilbara): 0-80 t; Redfish(Pilbara): 0-150 t

The catch of sea cucumber was within the tolerance ranges for all species. This indicates the status of sea cucumber stocks is adequate and that current management settings are maintaining risk at acceptable levels.

Harvest Strategy

The Western Australian Sea Cucumber fishery is managed under a formal harvest strategy, with specified performance indicators, threshold levels, and control rules. Currently all stocks are above the target reference point.

Compliance

There are no current issues.

Consultation

Industry Management Meetings are convened by the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), under a Service Level Agreement with the Department.

Management Initiatives (MSC Assessment)

The WA Sea Cucumber Fishery has been formally assessed against Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) sustainability standards. Sea cucumber stocks in the Pilbara Unit of Certification have passed the assessment, with the Kimberley region currently under review.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

The remoteness of the currently fished stock and the large tidal ranges where it occurs are natural barriers to uncontrolled expansion of fishing. Marine park planning has to date restricted this fishery from general use zones of some MPAs. Currently, lack of experienced fishers and suitable vessels is restricting catch to low levels.

Climate change could have positive or negative impacts on sea cucumber populations. It has been reported that higher sea temperatures will have a positive effect (i.e. higher production and yields) given the expected faster growth rates leading to larger sizes and increased fecundity. Sea cucumber were ranked as a **medium** risk to climate change effects.

NORTH COAST CRAB RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

D. Johnston, D. Harris and S. Blazeski



OVERVIEW

Blue swimmer crabs are targeted by the Pilbara Crab Managed Fishery (PCMF) using hourglass traps, primarily within inshore waters around Nickol Bay (North Coast Crab Figure 1). Recreational fishers for this species use drop nets or scoop nets, with diving for crabs becoming increasingly popular.

Mud crabs are harvested by the Kimberley Crab Managed Fishery (KCMF) using crab traps between Broome and Cambridge Gulf (North Coast Crab Figure 2). There is an allocation of 1200 units (currently equivalent to 600 traps) to holders of a Managed Fishery Licence under the *Kimberley Crab Managed Fishery Management Plan 2018*. The Minister for Fisheries has also provided an equivalent allocation of 600 traps for commercial purposes to allow for Aboriginal economic development. This is provided through the granting of non-transferable Instruments of Exemption under the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994* to Aboriginal groups.

These Exemption holders use crab traps and drop nets in waters adjacent to their native title lands. There is also a small, but socially important, recreational fishery for mud crabs in the North Coast Bioregion.

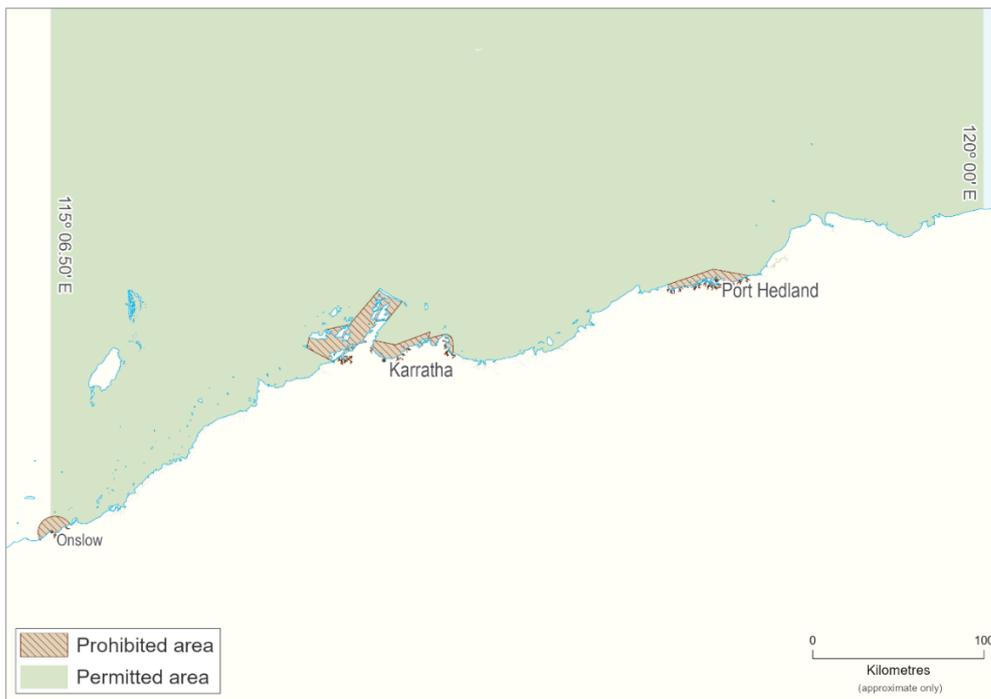
Management arrangements for commercial and recreational crab fisheries in the North Coast include minimum size limits and protection of breeding females, along with effort controls and spatial and temporal closures for the commercial fishery.

For more detailed descriptions of blue swimmer crab and mud crab biology and the North Coast crab fisheries see the Resource Assessment Report (Johnston et al., 2020) (http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/research_reports/frr306.pdf).

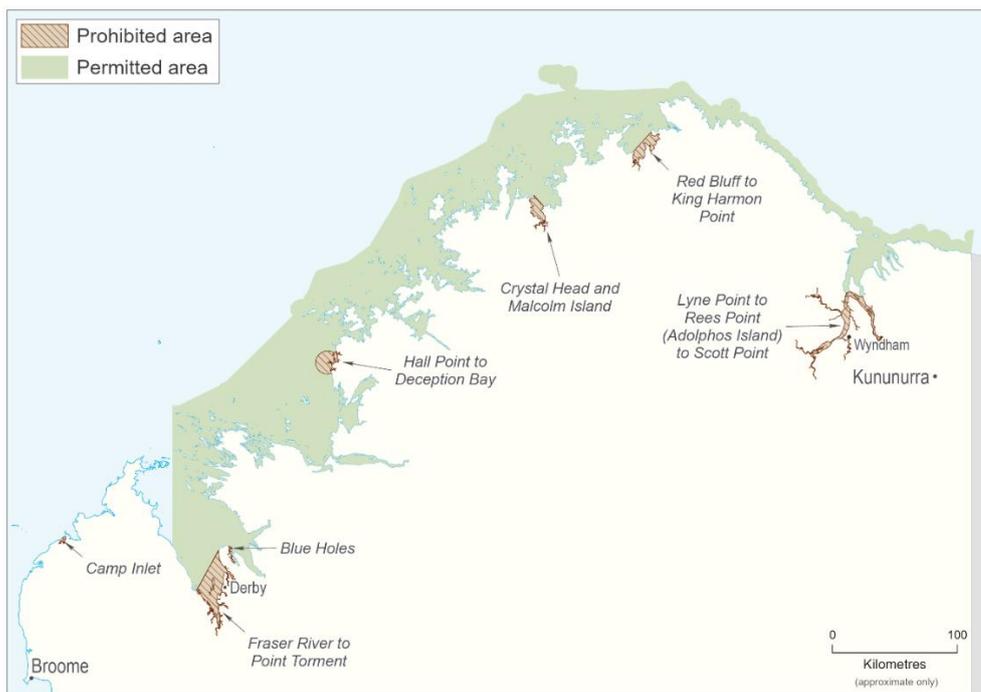
SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery	Total Catch 2019 Blue swimmer crab: 19.3 t Mud crab: 7.4 t	Acceptable Acceptable
Recreational fishery	Total Catch 2017/18 (boat-based only) Blue swimmer crab: 1–2 t Mud crab: 2–3 t	Acceptable Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Pilbara Blue Swimmer Crab	Catch rate: Above threshold	Adequate
Kimberley Mud Crab	Catch rate: Below threshold, above limit	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Low Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Low Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP <\$1 m)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Social (high amenity)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Low Risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	Moderate Risk	Acceptable

NORTH COAST BIOREGION



NORTH COAST CRAB FIGURE 1.
Map showing the boundaries of the Pilbara Managed Crab Fishery.



NORTH COAST CRAB FIGURE 2.
Map showing the boundaries of the Kimberley Crab Managed Fishery.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

Commercial Sector

The total commercial catch of blue swimmer crabs and mud crabs in the North Coast Bioregion for 2019 was 29.5 t, a decrease of 22% from 2018.

The 2019 North Coast blue swimmer crab catch of 22.1 t accounted for ~3% of the State commercial

catch of 660 t for that year, with the majority of catch taken from the PCMF (North Coast Crab Figure 3).

The KCMF catch of 7.4 t (North Coast Crab Figure 4) represented the entire commercial mud crab catch reported in WA in 2019. The majority of

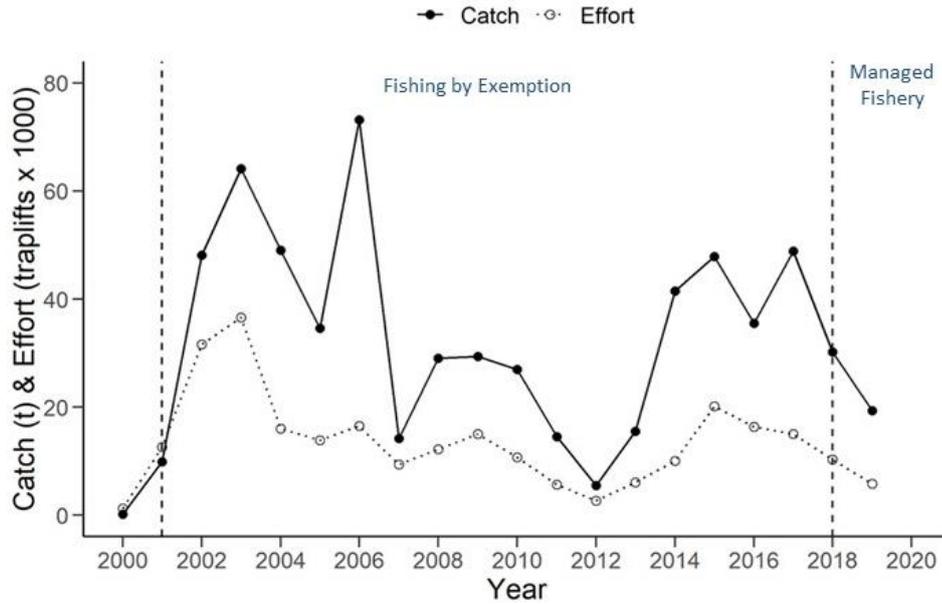
this catch was recorded as green mud crab, with a small proportion recorded as brown mud crab.

Recreational Sector

The estimated boat-based recreational catch of blue swimmer crab in the North Coast for 2017/18 represented approximately 3% of the statewide boat-based recreational catch (kept crabs by number) for that period. The estimated 2017/18 recreational harvest range for blue swimmer crab in the North Coast was steady at 1.6 t (95% CI 1–2), compared with 1.7 t (95% CI 1–3) in 2015/16,

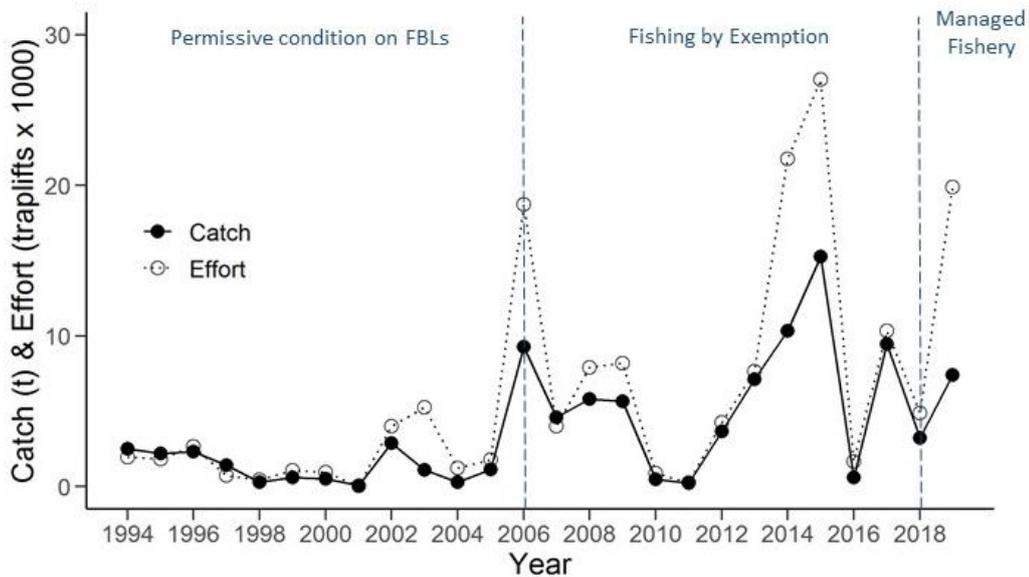
4 t (95% CI 2–6) in 2013/14 and 3 t (95% CI 2–5) in 2011/12 (Ryan *et al.* 2019).

The estimated boat-based recreational catch of mud crab in the North Coast represented 92% of the statewide boat-based recreational catch (kept by numbers) in 2017/18. The estimated recreational harvest range of mud crab in the North Coast was steady at 2.5 t (95% CI 2–3) in 2017/18 compared with 2.5 t (95% CI 2–3) in 2015/16, but lower than 6.5 t (95% CI 5–8) in 2013/14 and 7 t (95% CI 5–9) in 2011/12 (Ryan *et al.* 2019).



NORTH COAST CRAB FIGURE 3.

Annual commercial blue swimmer crab catch (tonnes) and fishing effort (traps x 1000) for the Pilbara Crab Managed Fishery between 2000 and 2019, including the developing (2001-18) and managed (since 2018) phases of the fishery. Prior to 2001, fishing occurred via permissive condition on Fishing Boat Licences.



NORTH COAST CRAB FIGURE 4.

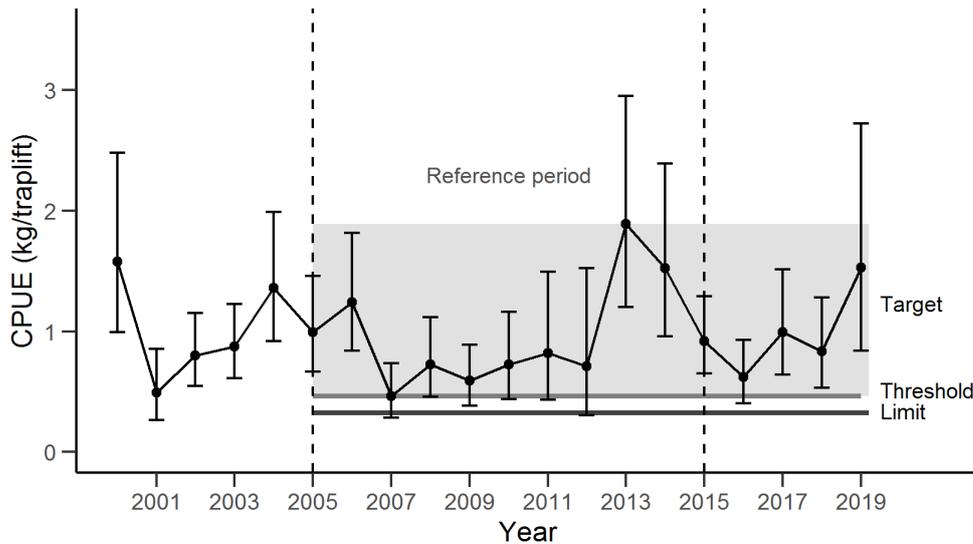
Historical annual commercial catch (tonnes) and fishing effort (traps x 1000) for trap fishers capturing mud crab in the Kimberley Crab Managed Fishery between 1994 and 2019, including the developing (2006-18) and managed (since 2018) phases of the fishery. Prior to 2006, fishing occurred via permissive condition on Fishing Boat Licences.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Blue Swimmer Crabs (Sustainable-Adequate)

The annual standardised catch rate from the PCMF provides an index of abundance that can be used to assess fishery performance. After significant increases in 2013 (1.9 kg/traplift), and 2014 (1.5 kg/traplift), the annual catch rate declined to 0.6-1.0 kg/traplift during 2015-18 (North Coast Crab Figure 5).

However, the fishery recorded an annual standardised catch rate of 1.5 kg/traplift in 2019, representing an 88% increase from 2018 (North Coast Figure 5). This catch rate is well above the preliminary (draft) harvest strategy threshold of 0.46 kg/traplift, indicating there should be adequate egg production under typical environmental conditions. Therefore, the crab stock in the PCMF is considered **sustainable**.



NORTH COAST CRAB FIGURE 5.

The primary performance indicator, annual standardised commercial catch rate (kg/traplift) of blue swimmer crabs, for the Pilbara Crab Managed Fishery between 2000 and 2019, relative to the associated reference points (target, threshold and limit) for a proposed harvest strategy. The reference period (2005-15) covers the years when the fishery was considered to be operating under relative stability following an initial exploratory period (2000-04).

Mud Crab (Sustainable-Adequate)

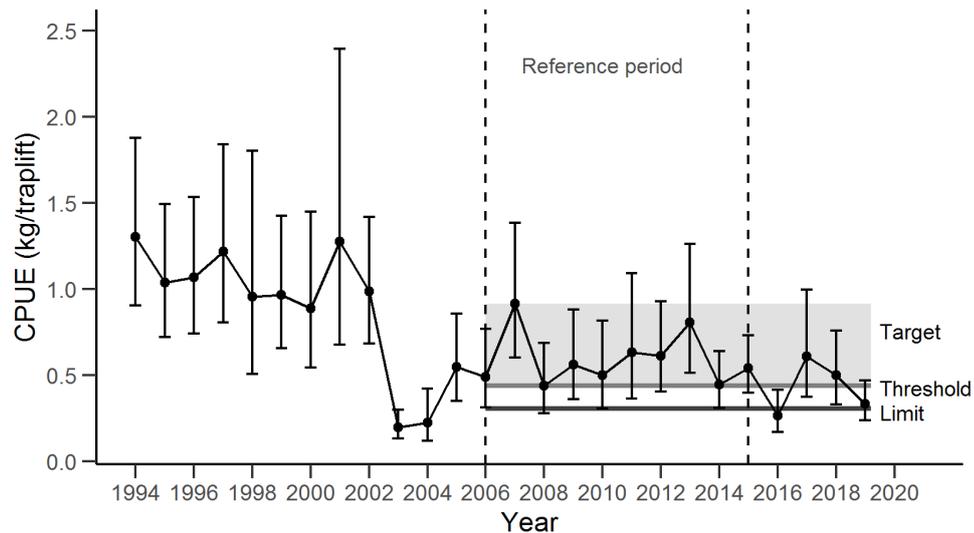
Four species of mud crab (*Scylla* spp.) have been identified in the Indo-West Pacific region, of which the green mud crab (*Scylla serrata*) and brown mud crab (*Scylla olivacea*) occur in Western Australia (Keenan et al., 1998). The green mud crab is predominantly found in estuarine habitats in north-western Australia from the Northern Territory border to Shark Bay. The brown mud crab has a more restricted distribution limited to northern embayments, with most catches from King Sound, 200 km northwest of Broome.

The minimum legal size is 150 mm CW for green mud crab (*Scylla serrata*) and 120 mm CW for brown mud crab (*Scylla olivacea*). These are set well above the size at first maturity of 90-120 mm CW for green and 86-96 mm CW for brown mud crab in the North Coast Bioregion. Consequently, breeding stock levels are expected to be

adequate to maintain stocks in all current fishing areas under normal environmental conditions.

The annual standardised catch rate from the KCMF provides an index of abundance that can be used to assess this fishery's performance. The fishery recorded a standardised catch rate of 0.92 kg/traplift in 2017 that was significantly above the (draft) harvest strategy threshold. The 2018 catch rate of 0.5 kg/traplift represented a 28% decrease from 2017, but was still above the (draft) harvest strategy threshold. However, the catch rate in 2019 (0.33 kg/traplift) fell below the threshold, but remained above the limit (North Coast Crab Figure 6). Consequently, catch and effort in this fishery will be closely monitored in 2020.

In addition, the relatively small catch by commercial and recreational fishers, the wide distribution of the species throughout the region, and the minimum legal size set well above size at first maturity, the crab stock is considered **sustainable**.



NORTH COAST CRAB FIGURE 6.

The primary performance indicator, annual standardised commercial catch rate (kg/traplift), for the Kimberley Crab Managed Fishery since 1994 (when permissive conditions of fishing boat licenses were issued), relative to the associated reference points (target, threshold and limit) for a proposed harvest strategy. The reference period spans 2006–15 when the fishery was considered to have operated under relative stability following initial exploratory fishing (2000–05).

BYCATCH and PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Blue Swimmer Crab

Bycatch

The shift from using set nets to traps in most blue swimmer crab fisheries has resulted in a substantial reduction in bycatch from dedicated crab fishing. Pots are purpose-designed to minimise the capture of non-target species and are therefore an inefficient way to capture fish, the majority of which are able to escape through the entrance gaps when the pot is soaking or being hauled. Small numbers of fish are infrequently captured in crab pots, but the fishers are not permitted to retain them. The low number of fish caught and returned by crab fishers is considered to pose a **low** risk to these stocks.

Discarded bycatch from trawl fisheries taking crabs as a by-product is dealt with in the status reports that are specific to each trawl fishery.

Protected Species

The crab trap longline system used in the targeted crab fisheries has little possibility of interacting with listed species. The fishery is conducted in a manner that avoids mortality of, or injuries to, endangered, threatened or protected species and avoids or minimises impacts on threatened ecological communities and is considered a **negligible** risk.

Mud Crab

Bycatch

Mud crab traps are purpose built to effectively target larger (legal-sized) mud crabs. The overall

trap design and mesh size allows sub-legal mud crabs and non-targeted bycatch species opportunity to escape the trap, preventing them from being retained, therefore posing a **negligible** risk to bycatch species. The gear is required to be pulled regularly, and undersized and berried crabs must be returned to the water.

Protected Species

As mud crab traps are purpose built to target mud crab species and are set for relatively short periods of time, the possibility of causing harm to listed species is minimal and a **negligible** risk.

HABITAT and ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

Blue Swimmer Crab

Fishing with traps results in limited habitat disturbance, with only minor dragging of traps on the bottom occurring during trap retrieval. Sand and associated biota do not get brought to the surface in commercial blue swimmer crab traps, as the mesh used on traps is sufficiently large to allow the escape of any sand-dwelling macrobenthos. Although seagrasses are occasionally brought to the surface with the trap, the infrequent nature of this occurrence, and the small amount of living seagrass removed, results in minimal habitat damage, posing a **low** risk to benthic habitat.

NORTH COAST BIOREGION

Mud Crab

Trap fishing in the shallow waters of associated mangrove tidal creeks and near shore embayments results in limited habitat disturbance. The large mesh size prevents capture of benthic organisms and only minor dragging of traps on the sea floor occurring in trap retrieval. The sheltered shallow mangrove environment is protected from wind and waves where the majority of traps are deployed, resulting in minimal habitat damage, posing a **low** risk to benthic habitat.

Ecosystem

As the commercial take of blue swimmer and mud crabs represents a relatively small portion of the biomass, which is effectively renewed annually and subject to high levels of natural variation in abundance, secondary food chain effects are likely to be minimal in these fisheries and are a **low** risk to the ecosystem.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

Blue Swimmer Crab

North Coast blue swimmer crab fisheries provide a high social amenity to recreational fishing and diving and to consumers via commercial crab supply to markets and restaurants. It is classified as a low risk. During 2019, two people were employed as skippers and crew on vessels fishing for blue swimmer crabs along the Pilbara coast. Additional employment for several workers has been created in Point Samson through the development of post-harvest processing of the crab catch.

Mud Crab

The North Coast mud crab fishery provides a high social amenity to recreational fishing and to consumers via commercial mud crab supply to markets and restaurants. It is classified as a low risk. Commercial fishers travel vast distances due to the remoteness of their operations and stay at sea for several weeks before returning to unload catch. In this scenario crabs are frozen and generally sold to local and interstate markets although live product may also be sold at premium prices. During 2019, six people were employed as skippers and crew on vessels fishing for mud crab in the KCMF, with effort concentrated between June and September.

Economic

The estimated gross value of product (GVP) for the crab fishery within the North Coast Bioregion for 2019 was approximately \$316 k (**Level 1** <\$1million). The value for blue swimmer crabs

was approximately \$114 k and mud crabs was approximately \$188 k.

Blue Swimmer Crabs: The average beach price for trap-caught blue swimmer crabs across all Western Australian fisheries for the 2018/19 financial year was around \$5.91/kg. Price data was generated by collecting monthly returns recording prices paid to fishers by fish processors. A weighted average price is then calculated for the financial year from the monthly data. The crab catch from the Pilbara region was sold through local and interstate markets.

Mud Crabs: The average beach price for green (uncooked) mud crabs in the Kimberley for the 2018/19 financial year remained in line with the 2017/18 beach price of around \$25.34/kg. Aboriginal corporations may also trade and barter product adding value to the local communities that cannot be estimated.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The breeding stock of crab fisheries are protected by effort control, legal minimum size well below the size at maturity, and spatial and temporal closures.

Blue Swimmer Crab

A preliminary harvest strategy has been determined for the PCMF where the primary performance indicator is the standardised annual commercial catch rate, specifically within the Nickol Bay area as the majority of fishing historically occurred in this area. The reference period spans 2005 to 2015, defined by the period when the developing fishery status commenced following a period (2001-04) of exploratory fishing.

As the indicator was above the threshold in 2019, no changes to the management of the fishery were introduced for the 2020 season.

Mud Crab

A preliminary harvest strategy has been determined for the KCMF where the primary performance indicator is the standardised annual commercial catch rate. The reference period spans 2006-15 when the fishery was considered to have operated under relative stability following initial exploratory fishing (2000–05).

As the indicator in 2019 was below the threshold, catch and effort in this fishery will be closely monitored in 2020 to determine if future management action is required.

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels

Pilbara BSC:	20–73 t
Kimberley Mud Crab:	5–30 t

Blue Swimmer Crab

Annual catch tolerance levels have recently been developed for the PCMF (see DPIRD, 2020) based on historical catch information relative to estimates of MSY derived from a preliminary production model to indicate the reference period in which the fishery has been operating sustainably (2005–2015).

Although the 2019 catch for the PCMF of 19.3 t was marginally below the lower Catch Tolerance level, this can be attributed to reduced fishing effort as the fisher spent periods of the 2019 season fishing other endorsements. Consequently, changes to management were considered unnecessary for the 2020 season.

Mud Crab

The current catch tolerance ranges used to assess annual fishery performance in the KCMF are based on the current stock status, and control rules have been calculated from the fishery's maximum and minimum catches between 2006 and 2015 including an additional 10% (of minimum catch) to generate the tolerance range. If the status of the resource changes such that the control rules trigger additional management adjustments, the tolerance range for this fishery will be adjusted accordingly.

As the 2019 mud crab catch for the KCMF of 7.4 t was within prescribed Catch Tolerance levels, no further management action was considered necessary for the 2020 season.

Compliance

Current risks to enforcement are low for North Coast Bioregion crab fisheries.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with licensees on operational issues and processes. Industry Management Meetings are convened by the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who are also responsible for statutory management plan consultation under a Service Level Agreement with the Fisheries.

Consultation processes relating to recreational fishing are now facilitated by Recfishwest under a Service Level Agreement although the Department undertakes direct consultation with the community on specific issues.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

A new Management Plan was implemented for the then Kimberley Developing Mud Crab fishery in late 2018. The Management Plan permits the take of Portunid crabs (including blue swimmer crabs).

A new Management Plan was also implemented for the then Pilbara Developing Crab Fishery in late 2018. An increase of 200 traps (total 600 traps) was allocated in 2016, with the traps able to be used across two vessels. As a precautionary measure to this increase in traps numbers, an annual season closure between 15 August and 15 November (inclusive) was implemented to protect berried and mated pre-spawning females.

A harvest strategy for the Portunidae crab resource (blue swimmer crab and mud crab) in the North Coast and Gascoyne bioregions of Western Australia is currently being developed. Consultation with key stakeholders and the community is planned for 2020/21.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Levels of recruitment to many crab fisheries fluctuate considerably. These are considered most likely due to environmental influences (e.g. water temperature) both on spawning success and larval survival through to recruitment. The relationship between environmental factors, recruitment and catch is being evaluated as further data become available. Climate change implications associated with these environmental variables are also under consideration. Blue swimmer crabs were rated a **high** risk to climate change due to their sensitivity to water temperature changes.

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NORTH COAST BIOREGION

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SOUTH COAST BIOREGION

ABOUT THE BIOREGION

The continental shelf waters of the South Coast Bioregion (South Coast Overview Figure 1) are generally temperate but low in nutrients, due to the seasonal winter presence of the tail of the tropical Leeuwin Current and limited terrestrial run-off. Sea surface temperatures typically range from approximately 15°C to 21°C, which is warmer than would normally be expected in these latitudes due to the influence of the Leeuwin Current. The effect of the Leeuwin Current, particularly west of Albany, limits winter minimum temperatures (away from terrestrial effects along the beaches) to about 16°C to 17°C.

Fish stocks in this region are predominantly temperate, with many species' distributions extending right across southern Australia. Tropical species are occasionally found, which are thought to be brought into the area as larvae and they are unlikely to form local breeding populations.

The South Coast is a high-energy environment, heavily influenced by large swells generated in the Southern Ocean. The coastline from Cape Leeuwin to Israelite Bay is characterised by white sand beaches separated by high granite

headlands. East of Israelite Bay there are long sandy beaches backed by large sand dunes, an extensive length (160 km) of high limestone cliffs and mixed arid coastline to the South Australian border. There are few large areas of protected water along the South Coast, the exceptions being around Albany and in the Recherche Archipelago off Esperance.

Along the western section of the coastline that receives significant winter rainfall, there are numerous estuaries fed by winter-flowing rivers. Several of these, such as Walpole/Nornalup Inlet and Oyster Harbour, are permanently open, but other estuaries are closed by sandbars and open seasonally after heavy winter rains. The number of rivers and estuaries decreases to the east as the coastline becomes more arid. While these estuaries, influenced by terrestrial run-off, have higher nutrient levels (and some, such as Oyster Harbour and Wilson Inlet, are experiencing eutrophication), their outflow to the ocean does not significantly influence the low nutrient status of coastal waters.



SOUTH COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 1

Map showing the South Coast Bioregion and IMCRA (V 4.0) meso-scale regions: South Coast and Eucla.

SOUTH COAST BIOREGION

The marine habitats of the South Coast are similar to the coastline, having fine, clear sand sea floors interspersed with occasional granite outcrops and limestone shoreline platforms and sub-surface reefs.

A mixture of seagrass and kelp habitats occurs along the South Coast, with seagrass more abundant in protected waters and some of the more marine estuaries. The kelp habitats are diverse but dominated by the relatively small *Ecklonia radiata*, rather than the larger kelps expected in these latitudes where waters are typically colder and have higher nutrient levels.

The ecosystem boundaries as defined by IMCRA (V 4.0) in the bioregion are depicted in South Coast Overview Figure 1. The potential threats and risks to these ecosystems are often similar. For simplicity risk ratings were allocated by grouping the ecosystems into two broad groups, estuarine or marine. However, if a particular ecosystem is unique and/or is exposed to different or significant threats, risk was allocated to these ecosystems separately.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES POTENTIALLY IMPACTING THE BIOREGION

Climate Change

Some of the key environmental trends that may be affecting ecosystems in WA include:

- Increasing frequency of *El Niño*/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events;
- More years with a weaker Leeuwin Current;
- Increase in water temperature off the west coast of WA, particularly the lower west coast;
- Increase in salinity, which includes some large annual fluctuations;
- Change in the frequency and location of storms (and rainfall) affecting the lower west coast; and
- Change in the frequency of cyclones (and summer rainfall) affecting the north-west coast which can influence rainfall along the south coast.

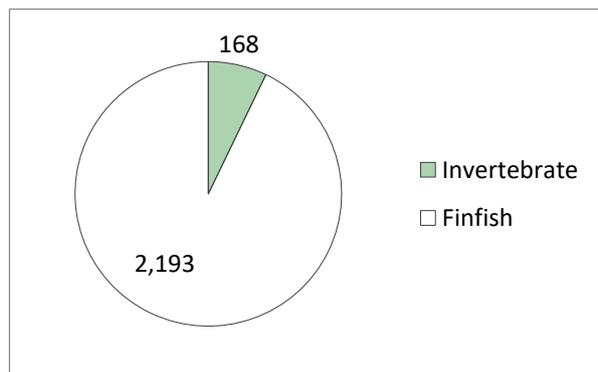
The South Coast Bioregion is predicted to be at enhanced risk from the effects of climate given that it spans a transitional zone between tropical and temperate regions. The variables expected to drive climate change impacts include changes in water temperature, ocean currents, winds, rainfall, sea level, ocean chemistry and extreme weather conditions.

It is apparent that climate change will impact the biological, economic, and social aspects of many

fisheries, and both positive and negative impacts are expected. Climate change can influence biological systems by modifying the timing of spawning, range and distribution, composition and interactions within communities, exotic species invasions and impacts, and the structure and dynamics of communities, including changes in productivity. Species distribution shifts are the most commonly reported changes and are often the easiest to recognise and measure. Changes in the distribution of key species are monitored in a national citizen-science program (www.redmap.org.au) in which the Department is a collaborator.

Commercial Fishing

The major commercial fisheries of the South Coast Bioregion are the abalone fishery (which achieved Marine Stewardship Council certification in 2017), a trap fishery targeting southern rock lobsters and deep-water crabs, the purse seine fishery targeting pilchards and other small pelagics, and the demersal gillnet fishery for sharks and scalefishes. Other smaller commercial fisheries include the long-standing beach seine fishery for Western Australian salmon, and the intermittent scallop trawl fishery. There are also commercial net fisheries for finfish operating in a number of South Coast estuaries and beaches. Commercial fishers also target demersal scalefish offshore with droplines and handlines. South Coast commercial fishing vessel operators often hold a number of licences to create a viable year-round fishing operation.



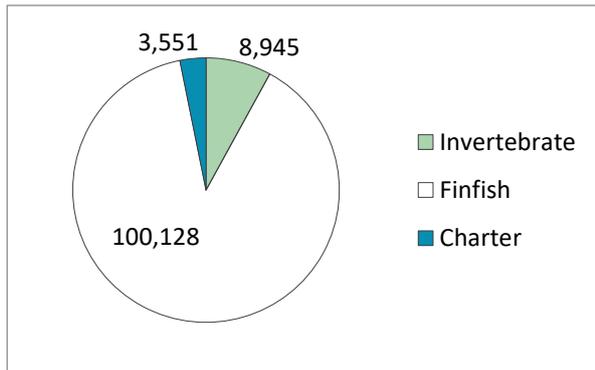
SOUTH COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 2

Contribution of finfish and invertebrates to the total commercial wild fishery catch originating from the South Coast Bioregion. Numbers represent total catch (in tonnes) based on all major assessed fisheries identified in the Overview section of this report (South Coast Overview Table 1).

Recreational Fishing

As much of the South Coast is remote or difficult to access, recreational beach and boat fishing tends to be concentrated around major population

and holiday centres. The major target species for beach and rock anglers are West Australian salmon, Australian herring, whiting and trevally, while boat anglers target snapper, queen snapper, Bight redfish and King George whiting. The third major component of the recreational fishery is the dinghy and shoreline fishing in estuaries and rivers, focused in the western half of the bioregion where the main angling targets are black bream and whiting (including King George whiting). Recreational netting, primarily targeting mullet, also occurs in these estuaries.



SOUTH COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 3

Recreational catches (by number) in the South Coast Bioregion. Finfish and invertebrate catches were as assessed in the statewide survey of boat-based recreational fishing in 2017/18¹. Charter boat catch is for the same period. Estimates of shore based recreational catch are unavailable.

Aquaculture

The predominant aquaculture activity undertaken on the south coast is the production of mussels and oysters from Oyster Harbour at Albany. This activity is restricted to this area where there are sufficient nutrient levels related to terrestrial run-off to provide the planktonic food necessary to promote growth of filter-feeding bivalves. This is supported by government supported shellfish hatchery in Albany. Other private hatcheries exist, including for abalone.

Other forms of aquaculture (e.g. sea cage farming) are restricted on the South Coast by the high-energy environment and the very limited availability of protected deep waters typically required by this sector. Most recent development activity in the invertebrate sector has focused on land-based 'raceway' culture of abalone, using pumped sea water. The Albany Aquaculture Development Zone – Oyster Harbour Area was declared in August 2020, it is the first marine shellfish aquaculture development zone established in Western Australia. When fully declared, the Albany Aquaculture Development Zone will encompass four separate areas. In

addition, an offshore abalone farm near Augusta is growing-out abalone using purpose-built concrete structures located on the sea bed (See Aquaculture Regional Research and Development Overview section in this chapter).

Tourism

Tourism is a regionally-important industry across the South Coast Bioregion, with much of the industry spread across rural areas and away from the major population centres of Albany and Esperance. Tourist infrastructure and development are generally small-scale and focussed on natural and wilderness experiences, thus tourism activities have a relatively low environmental impact, particularly in relation to the extensive length of coastline, which is only accessible via a limited number of four-wheel drive tracks. A significant portion of the bioregion's coastline is encompassed by national parks and nature reserves, particularly to the east of Bremer Bay. Whale watching, including expeditions to the largest known group of killer whales in the Southern Hemisphere at the head of the Bremer Canyon, and other marine wildlife experiences are also popular tourist activities.

Shipping and Maritime Activity

Significant volumes of bulk commodities such as iron ore, grain, other agricultural products and wood chips are exported from commercial port facilities in Albany and Esperance. Cruise vessels also visit the Ports of Albany and Esperance, providing significant economic input into the local community and surrounding regions during their visits. In addition, many international shipping routes to and from eastern Australia, traverse the South Coast Bioregion, often without coming to port in WA. Seismic surveys have been undertaken in the east of the bioregion to inform prospective oil and gas exploration in the western Great Australian Bight. However, exploratory drilling has yet to occur in this area.

BIOREGIONAL SPECIFIC ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Within each Bioregion there are a range of management measures that have been implemented to manage the potential impact of activities (See Chapter 3 for an overview). Management measures specific to the South Coast Bioregion include:

¹ Ryan KL, Hall NG, Lai EK, Smallwood CB, Taylor SM, Wise BS 2017. Statewide survey of boatbased recreational fishing in Western Australia 2015/16. Fisheries Research Report

No. 287, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia. 205pp.

Spatial Closures

Extensive fisheries closures in coastal and offshore waters have been introduced to manage trawling by Australian vessels (South Coast Overview Figure 4). Trawling is currently only permitted in 1% of shelf waters (South Coast Ecosystem Management Table 1).

The inshore marine habitats of the South Coast are relatively unaffected by human activities due to their remoteness, low population density across the bioregion and the extent of coastal management (national parks, nature reserves, etc.). While there are few permanent closures to demersal fishing methods in this region, the geographic footprint of demersal fishing activities is very small with about 98% of the region not affected by these methods.

The Walpole–Nornalup Marine Park was declared on the 8th May 2009 and is the first marine protected area on the South Coast. The Department currently undertakes research and monitoring within the Walpole-Nornalup Marine

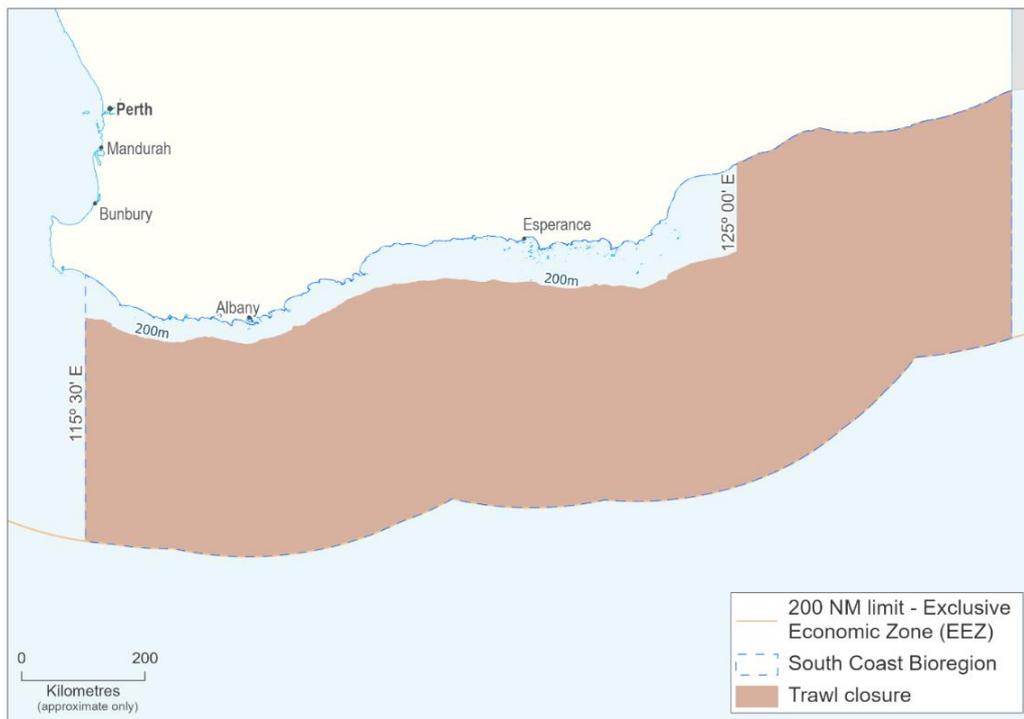
Park, based on the Department's identified risks in conjunction with the Marine Park Management Plan priorities set by the Department of Biosecurity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). This work includes the support and supervision (in collaboration with Murdoch University) of post-doctoral studies on the finfish community to assess current trends, movement ecology and development of a long term monitoring program for the finfish community within marine park. Additional access restrictions in the bioregion include closures under s.43 of the Fish Resources Management Act 1994 surrounding the wreck of the 'Perth' (Albany), wreck of the 'Sanko Harvest' (east of Esperance) and Esperance Jetty.

The Commonwealth Government's Marine Bioregional Planning process for the South-West marine region (between Kangaroo Island, South Australia and Shark Bay) was implemented in July 2018. This has resulted in a number of Marine Protected Areas off the South Coast of WA (South Coast Overview Figure 5).

SOUTH COAST ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT TABLE 1

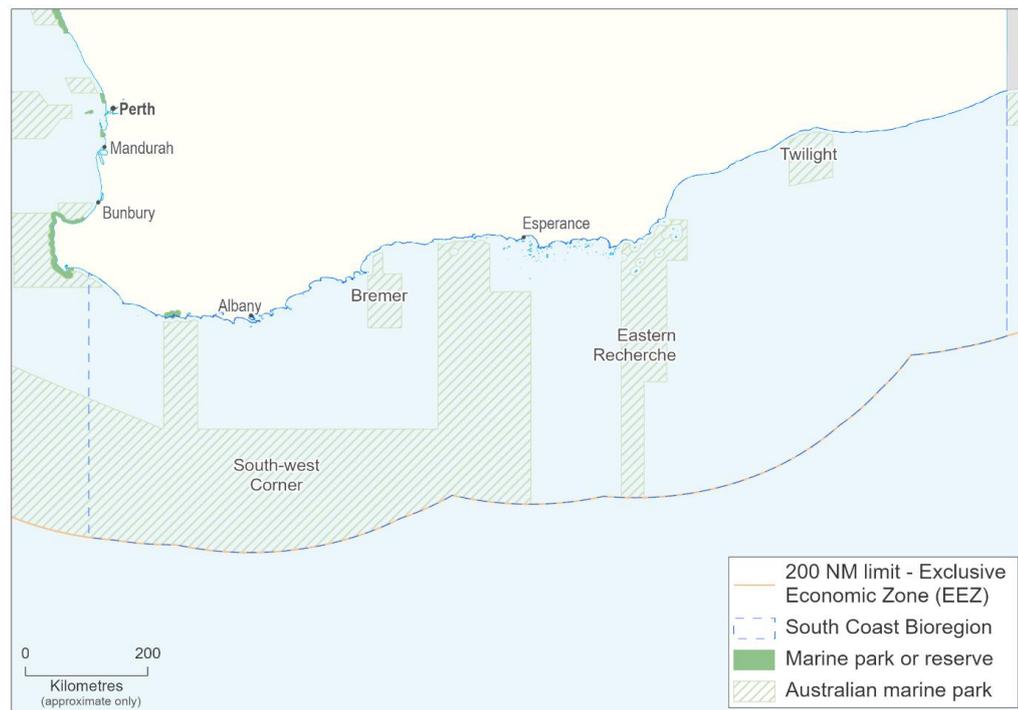
The areas and proportions of the South Coast Bioregion making up State Waters and all continental shelf waters, out to 200 m depth, which meet the IUCN criteria for classification as marine protected areas. This table does not yet include the closures that may be implemented by the Commonwealth as part of their marine planning zones.

IUCN category or equivalent	State Waters only (17,116 km ²)				All Waters (534,016 km ² (including State Waters))			
	Fisheries km ²	%	Existing MPA km ²	%	Fisheries km ²	%	Existing MPA km ²	%
I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
II	1	< 1	0	0	1	< 1	0	0
III	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IV	2,400	14	15	< 1	2,400	< 1	15	< 1
V	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VI	14,700	86	0	0	531,600	99	0	0



SOUTH COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 4

Map showing the South Coast Bioregion and areas closed to trawling. The areas permanently closed to trawling are consistent with IUCN marine protected area category IV.



SOUTH COAST OVERVIEW FIGURE 5

Map showing the South Coast Bioregion and current and proposed State and Commonwealth marine parks and reserves along the southern WA coast.

ECOSYSTEM MONITORING AND STATUS

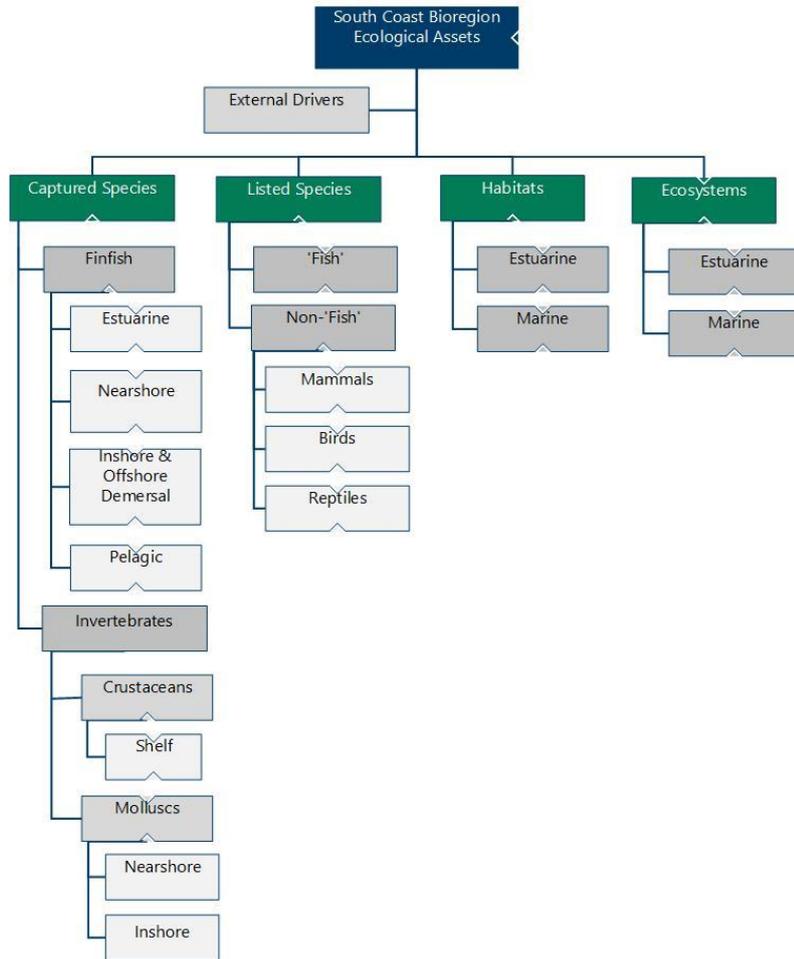
In order to assess the adequacy of management arrangements aimed at ensuring sustainability of the ecological assets within the South Coast Bioregion, the Department must identify and

monitor trends in the condition of these resources. This is achieved through application of an Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) framework (Fletcher *et al.*, 2010) to identify, in a

SOUTH COAST BIOREGION

hierarchical manner, the key ecological resources that require ongoing monitoring and assessment. (See How to Use section for more details). These key ecological assets identified for the South

Coast Bioregion are identified in South Coast Overview Figure 6 and their current risk status reported on in the following sections.



SOUTH COAST ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT FIGURE 6

Component tree showing the ecological assets identified and separately assessed for the South Coast Bioregion.

External Drivers

External factors that potentially impact marine and estuarine ecosystems at the bioregional-level may not fall within the direct control of Fishery legislation (e.g. climate change). An understanding of these factors, which are typically environmental (storms, ocean currents, rainfall, etc.) is necessary to properly assess the risks to ecological resources. The main external drivers identified with potential to affect the South Coast Bioregion include climate change and introduced pests and diseases¹.

Climate

External Drivers	Current Risk Status
Climate	LOW

While the current risk is Low, the south west of Western Australia is predicted to be heavily influenced by the impacts of climate change (e.g. increasing sea temperatures, declines in rainfall). Further information is required to examine potential impacts on this bioregion.

Captured Species

FINFISH

Estuarine

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Estuarine	HIGH

There is concern for some estuarine fish stocks such as cobbler mainly due to external (non-

¹ Biosecurity issues are now reported by the Biosecurity pillar of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

fishing) factors (e.g. changing rainfall and associated environmental factors).

Nearshore (0-20 m depth)

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Nearshore	MODERATE

Catches of many nearshore indicator species (e.g. Australian salmon) have been declining since the mid-late 1990s mainly as a result of reduced market demand.

Inshore and Offshore Demersal

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Demersal	MODERATE

An NRM-funded project that concluded in 2016¹, assessed the risks to inshore demersal indicator species as low (western blue groper) to moderate (bight redfish, snapper and blue morwong). Targeted fishing effort in deeper offshore areas is low and intermittent.

Pelagic

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Pelagic	NEGLIGIBLE

While the spawning biomass of sardines has returned to appropriate levels, their catches and those of other pelagic fish do not appear to have not returned to pre-virus levels.

INVERTEBRATES

Crustaceans

Captured species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Crustaceans	Shelf	HIGH

There are some concerns for lobsters and deep sea crabs, with catch rates showing declines. While crystal crab stocks are showing initial signs of recovery, to assist recovery potential effort reductions are being discussed.

Molluscs

Captured species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Molluscs (Abalone)	Nearshore	HIGH
Molluscs (Scallops)	Inshore	NEGLIGIBLE

There are concerns for stocks of abalone in some areas, however overall stocks are maintained at appropriate levels. The abundance of scallops varies inter-annually due to recruitment

fluctuations and fishing only occurs when stocks are sufficiently robust.

Listed species

A variety of endangered, threatened and protected² (ETP) species can be found within the South Coast Bioregion, including cetaceans, pinnipeds, elasmobranchs, seahorses and pipefish and sea/shore birds. These species are protected by various international agreements and national and state legislation. Primary pieces of legislation include the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the *Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, and the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994*.

Fish

Listed species	Risk
Fish	NEGLIGIBLE

There are few risks to the listed fish species in this region. This includes the white shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*) which is protected under State and Commonwealth legislation throughout this and all bioregions.

Non-Fish

Listed species	Risk
Mammals	MODERATE
Birds and Reptiles	MODERATE

Although captures of Australian sea lions are rare and significantly fewer than they were historically due to substantial reductions in levels of demersal gillnet fishing effort, small numbers have intermittently been reported from demersal and nearshore/estuarine gillnets (see Appendix 2). In addition, concerns about potential captures of juvenile sea lions in South Coast Crustacean Managed Fishery pots have led to the requirements for Sea Lion Excluder Devices to be fitted to pots when they are fished in proximity to breeding colonies.

Reported captures of shearwaters in purse seine operations have declined in recent years (Appendix 2) following mitigation measures implemented through a code of conduct. These measures, which apply during a "special mitigation period" (March and April) when entanglement rates historically peaked, include a dawn closure, measures to prevent slack and folds occurring in nets, communication and avoidance protocols and gear modification trials. Further monitoring was undertaken using

¹ J.V. Norriss, E.A. Fisher, S.A. Hesp, G. Jackson, P.G. Coulson, T. Leary and A.W. Thomson. 2016. Status of inshore demersal scalefish stocks on the South Coast of Western Australia. Fisheries Research Report No. 276, Department of Fisheries, Western Australia. 116 pp.

² Note that being on the listed species list does not automatically indicate that a species is either threatened or endangered.

SOUTH COAST BIOREGION

observers in 2017 and 2018. There are no reports of interactions with reptiles in this region.

Habitats and Ecosystems

The South Coast Bioregion, extends from Black Point (east of Augusta) to Israelite Bay (east of Esperance) (South Coast Overview Figure 1).

South Coast Bioregional ecosystems are generally temperate, although the tropical Leeuwin Current maintains temperatures above those normally expected at such latitudes, especially under *La Niña* conditions. Tropical species can therefore occur across much of the bioregion, although they are unlikely to form breeding populations. Due to the influence of the Leeuwin Current and limited freshwater discharge, South Coast Bioregion ecosystems are relatively oligotrophic, although localised upwelling along the outer edge of the continental shelf may be locally-important sources of productivity, e.g. the head of the Bremer Canyon is a recognised biodiversity hotspot in the region.

The key habitats occurring in depths of less than 40 m (where the vast majority of relevant fisheries resources are located and fishing activities are undertaken in this bioregion) include:

Rocky shores: The most conspicuous of the marine habitats in the South Coast Bioregion are the rocky shores. The south coast is exposed to the most extreme wave energy of the entire Australian coastline, due to the narrow continental shelf and lack of protection from offshore reefs and islands. Along this coast, granitic and gneissic slopes exposed to heavy wave action are usually smooth and populated with moderate to large numbers of gastropod molluscs, barnacles and macrophytes showing distinct vertical zonation.

Algae: Macroalgae along the southwestern and southern coasts of Australia are highly diverse, with an estimated 62 % of macroalgal species endemic to the south coast. Algal assemblages are important as a food source, nursery grounds and shelter for a variety of organisms. Macroalgae also contribute to marine nutrient and carbon cycling in the Bioregions.

Sand: The South Coast Bioregion seabed is largely composed of soft, unconsolidated sediments. These sediments provide an important habitat for benthic infauna, with sediment structure an important influence on the distribution, abundance and community of these species.

Seagrasses: The diversity of seagrasses in temperate south-western Australia is the highest

for any temperate region in the world and reflects the broad distribution of seagrasses in estuaries, coastal embayments and nearshore sheltered environments through to exposed coastal nearshore and offshore areas that are exposed to ocean swells. Seagrasses perform the following important ecosystem functions: primary production, nutrient cycling, stabilising sediments and habitat provision.

Sponges: In southwestern Australia, sponges are found in areas where algae are less dominant, which includes areas deeper than 30 m and caves.

The IMCRA ecosystem boundaries are illustrated in South Coast Overview Figure 1. The risk status for ecosystems and habitat is simplified into two broad categories: estuarine and marine.

Habitats

Habitats	Aquatic zone / category	Current Risk Status
South Coast	Estuarine	MODERATE
South Coast	Marine	NEGLIGIBLE

The footprint and intensity of demersal fishing methods (i.e. trawling, gillnetting, potting, droplining and longlining) on benthic habitats is extremely low (<1%) relative to the geographic scale of the bioregion. Trawling and demersal gillnetting also take place away from potentially sensitive hard-substrate habitats due to target species' distributions and to avoid damage to fishing gear. Some estuaries (e.g. Wilson and Hardy Inlets) are in poor condition due to reduced rainfall, eutrophication and other environmental factors.

Ecosystems

Ecosystems	Aquatic zone / category	Current Risk Status
South Coast	Estuarine	MODERATE
South Coast	Marine	LOW

An assessment by Hall and Wise (2011)¹ of finfish community structure using commercial fishery data for the past 30 years, concluded that trends mean trophic level, mean length and a Fishery-In-Balance indicator had stabilised in the South Coast Bioregion and that there were, thus, no concerning trends in available ecosystem-based indices.

The most likely cause of any changes to community structure in estuarine regions is changing rainfall levels (potentially due to climate change) and changes in tidal exchange due to opening and closing of sand-bars at river mouths.

¹ Hall, N.G. and Wise, B.S. 2011. Development of an ecosystem approach to the monitoring and management of Western Australian fisheries. FRDC Report – Project 2005/063. Fisheries Research Report No. 215. Department of Fisheries, Western Australia. 112pp.

FISHERIES

SOUTH COAST CRUSTACEAN RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

J. How and L. Orme



OVERVIEW

The South Coast Crustacean Managed Fishery (SCCMF) is a multi-species, effort-controlled pot based fishery, with catches of southern rock lobster (*Jasus edwardsii*) and western rock lobster

(*Panulirus cygnus*) as well as deep-sea crab species namely, giant crab (*Pseudocarcinus gigas*), crystal crab (*Chaceon albus*) and champagne crab (*Hypothalassia acerba*).

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (1977 pots)	Total Catch 2018-19: 67.5 t	Unacceptable Management Action Required
Recreational fishery	Total Catch 2018-19: <5 t	N/A
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Southern Rock Lobster	Below threshold, Above limit	Adequate
Crystal Crab	Below limit	Inadequate
Western Rock Lobster	Above threshold	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Medium Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Low Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$4.1 m)	Medium Risk	Acceptable
Social (Moderate amenity)	Medium Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Medium Risk	Unacceptable
External Drivers	Medium Risk	Acceptable

SOUTH COAST BIOREGION

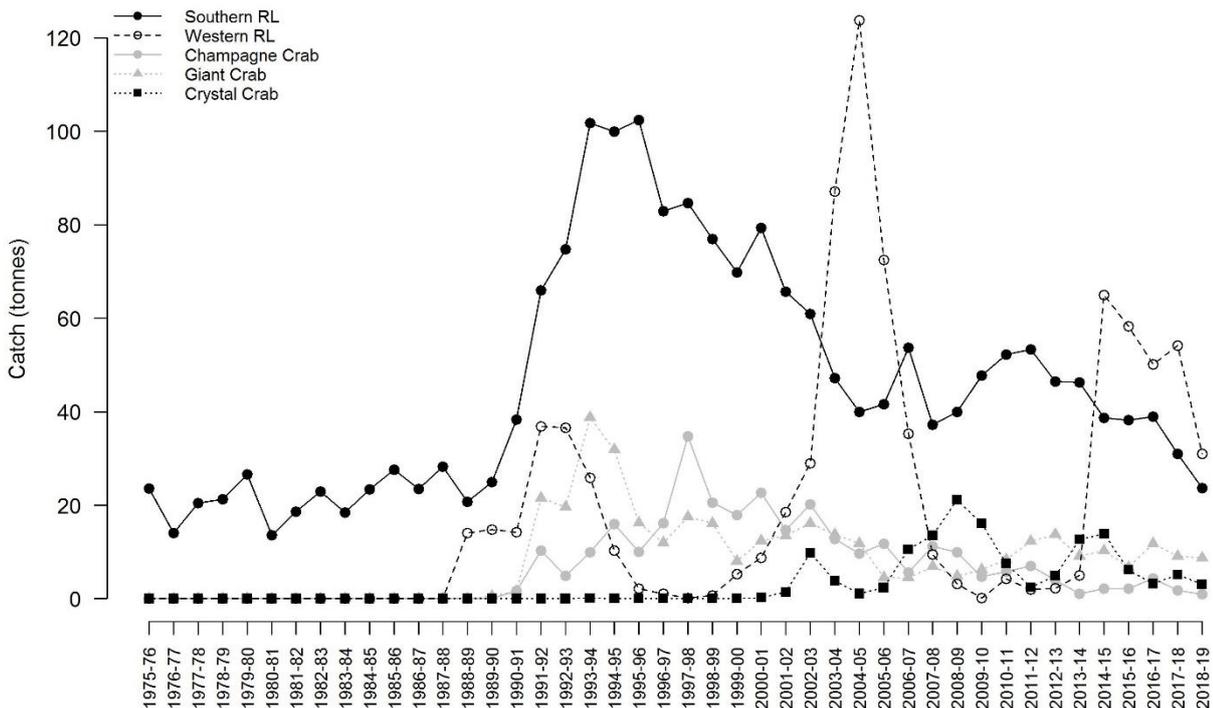


SOUTH COAST CRUSTACEAN FIGURE 1.
Map showing boundaries of the South Coast Crustacean Managed Fishery.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

The total landings of crustacean from this resource in 2018/19 accessed by the SCCMF was 67.5 t, comprising 23.7 t of southern rock lobster, 8.7 t giant and 1.0 t of champagne crabs (South Coast Crustacean Figure 1).

31.0 t of western rock lobster, and 3.1 t of crystal, 8.7 t giant and 1.0 t of champagne crabs (South Coast Crustacean Figure 1).



SOUTH COAST CRUSTACEAN FIGURE 2.
Total landings in the South Coast Crustacean Fishery by species.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Zone 1 – Augusta / Windy Harbour (Western rock lobster-Sustainable-Adequate)

The dominant species retained in the catch from this zone is western rock lobster. The western rock lobster in this zone represents the southern edge of the distribution of the stock. The catches and catch rates from 2014/15 to 2018/19 have been above their historic averages (South Coast Crustacean Figure 2 and 3a). Evidence suggests that the source of recruitment for western rock lobsters in the SCCMF is the West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery (WCRLMF), which was assessed as **sustainable-adequate**.

Zone 2 – Albany (Crystal Crab- Inadequate)

Crystal crab, which is found on the west and south coasts of Western Australia (WA), is the indicator species within this zone. It is a deep water species typically caught between 500 – 800 m (for more details see How *et al.* 2015).

Landings of crystal crabs decreased from 5.1 tonnes in 2017/18 to 3.1 tonnes in 2018/19 (South Coast Crustacean Figure 2). Catch rate data (standardised) from monthly returns, and (nominal) from volunteer logbook returns showed a decline in both metrics, resulting in the standardised catch rate being below the proposed limit reference point for crystal crab in Zone 2 (South Coast Crustacean Figure 3b). The 2018/19 catch rate levels are similar to those of the last three seasons. However, the current assessment indicates that it is likely that the overall level of stock depletion is **unacceptable** (i.e. overall a moderate-high sustainability risk) and is therefore **inadequate**.

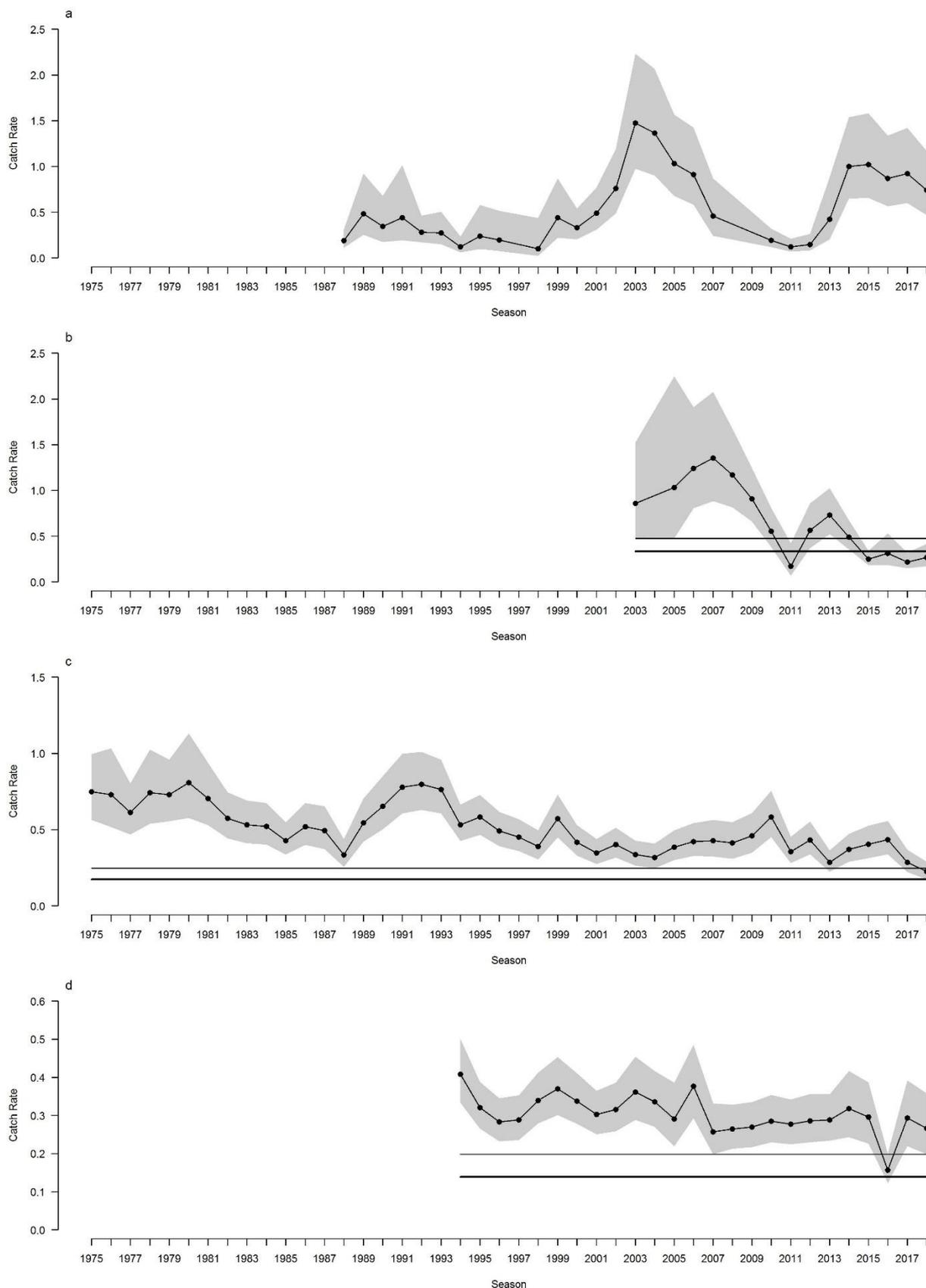
Zone 3 – Esperance and Zone 4 – Bight (Southern Rock Lobster- Sustainable-Adequate)

The assessment for these zones is determined using southern rock lobster as the indicator species. Southern rock lobster is considered to be a single genetic stock across the southern waters of Australia where it is caught (Ovenden *et al.* 1992). This is a major commercial species for a number of southern Australian states with a national stock assessment showing the overall status of the stock being sustainable (Linnane *et al.* 2018) and that the relative catches of southern rock lobster from WA are minimal. For more details see Linnane *et al.* (2018).

Catches of southern rock lobsters in the SCCMF have declined in recent seasons, with catch landings outside of the target catch range of 50-80 tonnes (South Coast Crustacean Figure 2).

Standardised commercial catch rates have declined to record-low levels in Zone 3 (Esperance) and are currently below the threshold reference level but above the limit reference level (South Coast Crustacean Figure 3c). The Zone 4 (Bight) standardised commercial catch rate has remained similar to that of the 2017/18 season, which is an improvement from the very low catch rate in 2016/17 season and so remains above the threshold level for this zone (South Coast Crustacean Figure 3d). It is therefore likely that the current level of overall stock depletion is **acceptable** (i.e. overall a moderate-high sustainability risk) and the SCCMF stock biomass is above its limit level and is therefore **sustainable-adequate**.

SOUTH COAST BIOREGION



SOUTH COAST CRUSTACEAN FIGURE 3.

Seasonal standardised catch rate (line and closed circles with grey 95CI) for a) western rock lobster in Zone 1 (Windy Harbour-Augusta), b) crystal crab in Zone 2 (Albany) c) southern rock lobster in Zones 3 (Esperance) and d) southern rock lobster in Zones 4 (Bight). Proposed threshold (thin horizontal line) and limit (heavy horizontal line) reference points are presented when applicable. The season is denoted by the first year of the season (e.g. 2017 reflects the 2017/18 season)

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

The gear used in this fishery generates minimal bycatch and the design of the pots is such that their potential to 'ghost fish' if lost is negligible.

Low risk.

Protected Species

The SCCMF operates in areas adjacent to Australian Sea Lion (ASL) colonies. Pots fished in areas potentially frequented by juvenile ASLs are required to be fitted with a Sea Lion Exclusion Device (SLED). These devices are designed to stop the entrance and accidental drowning of ASLs. An exemption was granted in the 2015/16 season to assess the impact of SLEDs on catch composition and catch rate in Zone 3. The outcomes of this assessment showed that SLEDs have no impact on catch composition and catch rates. Statutory consultation was undertaken between the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and licence holders to establish suitable mitigation measures to reduce potential ASL interactions and minimise any impact on fisher catches. SLEDs were implemented in the 2019/20 fishing season. In the 2018/19 season there were no ASL interactions attributed to the SCCMF.

In the 2018/19 season, there were no whale entanglement attributed to the SCCMF.

Turtles can also get caught in the float rigs of lobster pots. In 2018/19 no turtles were reported to have been entangled in fishing gear from the SCCMF.

Moderate risk.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

Potting is considered to have a low impact on the habitat over which the SCCMF operates. **Low** risk.

Ecosystem

The effect of the removal of lobster and deep sea crabs has been assessed for the West Coast Deep Sea Crustacean Fishery and WCRLMF on the state's west coast. Both of these fisheries have been assessed as having negligible food chain effects by the removal of crabs and lobsters respectively. Therefore, at current catch levels, it is unlikely that removal of lobster and crabs on the south coast are likely to result in food chain effects. **Low** risk.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

The SCCMF is based on mobile vessels that employ a skipper and two or three crew. The product is landed live at ports between the South Australian / West Australian border and Augusta, generating some additional economic activity and benefits. There is a small recreational fishery for rock lobsters on the south coast of WA. **Moderate** risk.

Economic

The beach value of the fishery was about \$4.1 million in 2018/19 with the majority of the catch sold live to Asian markets both locally and internationally. **Moderate** risk.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy (Under Development)

A preliminary harvest strategy has been developed and will be formally presented to industry in upcoming seasons to endorse.

Annual Catch Tolerances

Southern Rock Lobster – 50-80 t

Current fishing level –Unacceptable

Under the SCCF Management Plan, the SCCMF is managed through limited entry, input controls (including limiting the number of pots that can be used), size limits and seasonal closures. Through the establishment of the SCCMF, the large amount of latent effort which existed in Zones 2 and 4 was dramatically reduced. The restructuring which occurred as part of the SCCMF's establishment has also seen a reduction in effort in Zone 4 which may have in part contributed to the catch of 23.7 t for 2018/19 being below the level of 50-80 t of southern rock lobster.

While the standardised catch rate of Crystal Crabs in Zone 2 (Albany) is below the limit reference point, this reference level may not be appropriate. A review of the assessment technique and harvest strategy is planned. The overall assessment of the SCCMF fishing levels is unacceptable.

Compliance

Enforcement effort is either opportunistic or targeted. Practices include on-land and at-sea inspection of vessels, gear, authorisations and catch.

Consultation

Consultation occurs between the Department and the commercial sector through Annual Management Meetings convened by WAFIC. Consultation with Recfishwest and other interested stakeholders is conducted through specific meetings and the Department's website.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives (Stable)

Management initiatives focused on addressing stock status implications for indicator species in Zones 2 and 3. Research priorities will be on the

application of a new stock assessment technique for the fishery, and understanding the linkages with fisheries targeting the same species on the West Coast.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Given a large export market, fluctuation in the Australian dollar can have impacts on the economic performance of the fishery. The southern and western rock lobsters are near the edge of their distributional range and hence could be influenced by environmental conditions.

Moderate risk.

REFERENCES

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- Linnane A, Gardner C, Reilly D, How J. 2018. Southern Rock Lobster, *Jasus edwardsii*, in: Status of Key Australian Fish Stock Reports. Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (http://fish.gov.au/Pages/SAFS_Report.aspx).
- Ovenden JR, Brasher DJ, and White R. 1992. Mitochondrial DNA analyses of the Red Rock Lobster *Jasus edwardsii* supports an apparent absence of population subdivision throughout Australasia. *Marine Biology*, 112: 319–326.

SOUTH COAST GREENLIP/BROWNLIP ABALONE RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

L. Strain, F. Fabris and R. Jones

OVERVIEW

The Greenlip/Brownlip Abalone Fishery is a dive fishery that operates in the shallow coastal waters off the south-west and south coasts of WA. The fishery targets two large species of abalone: Greenlip abalone (*Haliotis laevis*) and Brownlip abalone (*H. conicopora*), both of which can grow to approximately 20 cm shell length. The commercial Greenlip/Brownlip Abalone Fishery is managed primarily through Total Allowable Commercial Catches (TACCs) for each species in three management areas (Greenlip/Brownlip Abalone Figure 1), which are allocated annually as Individually Transferable Quotas (ITQs).

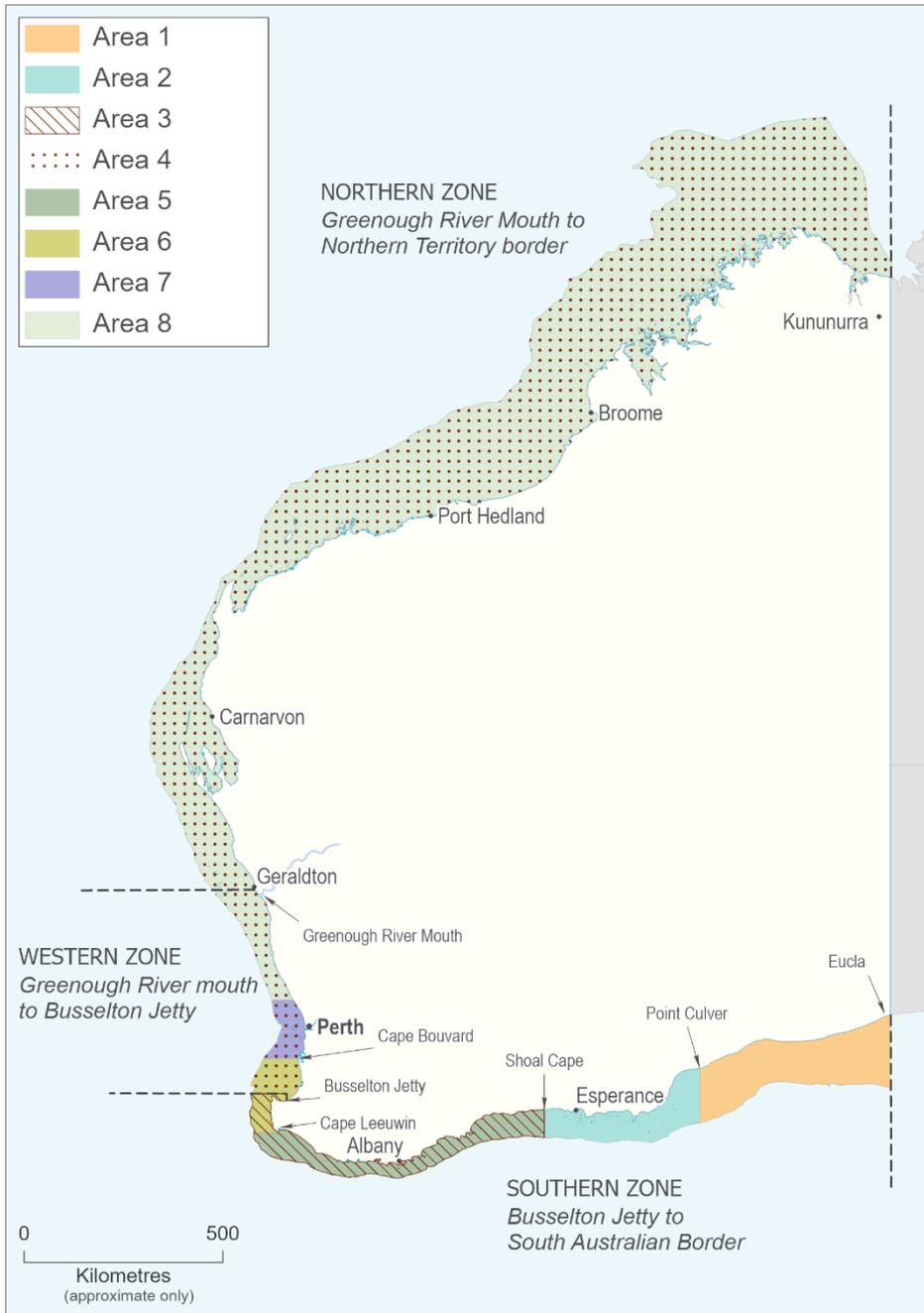


Recreational fishing only occurs in the Southern Zone (Greenlip/Brownlip Abalone Figure 1) with management arrangements that include a specific abalone recreational fishing licence, size limits, daily bag and possession limits, and temporal closures.

Further information on the fishery can be sourced from Hart *et al.* (2017) and Strain *et al.* (2020) at www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/wamsc_reports/wamsc_report_no_8.pdf. and http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/wamsc_reports/wamsc_report_no_8_addendum_3.pdf.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (62 t)	Total Catch 2019: 50 t	Management Action
Recreational fishery (not formal)	Total Catch 2019: 8 t	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Greenlip abalone (<i>Haliotis laevigata</i>)	Area 2 – PI below threshold but above limit Area 3 – PI below limit	Inadequate
Brownlip abalone (<i>Haliotis conicopora</i>)	Area 2 – PI below threshold but above limit Area 3 – PI above target	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Negligible risk	Adequate
Habitat	Negligible risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Negligible risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$2.6 m)	High risk	Management Action
Social (amenity)	Medium risk	Acceptable
Governance	High risk	Management Action
External Drivers	High risk	Management Action



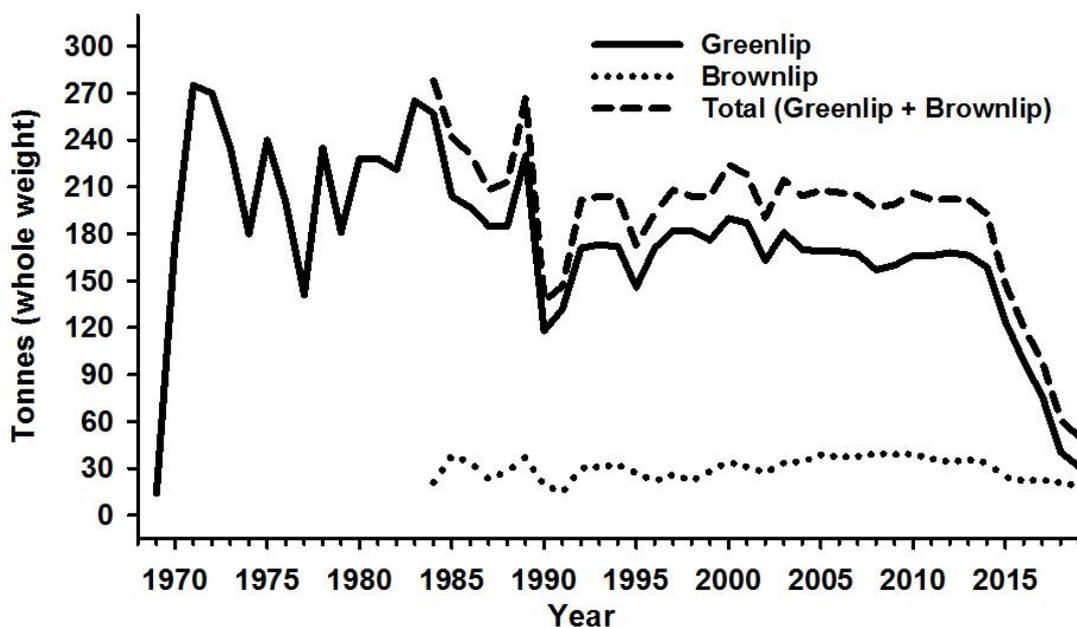
GREENLIP/BROWNLIP ABALONE FIGURE 1.

Map showing the boundaries of the management areas in the commercial Abalone Managed Fishery in Western Australia. The Greenlip/Brownlip Abalone fishery operates in Areas 1, 2, 3 and 4, other areas are associated with the Roe’s Abalone Fishery

CATCH AND LANDINGS

In 2019 the total commercial Greenlip/Brownlip abalone catch was 50 t whole weight (Greenlip 31 t and Brownlip 19 t), which was 81% of the combined TACC (62 t whole weight) and represents the lowest catch in 50 years (Greenlip/Brownlip Abalone Figure 2). The lower catch in 2019 was due to the reduction in Greenlip abalone TACC by 10.5 t whole weight in Area 3.

The implementation of the Ngari Capes Marine Park on the 10th April 2019 resulted in the Brownlip abalone TACC in Area 3 being reduced by 1 t (Hesp *et al.* 2008). The combined recreational catch of both species estimated at 8 t, which was derived from a 2007 telephone diary survey, is still considered sufficiently accurate.



GREENLIP/BROWNLIP ABALONE FIGURE 2.

Commercial Greenlip and Brownlip abalone catch (t, whole weight) by season as recorded against the nearest calendar year.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Greenlip abalone (Inadequate)

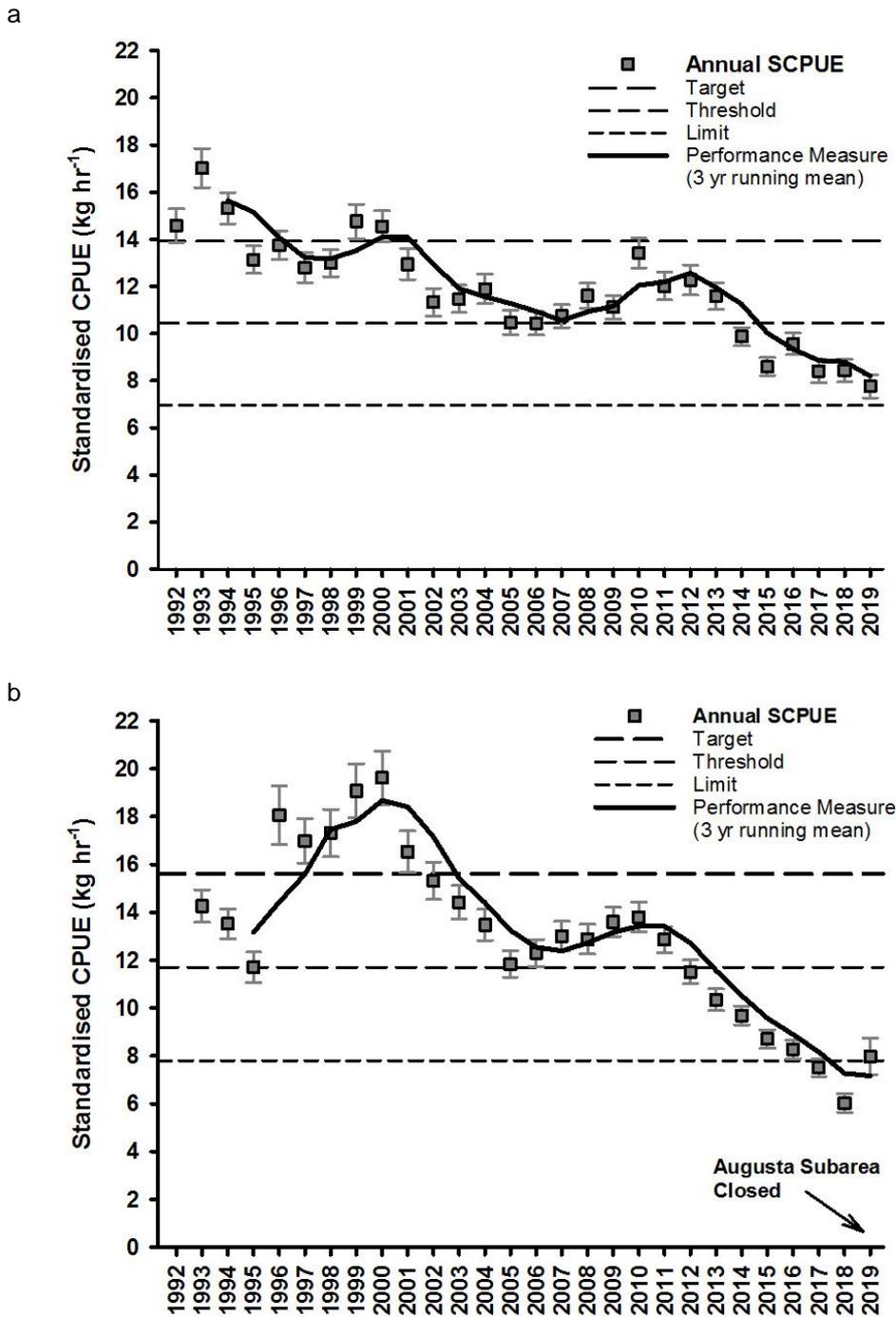
Greenlip abalone are distributed from south-west WA across southern Australia to Victoria and Tasmania. A recent genomic study suggests the existence of one single Greenlip abalone population along the WA coast but with five adaptive populations (Sandoval-Castillo *et al.* 2018). The fishery has a legal minimum length of 14.5 cm in Area 2 and 15 cm in Area 3, which allows 2–5 years of spawning to occur before recruitment to the fishery.

To determine the TACCs for each management area the stock status is assessed by, the performance indicator (PI) of standardised catch per unit effort (SCPUE) as a 3-year mean which uses commercial catch and effort statistics, and other measures such as fisheries-independent sampling. In Management Area 2 (Esperance) there has been a declining trend in annual SCPUE and PI since 2012. The PI is currently below the threshold but above the limit reference level (Greenlip/Brownlip Abalone Figure 3a).

In Management Area 3 (Albany) the annual SCPUE and PI declined between 2010 and 2018.

In 2018 both the annual SCPUE and PI were below the limit reference level (Greenlip/Brownlip Abalone Figure 3b). In 2019 the major component of Area 3 (Augusta) was closed to fishing and the TACC reduced to 4 t (whole weight). The increase in SCPUE in 2019 represents only the open regions of Area 3. Analysis of raw catch rate, average meat weight per individual and length-frequency trends also support evidence of the declining trend (2010-2019). However, small increases in meat weight per individual have occurred over the last 2 to 3 years. Fishery-independent surveys in the Augusta region indicate total density of Greenlip abalone at record low levels for the last 5 years, while there has been a slight increase in densities of juvenile animals (4 – 8 cm shell length) in the last 2 years after it was at record low levels between 2014 and 2017. A reduction in TACC has occurred in Areas 2 and 3 in response to the decline (see Harvest Strategy section).

Stock status of Greenlip abalone is considered **inadequate**.



GREENLIP/BROWNLIP ABALONE FIGURE 3.

The standardised CPUE (kg.hr⁻¹) for Greenlip abalone with the performance indicator (3 year running mean) and reference levels (target, threshold and limit) in Management Area 2 (a) and Area 3 (b).

Brownlip abalone (Adequate)

Brownlip abalone are limited to WA and distributed from the south-west to the WA/SA border. There is evidence to suggest Brownlip abalone are genetically similar to, and potentially considered conspecific with, Blacklip abalone (*Haliotis rubra*) (Brown and Murray 1992), which are distributed east from WA/SA border to northern NSW and Tasmania. Estimates of Brownlip abalone biological characteristics can be found in Strain *et al.* (2017), and given the fishery has a legal minimum length of 14.5 cm in Area 2

and 15 cm in Area 3 it allows 2–4 years of spawning to occur before recruitment to the fishery.

The stock status is assessed using commercial catch and effort statistics, and an integrated model. Trends in the PI (3 year mean of SCPUE) were used for the assessment of the 2019 TACC for each management area. In Management Area 2 (Esperance) the annual SCPUE and PI for Brownlip abalone were relatively stable above the target reference level between 1999 and 2011. However, over the next four seasons they

declined markedly before levelling off below the threshold but above the limit reference level. During the last 3 seasons the annual SCPUE has fluctuated around the threshold reference level and in 2019 the PI has approached this level. In Management Area 3 (Albany) the annual SCPUE and PI for Brownlip abalone fluctuated greatly during 1999 to 2012 (above the threshold). A relatively stable, increasing trend from the threshold to the target has been observed from 2011 to 2017, with substantial increases occurring in 2018 and 2019 to the high levels recorded during the 2000's above the target reference level.

An integrated length-based model has been fitted to commercial catch and catch rate data, length composition data and modelled growth of Brownlip abalone from Management Areas 2 and 3 combined (Strain *et al.* 2017). The integrated model estimated the spawning biomass (relative to that for an unfished stock) was above the target reference level in 2018. Consequently, the stock status of Brownlip abalone is considered to be **adequate**.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Divers have the ability to target abalone of choice (species, sizes and quality of abalone) and do not inadvertently harvest bycatch in their normal fishing activities. The only potential listed species interaction is with the white shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*), which has been known to attack divers. Most divers now use diving cages and/or electronic shark deterrent devices for their personal protection, and are recording their encounters with white sharks. **Negligible** risk.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

The fishing activity makes minimal contact with the habitat, which typically consists of hard rock surfaces in a high wave-energy environment. As abalone are drift algae feeders, their removal is unlikely to result in any change to the algal cover in fished areas, and hence it is considered unlikely that the fishery has any significant effect on the food chain in the region. **Negligible** risk.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

There are 20 vessels operating in the Commercial Greenlip/Brownlip Abalone Fishery, employing approximately 40 divers and deckhands. The dispersed nature of the Greenlip/Brownlip

Abalone Fishery means that small coastal towns from Busselton to the WA/SA border receive income from the activity of divers. Recreational diving for Greenlip and Brownlip abalone is a small but active sector, with dive shops and vessel manufacturers benefiting from this activity. The recreational fishery provides a major social benefit to those community members that appreciate abalone as a delicacy. There were 16,385 recreational abalone licenses issued in 2019 that would have allowed fishers to participate in the recreational abalone fishery, although most of these would have targeted the Roe's Abalone Fishery in the Perth metropolitan area. **Medium** risk.

Economic

Estimated annual value (to commercial fishers) for 2019 was \$2.6 million, based on the estimated average price received by commercial fishers of \$149.83/kg meat weight (\$56.18/kg whole weight) for Greenlip abalone and \$116.75/kg meat weight (\$46.7/kg whole weight) for Brownlip abalone. Greenlip and Brownlip abalone prices increased again in 2019 and the price for Greenlip abalone is well above the then high prices of 10 to 15 years ago (e.g. \$127/kg meat weight in 2005). **High** risk.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy (Formal)

The harvest strategy (DoF 2017) uses SCPUE as a proxy for biomass as the key performance indicator, which are assessed against specified biological reference levels for both species in each management area. The TACCs (whole weight) have been set for the 2020/21 season using the harvest strategy, for Greenlip abalone they are 3 t in Area 1, 16 t in Area 2 and 11 t in Area 3, while for Brownlip abalone they are 150 kg in Area 1, 12.5 t in Area 2 and 11 t in Area 3.

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels

Commercial – Not Acceptable

Recreational – Acceptable

Commercial: 62 t (TACC) (3,440 – 5,270 fishing hours)

Recreational: Not formal

Commercial catch was below TACC due to commercial industry decisions. The commercial fishing effort (1970 hours) was also below the expected range. Greenlip abalone stock indicator below threshold reference level for Area 2 and open regions of Area 3. The TACC was reduced to 54 t and spatial closures enforced in Area 3 for the 2020 season (Greenlip abalone TACC at 22% of long-term levels). Recreational catch levels are relatively small and not considered a risk to stocks.

Compliance

The Department conducts regular inspections of commercial catch at both the point of landing and processing facilities to ensure the commercial industry is adhering to governing legislation. The recreational fishery has a level of enforcement appropriate to the distribution of recreational fishing effort.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with the Abalone Industry Association of Western Australia (AIAWA), the Southern Seafood Producers Association WA (SSPA) and licensees on operational issues. The Department convenes Annual Management Meetings through the Industry Consultation Unit at the West Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who are also responsible for undertaking statutory management plan consultation under a Service Level Agreement with the Department. Recreational consultation processes are facilitated by Recfishwest under a Service Level Agreement, although the Department undertakes direct consultation with the community on specific issues. Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

Consultation took place with industry on relatively minor operational changes to the *Abalone Management Plan 1992* and these matters have

been finalised. A Recovery Strategy for Area 3 Greenlip abalone will be finalised in 2020/21. The Department will also review the Harvest Strategy for the Western Australian Abalone Resource in 2020/21.

The commercial Greenlip/Brownlip abalone fishery has undergone full MSC assessment and achieved certification in 2017, with the 2nd surveillance audit completed during 2019 (<https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/western-australia-abalone-fishery/@@view>).

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

In the last few years there have been a number of changes which impact on fishery governance, and particularly on catch rates. Lease divers and using 2 divers per fishing day are more common, and industry size limits have been varied substantially above the legal minimum lengths. Fishery management arrangements may need to be reviewed over the next few years with commercial fishers in Area 3 considering a different industry management model. In addition, environmental effects such as weather conditions, and the effect of technology changes, continue to have significant impacts on diver efficiency.

The effect of above-average water temperatures on the abalone stocks including the marine heatwave period of 2011-2013, needs to be investigated further. Greenlip and Brownlip abalone have been assessed as a high risk to climate change effects. **High** risk.

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SOUTH COAST ESTUARINE AND NEARSHORE SCALEFISH AND INVERTEBRATE RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020



R. Duffy, D. Harris, D. Johnston and N. Blay

OVERVIEW

The South Coast Estuarine and Nearshore Scalefish and Invertebrates Resource (SCENSIR) covers three commercial fisheries (South Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery [South Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Figure 1] South Coast Salmon Managed Fishery, and the Open Access South Coast Fishery), and two non-commercial fisheries (recreational fishing and customary fishing) operating in estuaries and nearshore (defined as oceanic waters of less than 20 m depth) waters. The Open Access South Coast Fishery is due to be replaced by two managed fisheries (South Coast Nearshore Net Managed Fishery, and the South Coast Line and Fish Trap Managed Fishery) in 2021.

The majority of the commercial catch in this resource is taken by gill net, purpose-designed

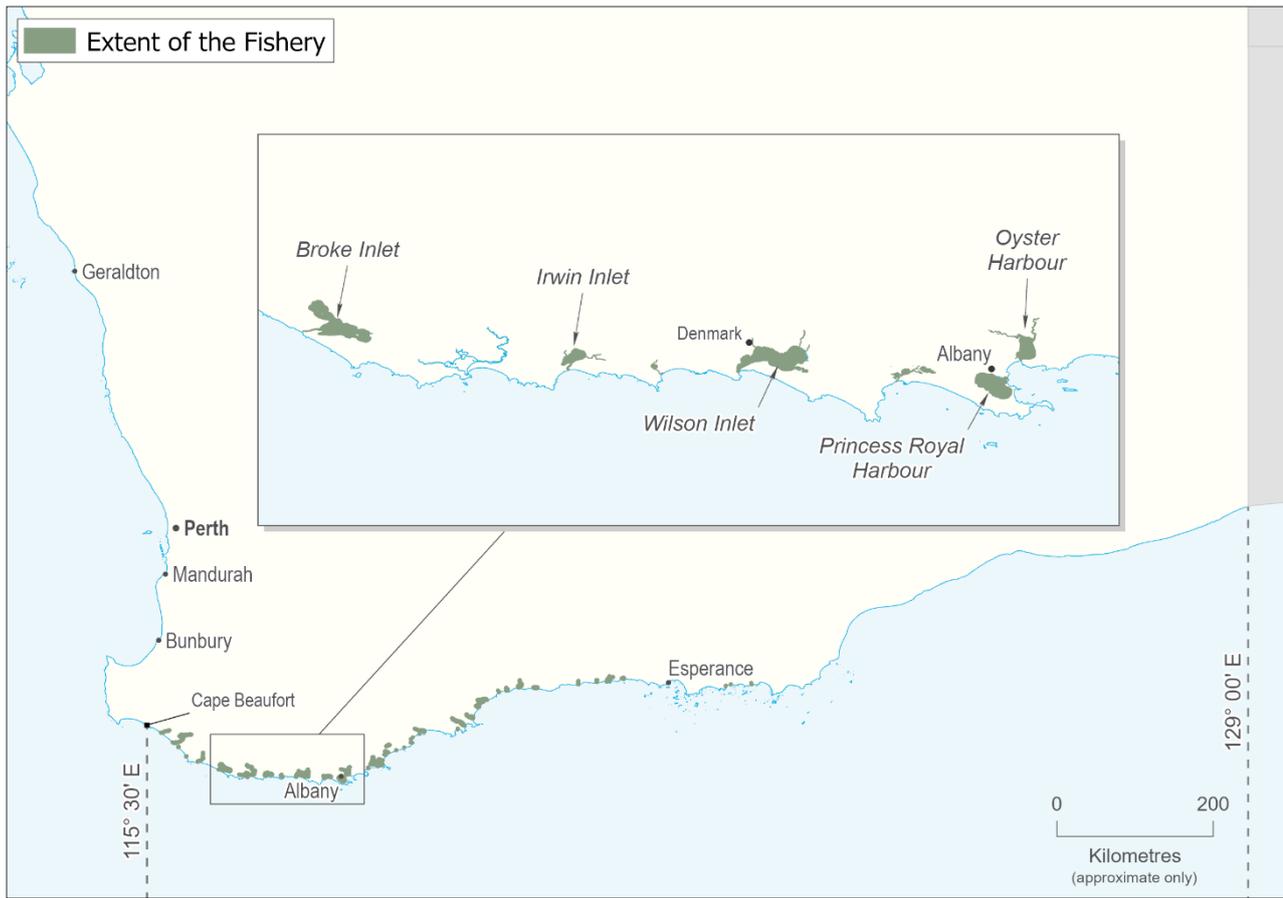
crab traps, haul net and beach seine; 'G traps' caught large quantities of herring until the fishery was closed in 2015. Fish capture in non-commercial fisheries occurs mainly by line (finfish), drop and scoop nets (target blue swimmer crabs), and there is also a small catch via recreational netting. Catch from commercial fisheries is monitored through self-reported, compulsory, monthly catch returns, recreational catch is monitored through surveys of fishers, customary catch has not been assessed and is considered minimal.

For more detailed descriptions of blue swimmer crab biology and South Coast crab fisheries see the Resource Assessment Report (Johnston et al., 2020).

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery	Total Catch 2019: 289 t	Recovering (Wilson Inlet Cobbler)
Recreational fishery	Total Catch 2017/18: 17–35 t (boat-based only)	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Western Australian salmon	Above target	Adequate
Australian Herring	Above threshold	Recovering
Cobbler (Wilson Inlet)	Below limit	Recovering
Black bream	Not assessed	Adequate
Blue swimmer crab	Not assessed	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low risk	Adequate
Protected Species	Negligible risk	Adequate
Habitat	Negligible risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low risk	Adequate
Social (high amenity)	Moderate risk	Acceptable
Economic (GVP < \$1m)	Moderate risk	Acceptable
Governance	Moderate risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	High risk	Acceptable

SOUTH COAST BIOREGION



SOUTH COAST NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FIGURE 1.

Map showing the boundaries, and primary finfish and crab fishing areas, of the South Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

In 2019, the total commercial catch of nearshore and estuarine finfish and crabs in the SCB was 289 t. The majority of this catch (213 t) was from the estuarine fisheries and 76 t from nearshore fisheries. The top 10 species (or species groupings), by weight, caught in this resource are shown in South Coast Estuarine and Nearshore Scalefish and Invertebrate Resource Table 1.

Since 1990 there has been a major decline in total catch in each of the main commercial finfish fisheries, resulting in a steady decline in commercial production in the SCB. This has been due to a complex suite of drivers, including effort reductions, changing environmental conditions,

changing market demands, and declining abundance of some species.

The estimated boat-based recreational harvest ranges for the top 10 nearshore and estuarine scalefish species in the South Coast were steady at 26 t (95% CI 17–35 t) in 2017/18 compared with 17 t (95% CI 13–21) in 2015/16, 25 t (95% CI 20–30) in 2013/14, but lower than 44 t (95% CI 37–52) in 2011/12 (Ryan *et al.* 2019). The boat-based recreational harvest range for blue swimmer crab in the SCB in 2017/18 was estimated to be between 0-0.14 t (95% CI), representing <1% of state wide catch (Ryan *et al.*, 2019). No recent estimates of shore-based recreational catches are available.

SOUTH COAST ESTUARINE AND NEARSHORE SCALEFISH AND INVERTEBRATE RESOURCE

TABLE 1.

Catch (tonnes) of top 10 species (by weight in 2019) by commercial fisheries in the South Coast Estuarine and Nearshore Scalefish and Invertebrates Resource in the previous five years.

Species	Scientific name	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Black Bream	<i>Acanthopagrus butcheri</i>	29.7	71.9	76.8	50.9	63.8
Western Australian Salmon	<i>Arripis truttaceus</i>	119.3	5.0	50.4	51.5	59.6
Estuary Cobbler	<i>Cnidoglanis macrocephalus</i>	53.3	70.2	60.6	37.2	35.0
Blue Swimmer Crab	<i>Portunus armatus</i>	53.5	23.1	10.5	7.3	19.0
Sea Mullet	<i>Mugil cephalus</i>	17.7	27.8	28.0	18.0	18.0
King George Whiting	<i>Sillaginodes punctatus</i>	22.5	17.2	8.7	11.9	17.1
Australian Herring	<i>Arripis georgianus</i>	23.7	20.9	38.9	19.9	16.6
Pink Snapper	<i>Chrysophrys auratus</i>	4.4	10.4	3.0	2.4	11.2
Tarwhine	<i>Rhabdosargus sarba</i>	7.5	12.1	8.2	8.0	9.8
Other species	NA	45.8	47.3	43.8	42.8	39.1
Total	NA	377.4	305.9	328.9	249.9	289.2

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

The status of each stock listed below is assessed using a weight-of-evidence approach that considers all available information about the stock. The species reported below, Western Australian Salmon, Australian Herring, Estuarine Cobbler and Black Bream are those species currently identified as indicator species (Department of Fisheries 2011). Use of the indicator species approach for the SCENSR is currently under review. Blue Swimmer Crab catch has been included in this year's report as increasing warmer temperatures (such as the 2011 extreme marine heatwave), which are influenced by the strength of the Leeuwin Current, have resulted in substantial increases in crab catches on the south coast.

Western Australian Salmon (Sustainable-Adequate)

Commercial catches have been at historically low levels since 2011 as a result of weak market demand and low wholesale prices (historical landings in WA were primarily sold as bait) (South Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Figure 2). In 2019 the catch of salmon within the Southern Bioregion in was 59.6 t. The majority of the catch, 56.5 t, was taken within the South Coast Salmon managed Fishery.

The estimated boat-based recreational harvest range for Western Australian Salmon in the South Coast was lower in 2017/18 (<1 t) compared with 2015/16 (95% CI 1–5 t), 2013/14 (2–5 t) and 2011/12 (4–11 t) (Ryan et al. 2019). Shore-based recreational catches are not estimated but believed to be substantial for this species.

The breeding component of this stock resides in WA, with only immature/nonbreeding fish

occurring in South Australia and Victoria. The assessment is based on catch data from each jurisdiction and recent (2012-2015) age composition data from WA. Analyses based on catch curves, a per recruit model, an equilibrium age structured model (Wise and Molony 2018), and a stock reduction model (catch MSY) indicate that the current rate of fishing mortality is relatively low (less than natural mortality) and biomass is likely to be well above the target level of 40%. On the basis of this evidence, the western Australian salmon breeding stock is classified as **sustainable – adequate**.

Australian Herring (Sustainable-Recovering)

Commercial catches are at historically low levels as a result of the closure of the 'G Trap' fishery (South Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Figure 3). In 2019 the catch of herring within the Southern Bioregion of 16.6 t, is well down on historic highs. This small catch is shared between open access fisheries and the South Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery.

The estimated boat-based recreational harvest range for Australian Herring in the SCB was 1.9–2.6 t (95% CI), in 2017/18 (Ryan et al. 2017), similar to 2015/16, but showing an ongoing declining trend from 2011/12 (Ryan et al. 2017). Shore-based recreational catches are not estimated but believed to be substantial for this species.

The breeding component of this stock resides in WA, with only immature/nonbreeding fish occurring in other States. There is currently a **Medium Risk** to the stock, determined by a weight-of-evidence assessment workshop held in

SOUTH COAST BIOREGION

2017 (Wise and Molony 2018). The workshop was attended by DPIRD staff, South Australian scientists and managers, independent scientists, and commercial and recreational fishing industry representatives. Stock biomass is projected to continue to increase under current management arrangements. On this basis, the Australian herring stock is classified as **sustainable – recovering**

Estuarine Cobbler (Sustainable-Recovering - Wilson Inlet)

In WA, cobbler occurs in marine and estuarine waters but is primarily caught by commercial fishers in estuaries. Landings by recreational fishers are negligible (Smallwood and Sumner 2007, Ryan et al. 2017). Each estuary hosts a discrete stock of cobbler, which is genetically distinct to other estuarine populations and also distinct from populations in adjacent ocean waters (Ayvazian et al. 1994).

In 2019 a total of 35 t was caught, less than the average catch over the last 5 years (51.2t (± 13.3 95%CI)). The majority of the catch, 34.7 t was taken by the South Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery (South Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Figure 4). The largest portion of the catch comes from a single estuary (68% from Wilson Inlet).

A Level 4 assessment completed in 2020 found a High Risk to the sustainability of the Wilson Inlet stock based on catches of over 50 t, that occurred prior to 2018. Catches since 2018 have been less than 40 t, and at this level the risk has been reduced to moderate. The stock status of estuarine cobbler in Wilson Inlet is used as a proxy for the status of estuarine cobbler in all south coast estuaries, therefore estuarine cobbler in the SCENSF is considered as **sustainable - recovering**.

Black bream (Sustainable-Adequate)

Black bream is an estuary-dependent species, with little movement between estuaries. Each estuarine population of black bream represents a genetically discrete stock (Chaplin et al. 1997).

In 2019 the catch of bream within the Southern Bioregion in 2019 of 63.8 t, nearly all of which was taken by the South Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery (South Coast Estuarine and Nearshore Scalefish and Invertebrate Resource Figure 5). Approximately 60% of the catch occurs in two estuaries, Wilson inlet and Beaufort Inlet (South Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Figure 5).

Total commercial catches in south coast estuaries have followed an increasing trend since the 1970s, suggesting an increasing availability of this species across the Bioregion. Black bream catches typically show large inter-annual fluctuations within each south coast estuary in response to environmental factors, particularly river flow.

The estimated boat-based recreational harvest of black bream in the SCB in 2017/18 (1.6 – 3 t (95% CI), was similar to previous years (2015/16: 1-6 t, 2013/14: 1-3 t, 2011/12: 3-11 t estimates) (95% confidence intervals; Ryan et al. 2017). The current shore-based recreational catch is unknown, but is believed to comprise a significant share of the catch of this species.

On the basis of the above evidence, South Coast Bioregion black bream stocks are classified as **Sustainable - adequate**.

Blue swimmer crab (Sustainable-Adequate)

The SCEMF reported a total annual blue swimmer crab catch of 19 t for 2019, more than double the 7.3 t landed in 2018 (South Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Figure 6). Most crabs were caught using dedicated traps in Oyster Harbour (5.5 t) and Princess Royal Harbour (4.4 t), and as by-product from the gill net fishery in the Wilson Inlet (5.7 t). The boat-based recreational harvest range for blue swimmer crab in the SCB in 2017/18 was estimated to be between 0-0.14 t (95% CI), representing <1% of state wide catch (Ryan et al., 2019).

Stock abundance of blue swimmer crabs in the SCB appears to be heavily influenced by the strength of the warm, southward flowing Leeuwin Current. Crabs recruit to these waters during strong Current years which result in warmer water temperatures, with subsequent catch and effort highly variable in response to these pulses of abundance. The two peaks in abundance in the last 20 years have been as a result of the 1999 and 2011-2013 marine heatwaves.

While the size of stock and relative exploitation level along the south coast is not fully understood, the relatively low level of commercial and recreational catch and effort suggests that blue swimmer crab stocks in the SCB are **sustainable-adequate**.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

The small-scale commercial fisheries in nearshore and estuarine waters mainly use gill, seine and haul nets that are deployed in a targeted manner. Few non-target species are taken. Mesh size regulations ensure that target species caught by these methods are within appropriate size ranges. Minimal discarding occurs because virtually all fish taken can be retained and marketed. Recreational fishers mainly use line-based methods in nearshore and estuarine waters. This method can result in the capture and release of non-target species and undersized fish. The risks

associated with post-release mortality vary considerably among species. In general, fish in nearshore and estuarine waters are captured from shallow depths and have lower risks of barotrauma-related injuries than deep water oceanic species and so bycatch species are at **low risk**.

Blue swimmer crab traps are purpose-designed to minimise the capture of non-target species and undersized crabs. The majority of fish and other bycatch species escape through the trap entrance gaps when the trap is soaking or hauled. The small quantity of bycatch that is caught and returned by commercial crab fishers is considered to pose a **negligible risk** to these stocks.

Protected Species

It is compulsory for commercial fishers to report all interactions with protected listed marine species. New Zealand fur seals and Australian sea lions are occasionally surrounded by beach seine nets used in the South Coast nearshore and estuarine fisheries, but are released immediately by the fishers. This is possible because seine netting is a labour-intensive operation and the fishing team will immediately notice a seal in the net. Fishers are able to release a seal from their seine net without injury to the animal. There have been no reports of incidental mortalities of seals in these fisheries and it is believed that the present level of interaction (direct and indirect) is not a significant threat to the populations of fur seals and sea lions. An assessment of the impact of interactions is performed on an annual basis and, if required, appropriate management plans will be devised to mitigate these interactions. The current risk is considered to be **negligible**.

Birds such as pelicans, cormorants and shearwaters sometimes interact with commercial fishing nets in estuaries and with recreational line-fishing gear but the risks to bird populations are considered to be **negligible**.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

The operation of gill nets, haul nets and crab traps over predominantly sand and mud bottoms is unlikely to have any impact on these habitats in estuaries and nearshore waters. Similarly, the risks from line fishing, and drop and scoop netting methods used by recreational fishers, to bottom substrates are **negligible**. Anchoring by recreational fishing vessels may have localised impacts on habitats such as seagrass.

Haul nets may be deployed over low or medium density seagrass. This type of net tends to 'roll' over the surface of seagrass beds without removing attached leaves or uprooting plants. At

times, haul nets may collect floating vegetation including seagrass leaves or algae. Hence the risk to benthic habitats are considered **negligible**.

Ecosystem

Excessive removal by commercial and recreational fisheries of certain species, such as Australian herring or Western Australian salmon, could potentially impact on prey and predator species including larger fish, cetaceans and seabirds. However, commercial fishing effort directed towards these species in recent years has been declining and is very low compared to historic levels. Recreational fishing effort directed towards Australian herring is relatively high. Total removals by fishing currently pose a **low risk**.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

The nearshore and estuarine recreational fisheries of the SCB provide a high social amenity for the WA community. There is currently a **moderate risk** to these values.

In 2018, there were approximately 12 commercial fishers employed in the South Coast Salmon Fishery and 37 in the South Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery. An additional commercial fisher is currently employed in the SCB targeting sand crabs by Exemption. Additional employment is created by these fisheries in processing and distribution networks and retail fish sales sectors. Western Australian salmon fisheries supply WA bait and human consumption markets. The South Coast Estuarine Fishery is an important source of fresh local fish and crabs to regional centres. The use of beach seine nets by commercial salmon fishers may temporarily impact on beach access by members of the public.

Economic

Estimated annual value (Gross Value of Production) to commercial fishers for 2019

Level 1: <\$1 million

This reflects commercial beach price of landed product only and does not include economic flow-on values such as employment within the fishery, additional employment/value in distribution networks, retail fish sales sectors and spending on fuel and equipment.

Recreational fishing in nearshore and estuarine waters generates economic activity in many regional towns in the SCB. Recreational fishing in the Great Southern area is estimated to be worth approximately \$45.8 million, and \$146.6 million in the Goldfields-Esperance area (McLeod and Lindner 2018).

SOUTH COAST BIOREGION

Due to low catches in commercial salmon and estuarine fisheries as well as the long term decline in commercial production the economic risk is considered **Moderate**.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

This resource is harvested using a constant exploitation approach, where the annual catch taken varies in proportion to variations in the stock abundance. Indicator species are used to determine the status of the resource. Indicator species are assessed annually based on catch and/or catch rate trends, where data are available (noting that recreational fishery data is limited for these stocks). Additionally, higher level assessments are periodically undertaken for some stocks. There is currently no formal harvest strategy developed for the commercial Western Australian salmon fisheries or the South Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery.

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels

Catch tolerance levels require a review. Previous measures were set for finfish, however, blue swimmer crabs now compose a substantial amount of the catch. In addition, salmon and herring fishing has undergone a substantial reduction in effort due to both market demand and management restrictions.

Compliance

The Department undertakes regular compliance inspections to ensure fishing is being undertaken in accordance with the governing legislation.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with the Southern Seafood Producers Association, and licensees on operational issues. Industry Management Meetings are convened by the Department through the West Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who are also responsible for undertaking statutory management plan consultation on behalf of the Department under a Service Level Agreement. Consultation with the recreational sector is undertaken via the peak representative body, Recfishwest and/or the Department's website when documents are released for public comment.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

In 2013, an independently reviewed stock assessment of Australian herring concluded the

stock was at an unacceptable level and subsequently management changes were introduced to help the stock recover. A herring stock assessment workshop was held in September 2017 which showed that Australian herring was recovering but had not yet recovered. As a result of the review current management arrangements are being maintained to support stock recovery. The next stock assessment is scheduled for 2021.

A trial of extended penning time for western Australian salmon is being undertaken in the SCSMF. The trial is scheduled to continue during 2020.

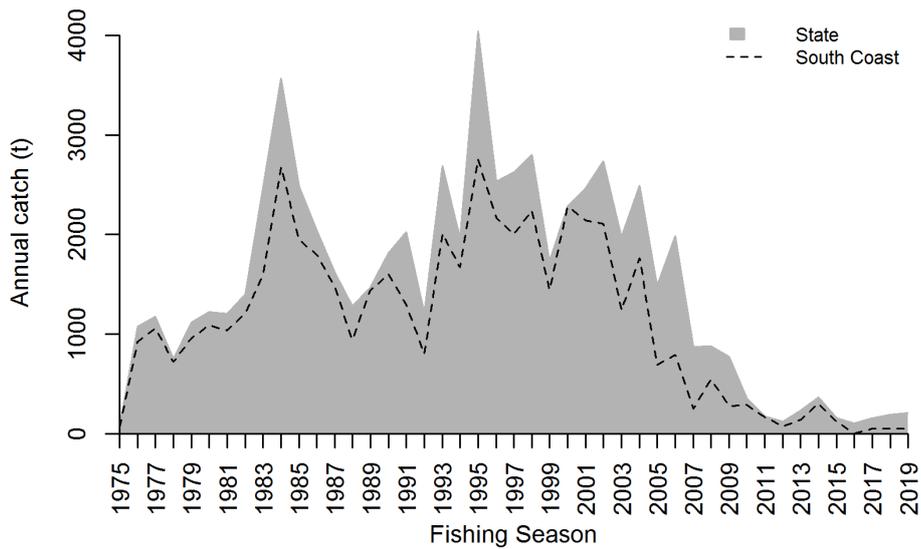
The Minister for Fisheries finalised the review of South Coast commercial line, fish trap and net fisheries in January 2019. The Department drafted two new management plans to give effect to the outcomes of the review. This includes a management plan for a South Coast nearshore net fishery that will regulate current open-access nearshore netting activities on the South Coast. The two new management plans are scheduled to commence in 2021.

A five-year Instrument of Exemption was issued endorsing one commercial fisher to target the sand crab (*Ovalipes australiensis*) using purpose-designed hourglass traps in waters between Augusta and Hopetoun.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

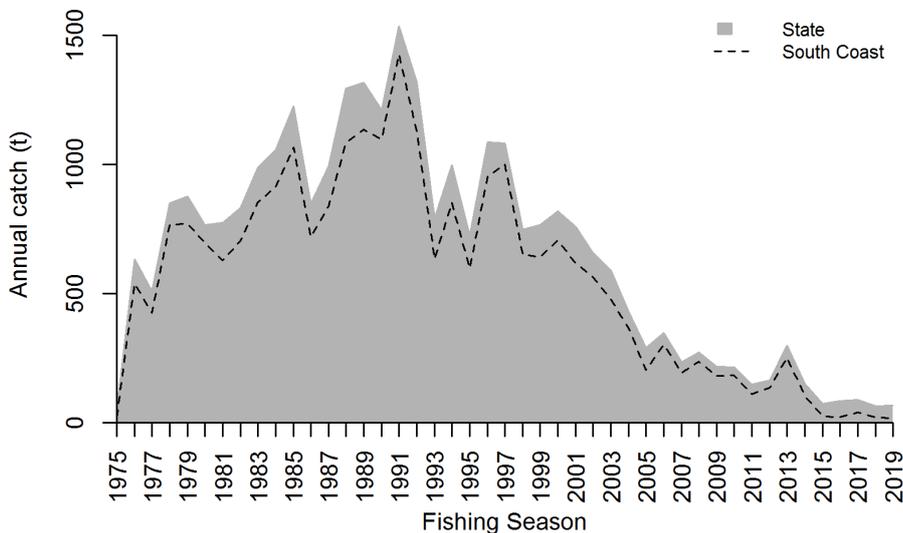
The abundance of fish species in SCB estuaries are strongly influenced by climatic and other environmental factors, independent of fishing. Catchment processes (e.g. runoff) can have major effects on estuary condition and fishery production. Annual variations in coastal currents (particularly the Leeuwin and Capes Currents) influence spawning, recruitment, distribution and catchability of species such as Australian herring, Western Australian salmon, and blue swimmer crab. Cool inshore temperatures due to a strong Capes Current provided a favourable 'corridor' for salmon to migrate northwards in 2016, with exceptionally high numbers of fish observed along the west coast during the autumn spawning period, and some travelling as far north as Exmouth.

Fluctuating market demand is a significant factor affecting the annual commercial catch level of many species. On the basis of market demand and price commercial fishers sometimes elect not to capture a school of fish, or release part of their catch, when a market is not available. This is particularly relevant to western Australian salmon. **High risk.**



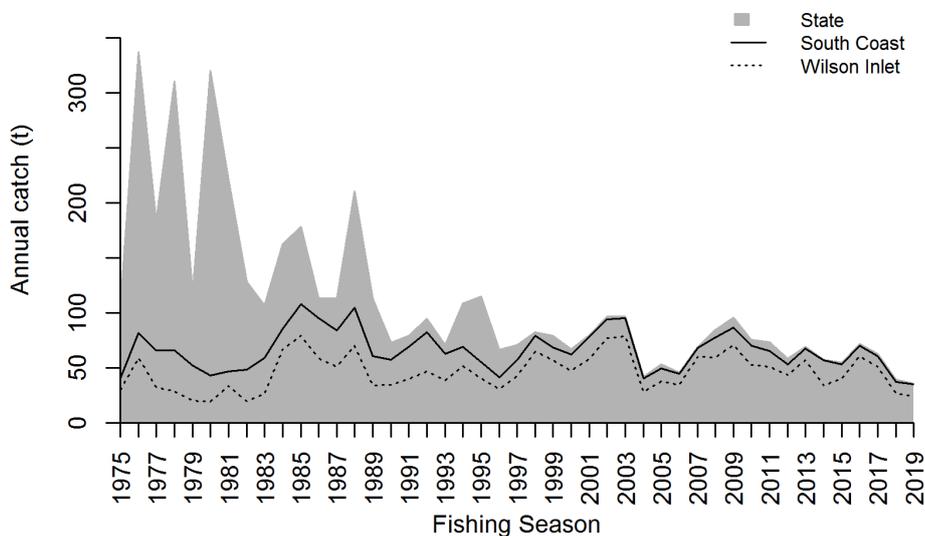
SOUTH COAST NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FIGURE 2.

Annual commercial catches of Western Australian salmon in the State and the South Coast Bioregion 1975 to 2019.



SOUTH COAST NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FIGURE 3.

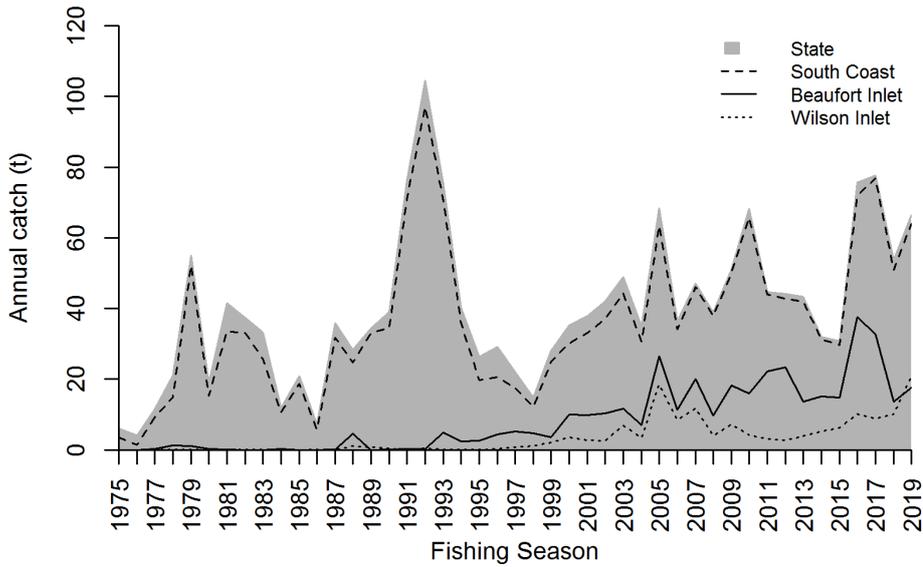
Annual commercial catches of Australian herring in the State and the South Coast Bioregion 1975 to 2019.



SOUTH COAST NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FIGURE 4.

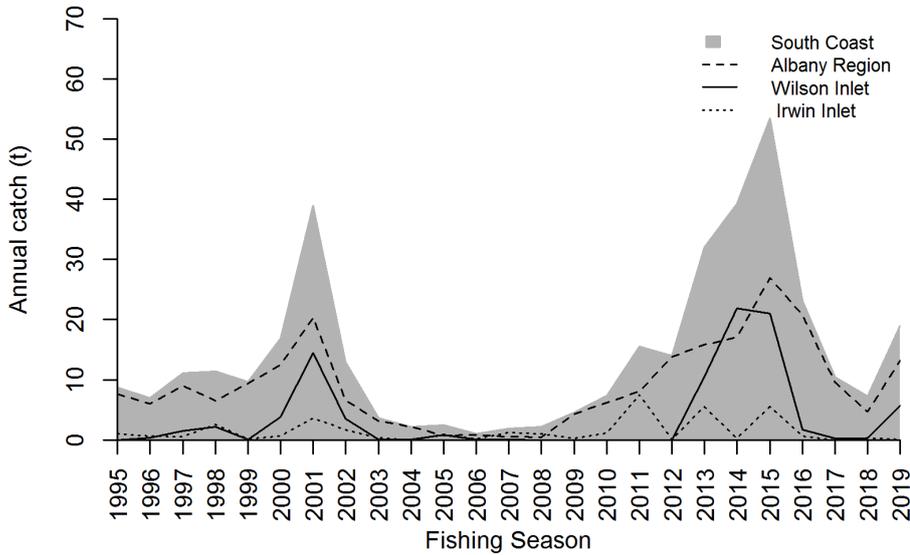
Annual commercial catches of estuary cobbler in the State, South Coast Bioregion and Wilson Inlet, 1975 to 2019.

SOUTH COAST BIOREGION



SOUTH COAST NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FIGURE 5.

Annual commercial catches of black bream in the State, South Coast Bioregion, and two major estuaries, Wilson Inlet and Beaufort Inlet, 1975 to 2019.



SOUTH COAST NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FIGURE 6.

Annual commercial blue swimmer crab catch for the South Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery by fishing area between 1995-2019. The Albany region incorporates primarily the Princess Royal and Oyster Harbours, and King George Sound.

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SOUTH COAST SMALL PELAGIC SCALEFISH RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

J. Norriss and S. Blazeski



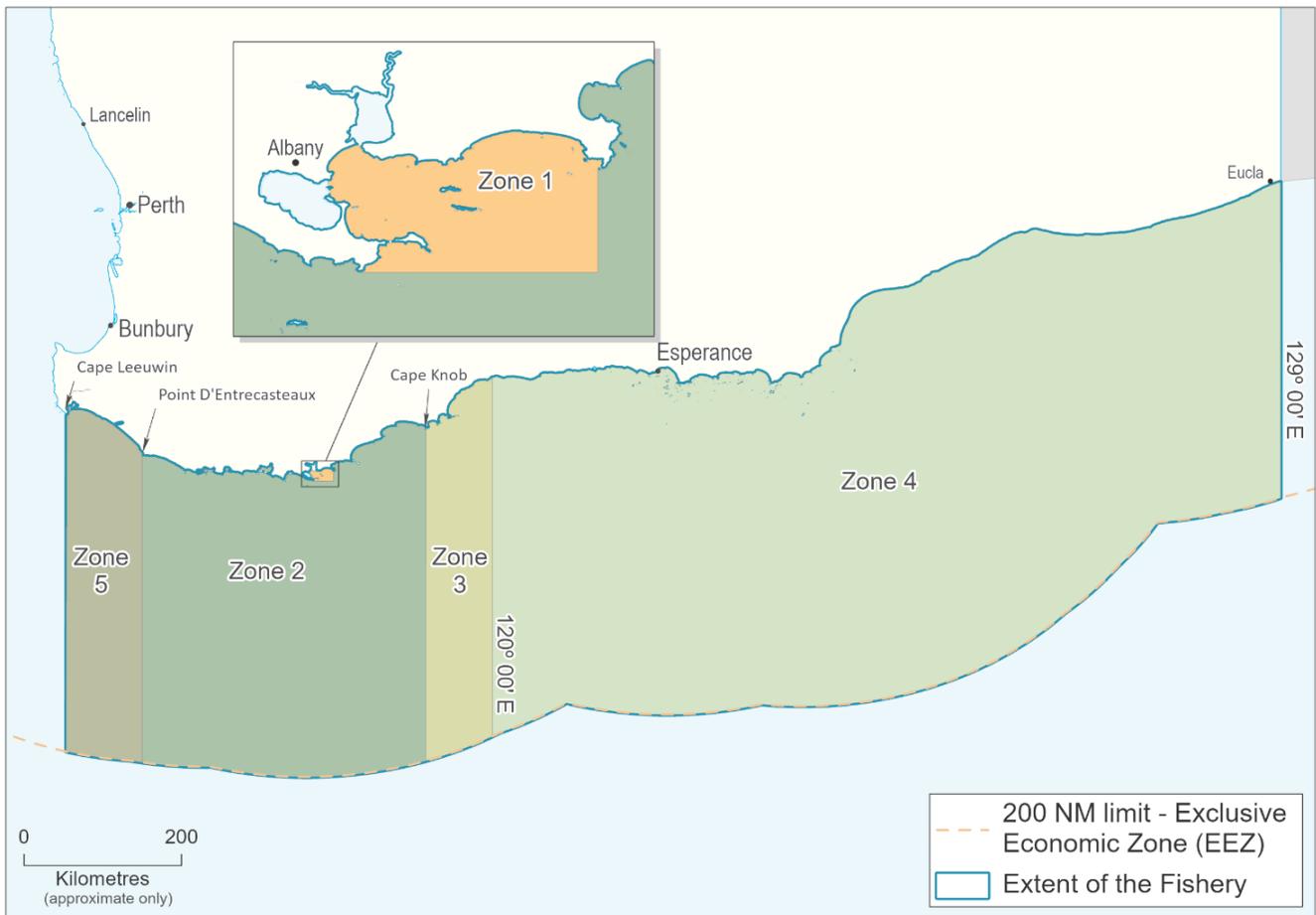
OVERVIEW

The five species comprising the south coast small pelagic scalefish resource are pilchards (*Sardinops sagax*), yellowtail scad (*Trachurus novaezelandiae*), Australian anchovy (*Engraulis australis*), scaly mackerel (*Sardinella lemuru*) and maray (*Etrumeus teres*). Pilchards and yellowtail scad are the indicator species and dominate the catch, taken predominantly by the quota managed, limited entry South Coast Purse Seine Managed Fishery (SCPSMF). These fishers use purse seine gear in waters between Cape Leeuwin and the South Australian border. The SCPSMF is also entitled to take sandy sprat (*Hyperlophus vittatus*) and blue sprat (*Spratelloides robustus*), which form part of the South Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish

Resource, however this catch is very small and infrequent. The SCPSMF has five management zones (South Coast Small Pelagic Figure 1), centred on King George Sound (Zone 1), Albany (Zone 2), Bremer Bay (Zone 3), Esperance (Zone 4) and a developmental zone near Augusta (Zone 5) where the recorded catch has been negligible in recent years. The SCPSMF was the largest tonnage fishery in WA during the late 1980s and early 1990s, until a pilchard virus devastated stocks in 1995 and 1998/99. While surveys demonstrated strong recovery by the mid-2000s, catches have remained well below the total allowable commercial catch (TACC), which was conservatively set at 5,683 t.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (5,683 t)	Total Catch 2018/19: 1,064 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (not applicable)	Total Catch 2017/18: <1 t (boat-based only)	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Pilchards	Above target	Adequate
Yellowtail scad	Above target	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Moderate risk	Monitoring, voluntary mitigation and industry consultation
Habitat	Negligible risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$1-5 m)	Moderate risk	Acceptable
Social (low amenity)	Low risk	Acceptable
Governance	Stable	Acceptable
External Drivers	Moderate risk	Acceptable

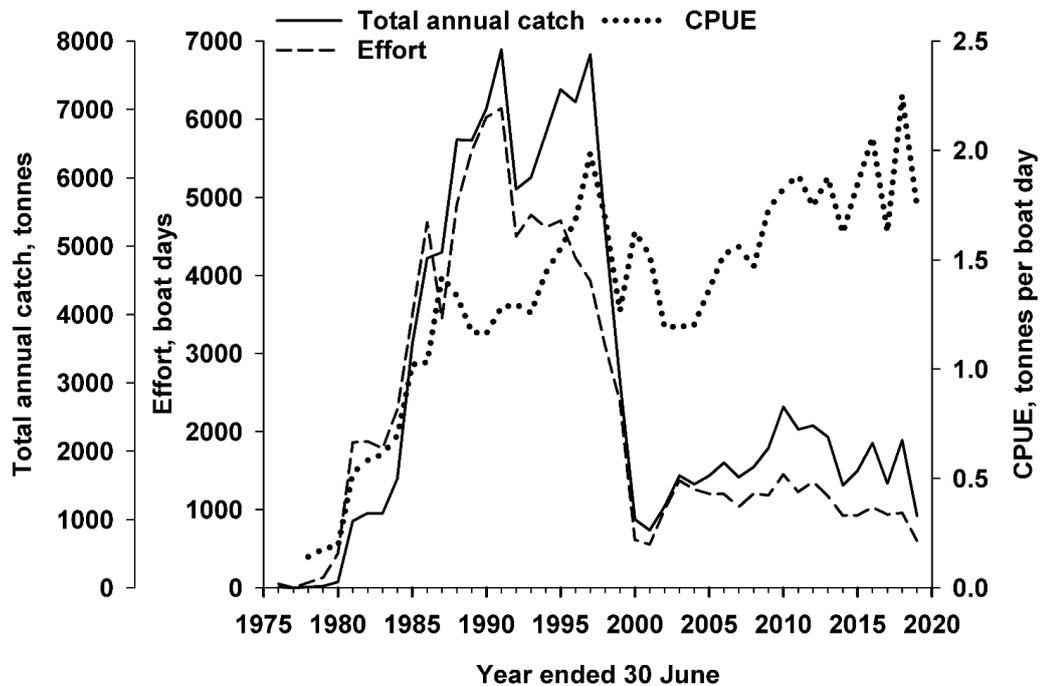


SOUTH COAST SMALL PELAGIC FIGURE 1.
Map showing boundaries of the South Coast small pelagics resource.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

The SCPSMF total catch of 1,064 t in the 2018/19 quota year included 1,052 t of pilchards (99%), a decrease of 51% from the previous year (South Coast Small Pelagic Figure 2). The remainder of the catch was predominantly yellowtail scad (11 t). The total catch was comprised of 656 t from King

George Sound (zone 1), zero from the greater Albany region (zone 2) and 407 t from Bremer and Esperance (zones 3 and 4) combined (South Coast Small Pelagic Table 1). Fishing effort in the 2018/19 quota year was 603 boat days, a 37% decrease from the previous year, by 8 vessels.



SOUTH COAST SMALL PELAGIC FIGURE 2.

Time series of total annual catch, effort and nominal catch per unit effort (CPUE) for pilchards in the SCPSMF from 1975/76 to 2018/19.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Pilchards (Sustainable-Adequate)

The pilchard is a small, low trophic level pelagic species that feeds by filtering plankton. Longevity is up to 9 years and maximum size 200-250 mm SL.

Population modelling, based on spawning biomass estimates (using the daily egg production method), catch-at-age and catch data, show that by the mid-2000s the stock had recovered from a mass mortality event in 1998/99 caused by a herpesvirus (Gaughan *et al.* 2008). The annual exploitation rate in mid-2000s was around 3 per cent (less than 3,000 t from an estimated spawning biomass of approximately 97,000 t), and the total annual catch has never exceeded 3,000 t since then. Since 2008/09 the nominal catch rate has remained relatively high (South Coast Small Pelagic Figure 2). The stock is therefore not considered to be recruitment overfished. Under the current level of fishing pressure, the biological stocks of pilchards are considered **sustainable-adequate**.

Yellowtail scad (Sustainable-Adequate)

Yellowtail scad is a schooling species common in temperate Australian waters. The population structure in WA is unknown. The species is known to reach a maximum age of 24 years and maximum length of about 330 mm FL.

Historically, relatively low prices have contributed to low annual catches in the SCPSMF, never exceeding 26 t since the pilchard stock recovery in the mid-2000s. The annual recreational catch has been negligible (< 1 t). This low level of fishing mortality suggests the biological stock is **sustainable-adequate**.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

The SCPSMF is a species-restricted fishery prohibiting the landing of any species not listed in

SOUTH COAST BIOREGION

the management plan. Small quantities of fish bycatch species are sometimes captured incidentally, but this occurs infrequently and the majority are released from the net unharmed. **Negligible** risk.

Protected species

SCPSMF operators must record all interactions with endangered, threatened and protected species on Catch and Disposal Records for each fishing trip and on statutory monthly Catch and Effort Statistics returns. Low capture rates of dolphins, sea lions and seals, usually released unharmed, have been recorded. Bycatch of Flesh-footed Shearwaters (FFS) are often recorded. FFS opportunistically feed on fish trapped inside the purse seine net and may drown if caught in net folds. Interactions with protected species are mitigated and managed through the implementation of a voluntary SCPSMF Code of Practice which is reviewed annually. A Special Management Period (SMP, March & April) has been designated under this Code, when the risk of FFS interactions is highest. During the SMP fishers avoid fishing at dawn when interaction risk is believed to be further elevated. Analyses of fishery dependent and independent observer data confirm correct timing of the SMP, and generated estimates of total annual mortalities ($\pm 95\%$ confidence limits) of 123 (52-251) and 172 (91-302) in the 2016/17 and 2017/18 quota years, respectively (Norriss *et al.* accepted). Although below sustainable limits estimated for WA's FFS population, the extent of other anthropogenic mortalities is unknown. **Moderate** risk.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

Purse seine nets are pelagic in nature, with no impact on benthic habitats during normal operations. On rare occasions nets may be deployed in shallow waters and come into contact with habitats such as seagrass beds. The light structure of the net is expected to cause minimal damage to benthic habits when this occurs, and kept to a small, localised area. Moreover, the likely net damage motivates fishers to avoid contact with reef or coral. The SCPSMF is therefore considered a **negligible** risk to these habitats.

Ecosystem

Pilchards are a relatively short lived, low trophic level species important for ecosystem structure and function. Their abundance is subject to large natural variation in response to environmental conditions. Catch quotas likely to be <10% of spawning biomass, and trophic modelling by the much larger South Australian pilchard fishery

(Goldsworthy *et al.* 2013) indicates minor impacts on top order predators. The ecosystem impact from fishing in the SCPSMF is considered **low** risk.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

Small pelagic fish are not a major target for recreational fishers and catches are low: the only species detected in the catch of boat-based recreational fishers during 2017/18 was <1 t of yellowtail scad (Ryan *et al.* 2019). Pilchards are an important bait for recreational fishers. **Low** risk.

Economic

Eight active vessels as well as local fish processing facilities in Albany, Bremer Bay and Esperance provided local employment during 2018/19. A small proportion of the catch is sold for human consumption but the large majority for bait, aquaculture feed or pet food. The estimated gross value of product (GVP) for the SCPSMF in 2018/19 was level 2 (\$1-5 million). There is a **moderate** risk to this level of return, considering possible management responses to seabird interactions.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The SCPSMF is managed under a constant catch harvest strategy approach, with catches limited to quotas (TACC) set for each management zone. Any proposed changes to the TACC are made with regard to total catches and nominal catch rates, in consultation with stakeholders.

Allowable Catch Tolerance Levels

The SCPSMF total annual catch for all species combined in the 2018/19 quota year was only 18.7% of the total allowable commercial catch (TACC, South Coast Small Pelagic Table 1). Catches are therefore at **acceptable** levels.

Compliance

SCPSMF licensees are allocated individual transferable quotas and catches are assessed against quotas through the lodgement of trip Catch and Disposal Records by fishers to the Department. Compliance is monitored via aerial patrols and both at-sea and land based inspections.

Consultation

Consultation with SCPSMF licensees on operational issues occurs on an as needs basis,

and more formally via industry Management Meetings convened by the West Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC) pursuant to a Service Level Agreement with the Department.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives/Outlook Status

The south coast small pelagic scalefish resource will continue to be monitored using catch and nominal catch rates.

The SCPSMF intends to apply to the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to be assessed against the Commonwealth Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries, for the

purpose of becoming an approved wildlife trade operation and gaining export approval. As a key part of this process, the Department expects to commence an Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) in early 2021. The ERA will involve a broad range of external stakeholders and identify and examine risks associated with all elements of the SCPSMF operations on the ecosystem.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Licensed operators in the Commonwealth Small Pelagic Fishery are permitted to take pilchards in waters adjacent to the West Australian coastline but no fishing in these waters was identified in 2017/18, the last year reported for that fishery (Marton and Mobsby 2018). **Moderate** risk.

SOUTH COAST SMALL PELAGIC TABLE 1.

2018/19 catches and total allowable commercial catches (TACC) for the major Management Zones of the South Coast Purse Seine Managed Fishery.

Management Zone	TACC (t)	2018/19 catch (t)	Active vessels	2018/19 catch as % of TACC
Albany (Zones 1 and 2)*	2,683	656	5	24.5%
Bremer Bay and Esperance (Zones 2 and 3)#	3,000	407	3	13.6%
Total for Fishery	5,683	1,064	8	18.7%

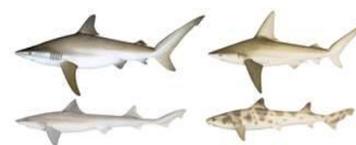
* Zero catch in zone 2.

Zones cannot be reported individually because insufficient vessels operated in 2017/18

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TEMPERATE DEMERSAL GILLNET AND DEMERSAL LONGLINE FISHERIES RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020



M. Braccini & N. Blay

OVERVIEW

The Temperate Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Fishery (TDGDLF) comprises the West Coast Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline (Interim) Managed Fishery (WCDGDLF), which operates between 26° and 33° S, and the then Joint Authority Southern Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Managed Fishery (JASDGLDF)¹, which operates from 33° S to the WA/SA border. Most fishers employ demersal gillnets to target mainly sharks with scalefish being a byproduct. Demersal longline is also

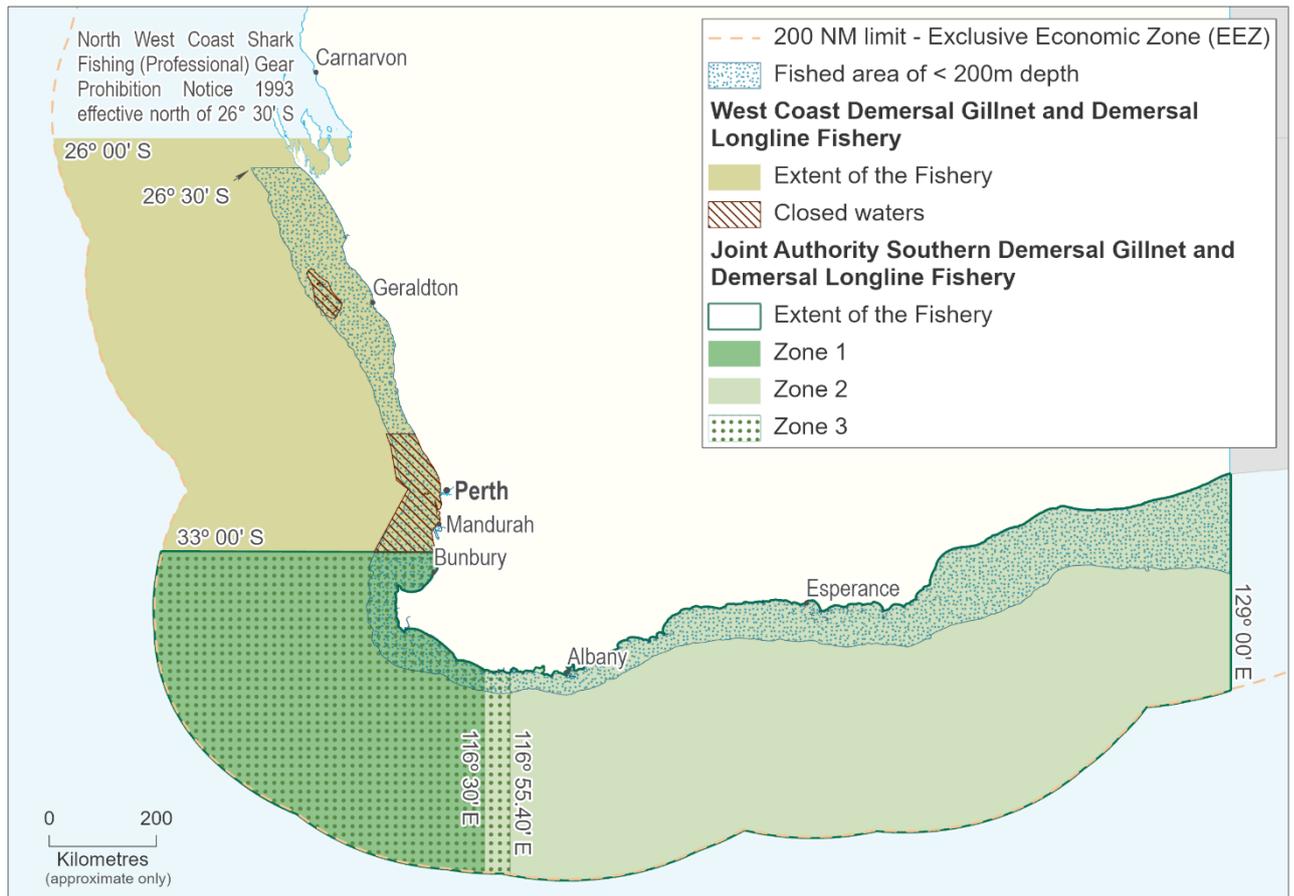
permitted but is not widely used. Gummy (*Mustelus antarcticus*), dusky (*Carcharhinus obscurus*), whiskery (*Furgaleus macki*), and sandbar (*C. plumbeus*) sharks are the main shark species targeted (~80% of the fisheries' shark catch) and they have been identified as indicators for the status of the temperate shark 'suite' as they represent the range of life history strategies of other shark species caught by these fisheries. For further details, see Braccini et al (2018) and SAFS (2018).

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch for indicator species)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (725–1,095 t)	Total Catch 2018-19 Sharks and rays*: 838 t Scalefish*: 132 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (not defined)	Total Catch 2017/18: < 10% of commercial catch	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Gummy shark	Above threshold	Adequate
Dusky shark	Above threshold	Recovering
Whiskery shark	Above threshold	Adequate
Sandbar shark	Above threshold	Recovering
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Negligible-Low Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$1-5 m)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Social (Moderate amenity)	Significant Risk	Unacceptable
Governance	Stable	Acceptable
External Drivers	Moderate Risk	Acceptable

*All reported weights are live weight

¹ The JASDGLDF transitioned from joint Commonwealth/State management to State only management in December 2018



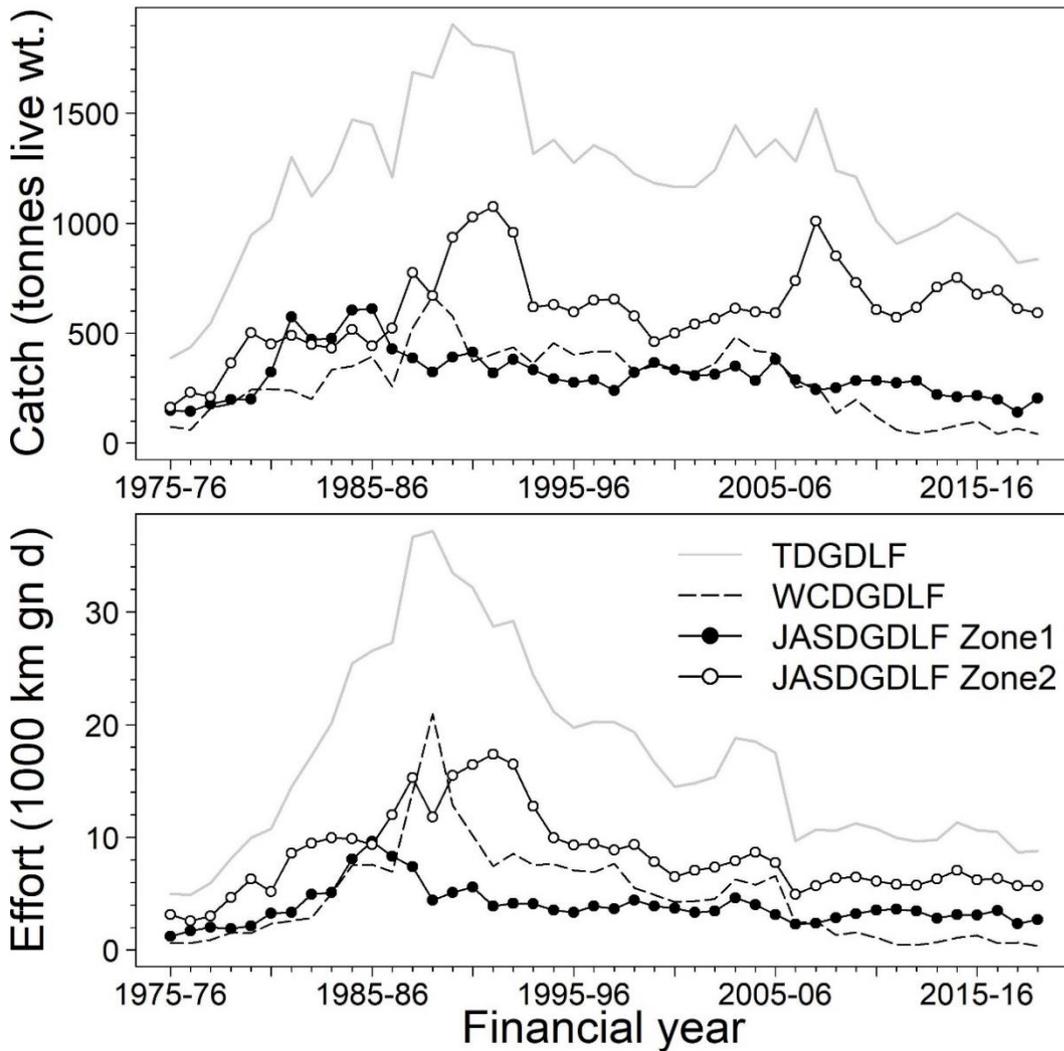
TEMPERATE DEMERSAL FIGURE 1.

Map showing boundaries of the Temperate Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Fishery.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

For the TDGDLF, reported catches of elasmobranchs and fishing effort peaked during the late 1980s and early 1990s and have stabilised at much lower levels in recent years (Temperate Demersal Figure 2). The catch of sharks in other WA commercial fisheries is **negligible** (< 10 t). Additionally, boat-based

recreational fishers retain very small numbers of sharks in WA (Ryan *et al.* 2019). Scalefish catches are reported in the West Coast and South Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Status Report chapters, respectively. For a detailed historic account of shark catch and effort in WA refer to Braccini *et al.* (2018).



TEMPERATE DEMERSAL FIGURE 2.

Total elasmobranch catches, and demersal gillnet and longline effort (in km gillnet days, km gn d⁻¹). Black circles = JASDGLF Zone 1; white circles = JASDGLF Zone 2; dashed black line = WCDGDLF; plain grey line = total from the three management zones.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Gummy shark (Sustainable - Adequate)

Previous calculations of catch rates defined fishing effort as the product of the net length used per day and the number of days fished per month. This resulted in a historic peak in catch rates in the mid/late 2000s, which coincides with the historic peak in catches, and a failure in the fitting of population dynamics models to this catch rate series. The peak in catch rates was partly due to a systematic increase in the number of hours fished per day in Zone 2 during that period of time. Hence, a new standardisation process was implemented where hours fished per day was included in the definition of fishing effort. Based on this, standardised catch rates have been stable since 2010 (Temperate Demersal Figure 2). The most recent weight of evidence assessment estimated a Low current risk level for the gummy shark stock, with 87%, 100% and 100% of the simulated current (2015-16) relative total biomass

trajectories being above the target, threshold and limit biomass reference points, respectively (Braccini *et al.* 2018). On the basis of the above, the current status of gummy sharks is **sustainable-adequate**.

Dusky shark (Sustainable - Recovering)

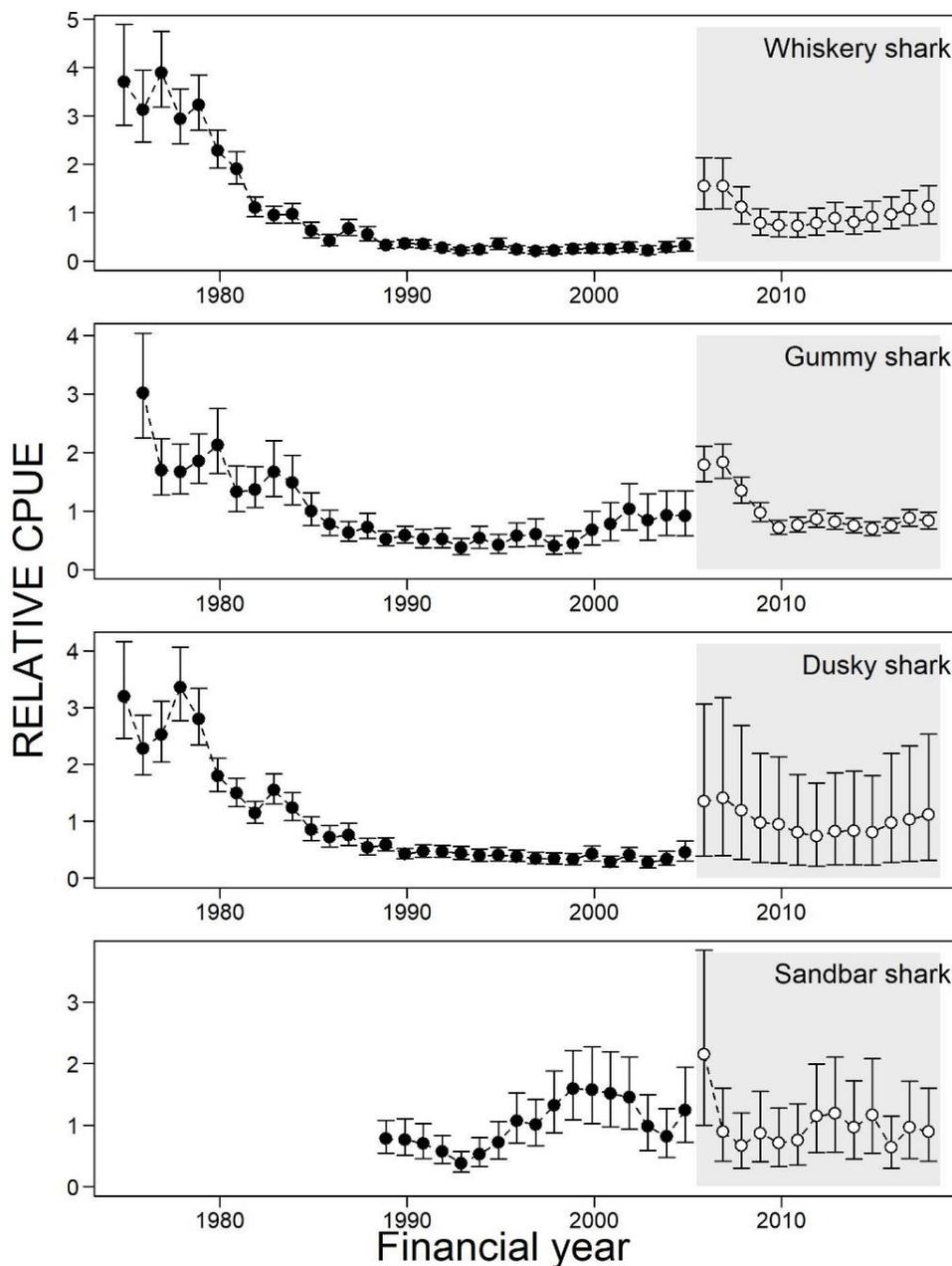
Standardised catch rates have been stable since 2009 (Temperate Demersal Figure 2). The most recent weight of evidence assessment estimated a Medium current risk level for the dusky shark stock, with 46%, 73% and 100% of the simulated current (2015-16) relative total biomass trajectories being above the target, threshold and limit biomass reference points, respectively (Braccini *et al.* 2018). Hence, current management arrangements are considered suitable to allow gradual recovery of the breeding stock. On the basis of the above, the current status of dusky sharks is **sustainable-recovering**.

Whiskery shark (Sustainable - Adequate)

Significant declines in standardised catch rates in the early 1980s (Temperate Demersal Figure 2) is likely a result of changes in targeting practices (Simpfendorfer *et al.* 2000). Since 2009, standardised catch rates have remained stable. The most recent weight of evidence assessment estimated a Medium current risk level for the whiskery shark stock, with 82%, 92% and 100% of the simulated current (2015-16) relative total biomass trajectories being above the target, threshold and limit biomass reference points, respectively (Braccini *et al.* 2018). On the basis of the above, the current status of whiskery sharks is **sustainable-adequate**.

Sandbar shark (Sustainable - Recovering)

Standardised catch rates have been fluctuating between 2007 and 2018 (Temperate Demersal Figure 2). The most recent weight of evidence assessment estimated a Medium current risk level for the sandbar shark stock, with 62%, 83% and 99% of the simulated current (2015-16) relative total biomass trajectories being above the target, threshold and limit biomass reference points, respectively (Braccini *et al.* 2018). In addition, recent annual catches have been well below allowable catch tolerance levels. On the basis of the above, the current status of sandbar sharks is **sustainable-recovering**.



TEMPERATE DEMERSAL FIGURE 2.

Relative annual standardised catch rates by species (mean and 95% confidence intervals). Each series has been normalised to a mean score of 1. The shaded area highlights the daily logbook time period.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

The TDGDLF have low levels of discarded bycatch of unsaleable species of sharks, rays and scalefish (McAuley & Simpfendorfer 2003). As maximum potential fishing effort is now explicitly capped at less than 70% of the mid to late 1990s levels, bycatch in all management zones has reduced. Based on ESD risk assessment of these finfish, all fishery impacts on stocks of bycatch species impose a **low risk** to their ongoing sustainability.

Protected Species

The TDGDLF has low interactions with listed species (McAuley & Simpfendorfer 2003).

For 2018-19, fishers reported catching and releasing 0 Australian sea lions (ASL), 1 alive turtle, 6 dead and 15 alive grey nurse sharks, and 2 dead and 13 alive white sharks (Appendix 2) and are therefore considered **negligible-low risk**. For a detailed description of species interactions refer to Braccini *et al.* (2018).

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

The level of effort in the TDGDLF is such that the gear is deployed infrequently over approximately 40% of the fisheries' areas and under normal circumstances the physical impact of the gear on the benthic habitat is minimal. Moreover, the very small footprint of each net would combine to make a very small percentage (< 5%) of the area that would be contacted by these gears annually therefore representing a **negligible risk** to benthic habitats.

Ecosystem

There is no evidence of any systematic change in species diversity, richness or trophic index (Hall & Wise 2011), indicating that the TDGDLF is not having a material impact on food chain or ecosystem structure therefore representing a **low risk** to the ecosystem. For a detailed description of habitat and ecosystem effects refer to Braccini *et al.* (2018).

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

Fishing returns reported that between 55 and 66 skippers and crew were employed in the

JASDGDLF and 12 skippers and crew were employed in the WCDGDLF during 2018-19.

As sharks are generally not targeted by recreational fishers in Western Australia, their direct social importance to this group is **negligible**. However, at the community level sharks generate a high level of community interest and debate, creating **moderate** social amenity and **significant** social risk.

Economic

Shark meat is mostly sold in the Western Australian fish and chip shop market (WCDGDLF and Zone 1 of the JASDGDLF) or sold to wholesalers in Adelaide and Melbourne (Zone 2 of the JASDGDLF). However, anecdotal evidence suggests that recent tourism expansion in the South West of the State may have resulted in a higher proportion of shark meat having been sold to restaurants and fish retailers around landing ports.

The estimated annual value (to fisheries) for 2018-19 is \$2.9 million and \$0.2 million for JASDGDLF and WCDGDLF, respectively (GVP level 2).

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The TDGDLF is managed under a constant catch harvest strategy. Although the harvest strategy has not been formally developed, the operational management objective of the TDGDLF has been 'to maintain the biomass of the fisheries' for the three traditional target stocks (gummy, whiskery and dusky sharks) at or above 40% of their unfished levels'. Management is via input controls in the form of transferable time/gear effort units and restrictions on mesh and hook sizes, net height ('drop') and maximum net length. Maximum acceptable effort levels for each management zone have been based on their respective 2001/02 (daily) levels (Zones 1 & 3 of the JASDGDLF: 84,075 km gn.hr⁻¹ or 3,503 km gn.d⁻¹; Zone 2 of the JASDGDLF: 144,102 km gn.hr⁻¹ or 7,205 km gn.d⁻¹; WCDGDLF: 67,692 km gn.hr⁻¹ or 2,832 km gn.d⁻¹).

The 2018-19 effort levels were maintained within these ranges (43,400 km gn.hr⁻¹ or 2,707 km gn.d⁻¹ for Zones 1 & 3 of the JASDGDLF; 105,700 km gn.hr⁻¹ or 5,702 km gn.d⁻¹ for Zone 2 of the JASDGDLF; 13,600 km gn.hr⁻¹ or 388 km gn.d⁻¹ for WCDGDLF).

Allowable Catch Tolerance Levels

The 2018-19 total catch of sharks and rays was 838 t (348 t, 195 t, 32 t, and 137 t for gummy, dusky, sandbar and whiskery sharks, respectively), similar to previous years and within the acceptable catch ranges (725-1,095 t for the

four key species and 350-450 t, 200-300 t, < 120 t and 175-225 t for gummy, dusky, sandbar and whiskery sharks, respectively). Whiskery catch was maintained below historical allowable levels due to reductions in targeted effort. Reported dusky shark catches are for *C. obscurus* only. In the past, dusky shark catches had been combined with copper shark (*C. brachyurus*) catches, which is a minor component, and recommended catch ranges were defined for the combined species. Therefore, the recommended catch ranges should be revisited as part of the development of a new harvest strategy.

The catch levels of both the commercial and recreational sectors indicate that the fishery performance for both sectors is considered **acceptable**.

Compliance

TDGDLF vessels are fitted with an Automatic Location Communicator (ALC) that enables the Department to monitor vessels using a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and manage compliance with temporal and spatial closures. The Department also undertakes regular vessel inspections to ensure fishing is being undertaken in accordance with the governing legislation.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with licensees on operational issues. Industry Management Meetings are convened by the West Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who are also responsible for statutory management plan consultation under a Service Level Agreement with the Department.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

In 2018, the TDGDLF was reaccredited under Parts 13 and 13A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The Wildlife Trade Operation export approval, includes conditions associated with monitoring and

reviewing the gillnet exclusion zones implemented in mid-2018. The gillnet exclusion zones were negotiated between the State and Commonwealth and are located around identified ASL colonies in the WCDGDLF and the JASDGDLF to address potential interactions between ASL and the TDGDLF.

Furthermore, following amendments to the Offshore Constitutional Settlement (OCS) arrangements that came into place 1 December 2018, the JASDGDLF transitioned from Joint Authority to State jurisdiction. As such, management arrangements for the Southern Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Fishery (SDGDLF) are now provided for under the *Southern Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Managed Fishery Management Plan 2018*, which also commenced on 1 December 2018.

The development of a formal harvest strategy for the SDGDLF and catch share arrangements for the associated Commonwealth managed fishery is proposed to commence in 2021.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

The TDGDLF key target species span multiple regional boundaries and sandbar and dusky sharks were targeted in the Northern Shark Fisheries. However, the risks to the stocks are currently low due to no fishing being undertaken in the Northern Shark Fisheries since 2008/09, low catches from other fisheries or catches from tightly-managed fisheries (gummy sharks).

Environmental drivers pose low risk to shark stocks. The main external risk to the viability of the TDGDLF is the introduction of Commonwealth Marine Parks (South-west Marine Parks Network introduced July 2018), State Marine Parks and ASL closures, which exclude the use of demersal gillnet and demersal longline in specific areas. The introduction of these spatial closures have resulted in the displacement of fishing effort which has implications for the interpretation of standardised catch rates. These external drivers represent a **moderate** risk.

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SOUTH COAST BIOREGION

Ryan KL, Hall NG, Lai EK, Smallwood CB, Tate A, Taylor SM, Wise BS 2019. Statewide survey of boat-based recreational fishing in Western Australia 2017/18. Fisheries Research Report No. 297, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia.

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SOUTH COAST DEMERSAL SCALEFISH RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

J. Norriss and S. Walters



OVERVIEW

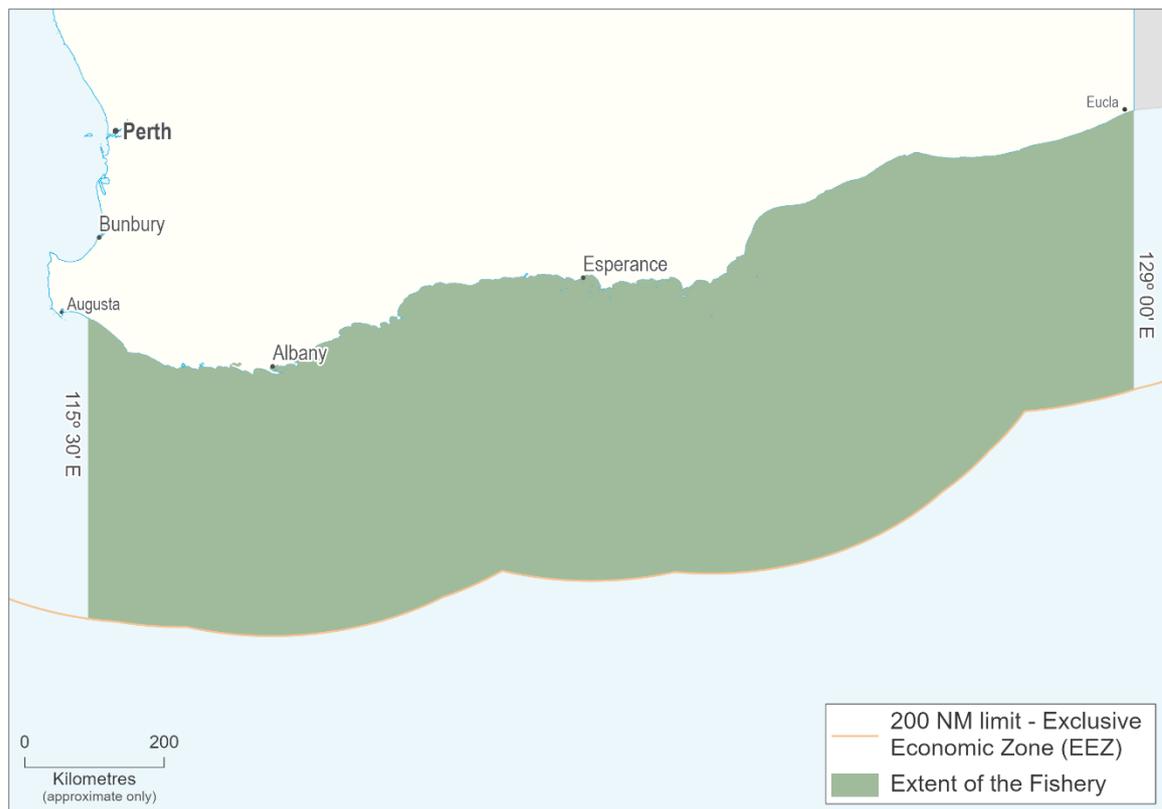
The south coast demersal scalefish resource (SCDSR) includes demersal species taken predominantly in marine waters deeper than 20 metres in the South Coast Bioregion (SCB). Indicator species are snapper (*Chrysophrys auratus*), Bight redfish (*Centroberyx gerrardi*), blue morwong (*Nemadactylus valenciennesi*), western blue groper (*Achoerodus gouldii*) and hapuku (*Polyprion oxygeneios*). Commercial fishers take these species predominantly by hook and line, however some species (e.g., blue morwong and western blue groper) by predominantly demersal gillnet as part of the Joint Authority Southern Demersal Gillnet and

Demersal Longline Managed Fishery (JASDGDLMF) (see Temperate Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Fisheries Resource Status Report). Snapper are also taken in estuaries by the South Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery using nets (see South Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Finfish Resource Status). Recreational and charter catches are almost exclusively boat-based using hook and line.

More details of biology and assesment can be found in Norriss et al. (2016) at www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/research_reports/frr276.pdf.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (not defined)	Total Catch 2017: 224 t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (not defined)	Total Catch 2017/18: 59–77 t (boat-based only)	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Snapper	Above threshold	Adequate
Bight redfish	Above threshold	Adequate
Blue morwong	Above threshold	Adequate
Western blue groper	Above target	Adequate
Hapuku	Above threshold	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low Risk	Acceptable
Listed Species	Negligible Risk	Acceptable
Habitat	Negligible Risk	Acceptable
Ecosystem	Low risk	Acceptable
Economic (GVP \$1-5 m)	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
Social (moderate amenity)	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Under Review	Under Review
External Drivers	Moderate Risk	Acceptable



SOUTH COAST DEMERSAL FIGURE 1.

Map showing boundaries of the south coast demersal scalefish resource.

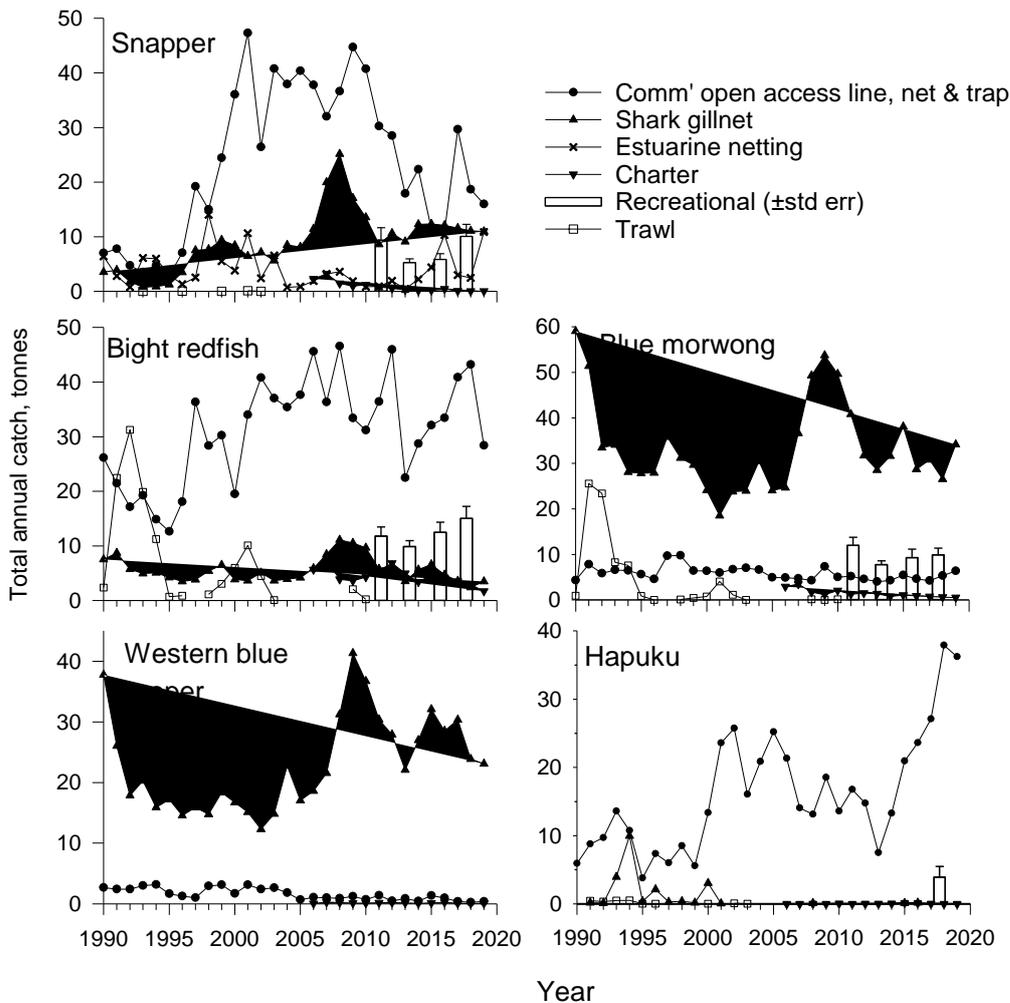
CATCH AND LANDINGS

The SCDSR total commercial catch of 224 t in 2019 was an 11% increase from 201 t in 2018. Catches for all indicator species remain within recent historical levels except for hapuku which was second highest on record (South Coast Demersal Figure 2).

The top 10 demersal species in the South Coast represented 99% of the boat-based recreational

catch (kept by numbers) in 2017/18. The estimated recreational harvest range for the top 10 demersal species (or groupings) in the South Coast were higher at 68 t (95% CI 59–77) in 2017/18 compared with 45 t (95% CI 38–51) in 2015/16, 33 t (95% CI 30–37) in 2013/14 and 54 t (95% CI 46–63) in 2011/12 (Ryan *et al.* 2019).

SOUTH COAST BIOREGION



SOUTH COAST DEMERSAL FIGURE 2:

Annual catches by sector for each demersal indicator species in the South Coast Bioregion from 1990 to 2019. Recreational harvest weights for western blue groper/hapuku were too small to be estimated for all/some years, respectively.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Demersal species on the south coast are typically long lived (≥ 24 years) and slow growing, making them inherently vulnerable to overfishing. Snapper in the SCB, and Bight redfish throughout their distribution in southern WA, comprise single genetic stocks. The stock structure of the other three indicator species is less well known.

Inshore Demersal (Sustainable-Adequate)

A weight-of-evidence assessment that incorporated catch-at-age sampling in 2013 and 2014 indicated risk profiles to be **moderate** for snapper, Bight redfish and blue morwong, and **low** for western blue groper. Fishing mortality and breeding stock levels for these species were therefore considered **sustainable-adequate** (Norriss *et al.* 2016).

Snapper and Bight redfish (Sustainable-Adequate)

Age-based estimates of fishing mortality (F) and spawning potential ratio (SPR) show these parameters were unlikely to have breached threshold reference levels (1.0 and 0.30, respectively), and had only a remote chance of breaching the limit reference levels (1.5 and 0.20 respectively). However, any significant increase in catches beyond recent historical levels would constitute an unacceptable risk.

Blue morwong (Sustainable-Adequate)

Age-based estimates of F and SPR for females show an almost zero likelihood of breaching threshold reference levels (1.0 and 0.30, respectively). Males were unlikely to have breached these thresholds and there was only a remote likelihood they breached the limit reference levels (1.5 and 0.20 respectively). There is only a slight capacity for increased catches beyond recent historical levels before risk levels become unacceptable.

Western blue groper (Sustainable-Adequate)

Age-based estimates of F (both sexes) and SPR for females shows an almost zero likelihood of breaching threshold reference levels (1.0 and 0.30 respectively). The male SPR estimate showed that a breach of the threshold was unlikely and a breach of the limit reference level only a remote possibility. There is a small capacity for increased catches beyond recent historical levels.

Hapuku (Sustainable-Adequate)

An age-based assessment from sampling of the 2005 and 2006 catches estimated F to be within target and threshold levels (Wakefield *et al.* 2010). A recent, updated analysis of that data that assumed variable recruitment and age-based selectivity, generated two spawning potential ratio estimates ($\pm 95\%$ c.i.) using the per recruit and dynamic pool methods: 0.48 (0.43 - 0.54) and 0.44 (0.38 - 0.50) respectively, indicating a high likelihood that spawning biomass was above the threshold reference level of 0.30. Simultaneously generated estimates of fishing F and natural mortality M year1 were 0.045 (0.04-0.05) and 0.09, respectively, giving an F/M estimate of 0.50 (0.42 - 0.60), well below the threshold reference level of 0.67. The new analysis shows breeding stock was adequate, and fishing mortality sustainable, at the time the sample was collected. However, catches have increased to record highs in recent years. Age samples have been recently collected and a new, updated assessment is underway.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Line fishing for demersal species using baited hooks is highly selective for demersal scalefish, with only low levels of catches of non-retained species (i.e. **low** risk). The risk to protected species from interactions with commercial line fishers is **negligible**.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Line fishing using baited hooks has minimal physical impact on the benthic environment and therefore constitutes a **negligible** habitat risk. An analysis of a long time series of commercial fishery data showed no reduction in mean trophic level in the finfish catches within the SCB (Hall and Wise 2011), suggesting a **low** ecosystem risk.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

The annual estimated boat-based recreational fishing effort in the South Coast Bioregion was steady in 2017/18 (21,460 boat days, SE=1,680) compared with 2015/16 (24,444 boat days, SE=2,042) and 2013/14 (28,277, SE=2,323), but lower than 2011/12 (40,073, SE=3,354) (Ryan *et al.* 2019). The SCDSR provides a **moderate** level social amenity to recreational fishing which is subject to a **moderate** level of risk.

Economic

In 2019 crew were employed on 64 commercial line or estuarine net vessels reported taking demersal scalefish, as well as employment with seafood processors in the SCB and Perth. The estimated gross value of product (GVP) for the SCDSR in 2019 was \$1-5 million which is subject to a **moderate** level of risk.

Recreational fishers make a significant contribution to Western Australia's economy, and support economic activity in many regional towns on the coast and near inland fishing spots. These resources contribute in part to the \$2.4 billion attributed to the value of recreational fishing to the State's economy each year.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

The South Coast commercial line fishery currently operates under open-access arrangements (as opposed to a Management Plan) although this is currently under review (see below). The recreational sector is managed through a range of input and output controls such as a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence, bag and size limits authorised under the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994* and *Fish Resources Management Regulations 1995*.

Harvest Strategy

A formal harvest strategy has not been developed for this resource.

Allowable Catch Tolerance Levels (Acceptable)

Not developed, but a recent stock assessment recommended catches remain within recent historical limits (Norriss *et al.* 2016).

Compliance

Fisheries and Marine Officers conduct both at-sea and on-land inspections.

SOUTH COAST BIOREGION

Consultation

A broad consultation process is currently in progress as part of a review of management arrangements for a number of SC open access and other fishing activities (see Management Initiatives/Outlook Status below). Consultation occurs with commercial fishers and the West Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC) on management issues and initiatives. For the recreational sector, consultation processes are facilitated by Recfishwest under a Service Level Agreement although the Department undertakes direct consultation with the community on specific issues.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

The Minister for Fisheries finalised the review of South Coast commercial line, fish trap and net

fisheries in January 2019. The Department is currently drafting two new management plans to give effect to the outcomes from the review.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Bight redfish are an important component of the catch of the Great Australia Bight Trawl Sector, a Commonwealth managed fishery permitted to operate across southern Australia as far west as Cape Leeuwin. Bight redfish landings by that fishery in 2018/19 were 220 t, or 36% of the Commonwealth TAC, predominantly in waters off South Australia but also from the western Great Australian Bight east of 125° E (Moore *et al.* 2019). Limited analysis indicates genetic homogeneity between Western Australia and the Great Australian Bight but there is some separation based on otolith chemistry between southwest WA and the GAB (Norriss *et al.* 2016).

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NORTHERN INLAND BIOREGION

ABOUT THE BIOREGION

The Northern Inland Bioregion, which encompasses the northern half of Western Australia, is predominantly a desert area, with few permanent water bodies. As a result of occasional summer cyclones, the various river systems flow at flood levels for short periods before drying-out to residual waterholes. The only exceptions to this are man-made dams which trap rainfall for water supply purposes and irrigation.

The only significant fishable water body in the region is Lake Argyle, created by the damming of the Ord River. The continuous release of water from the dam has resulted in the Ord River maintaining its freshwater fish populations year-round, as does the lake, where some freshwater native fish populations have expanded (e.g. silver cobbler).

Populations of reptiles, such as the protected freshwater crocodile, are also supported by the expanded food chain of native fish, and are thought to have increased significantly from their original billabong-based populations.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES POTENTIALLY IMPACTING THE BIOREGION

Climate Change

Some of the key environmental trends that may be affecting ecosystems in WA include:

- Increasing frequency of *El Niño*/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events;
- More years with a weaker Leeuwin Current;
- Increase in water temperature off the lower west coast of WA;
- Increases in salinity, which includes large annual fluctuations;
- Change in the frequency and location of storms (and rainfall) affecting the lower west coast; and
- Change in the frequency of cyclones (and summer rainfall) affecting the north-west coast.

The Northern Inland Bioregion is predicted to have relatively minor impacts from climate change, especially in the coming decade, compared to more southerly locations (Fletcher and Santoro 2012). The variables expected to

drive climate change impacts include changes in rainfall and extreme weather conditions (e.g. cyclones and tropical storms).

Commercial Fishing

The main water body in the Northern Inland Bioregion, Lake Argyle, is a man-made lake in the East Kimberley that was formed in 1973 following the completion of the Ord River Dam. The lake supports the State's only commercial freshwater fishery, the Lake Argyle Silver Cobbler Fishery (LASCf). In Lake Argyle, the population of silver cobbler (*Neoarius midgleyi*) increased after the Ord River Dam was first filled to capacity in the 1974 wet season. The LASCf uses gillnets to specifically target this species.

Recreational Fishing

Relative to the commercial catch, the total recreational catch of silver cobbler is likely to be small but is currently unable to be estimated. A small recreational and charter boat fishery for this species exists in Lake Argyle with fishing activities peaking during the dry season (winter months). The 2015/16 iSurvey of boat-based recreational fishing in WA1 indicated that silver cobbler are targeted mainly by hook and line fishing, with the majority of fish being released after capture. A single charter vessel has operated in Lake Argyle since 2001, with very few silver cobbler being retained.

Lake Argyle and its associated river system also support recreational fishing for cherabin (freshwater prawns). Limited surveys of recreational fishing in this region have been completed and shore-based and riverine recreational catches are unavailable at this time.

Aquaculture

Aquaculture development operations in the region have previously included the production of barramundi from cage operations in Lake Argyle, and a small but growing pond production of redclaw crayfish in the Ord River irrigation system around Kununurra.

1Ryan KL, Hall NG, Lai EK, Smallwood CB, Taylor SM, Wise BS 2017. Statewide survey of boatbased recreational fishing in Western Australia 2015/16. Fisheries Research Report

No. 287, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia. 205pp.

Tourism

A small scale tourism industry operates on Lake Argyle, with boat operators, helicopter and plane flights, fishing, canoeing and bird watching. There is recreational boating usage on the Lake including skiing and swimming. Since 2012 the State Government has funded a stock enhancement project at Lake Kununurra to create an impoundment based recreational barramundi fishery in the region.

Other Factors

While the Lake was created to supply water for irrigation and hydroelectric power generation in the Ord River Irrigation Area, it is also a source of water for supplying mining operations, town water supplies and a large number of industrial operations.

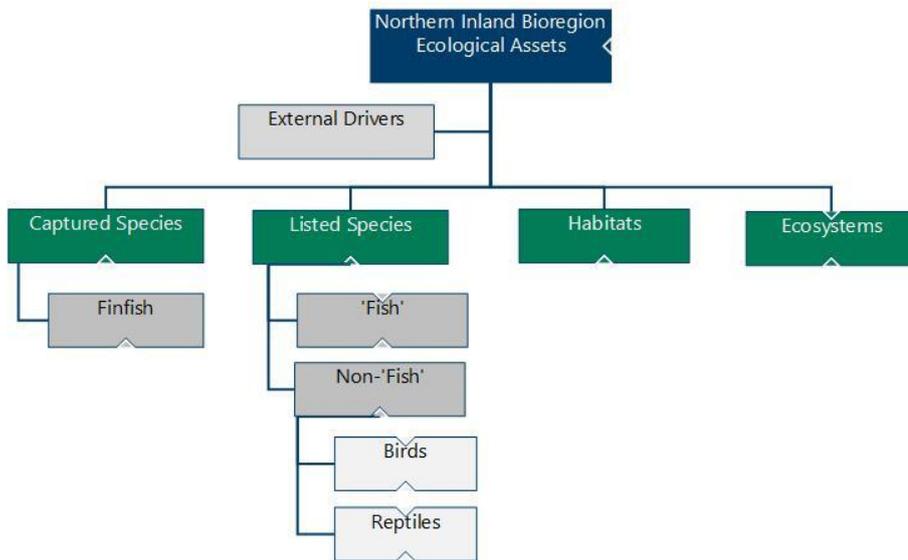
BIOREGIONAL SPECIFIC ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Within each Bioregion there are a range of management measures that have been implemented to manage the potential impact of activities (See the Ecosystem Management Section for an overview).

As one of the key ecosystem risks is the introduction of non-endemic species, the Department has an approval process in place for assessing proposals to translocate live non-endemic fish species into and within Western Australia, so as to minimise the environmental risks to freshwater ecosystems in the Northern Inland Bioregion associated with this activity. The introduced cane toad (*Rhinella marina*) has also been reported from around Kununurra and will likely reach Lake argyle within a few years, posing a major threat to the system.

ECOSYSTEM MONITORING AND STATUS

In order to assess the adequacy of management arrangements aimed at ensuring sustainability of the ecological assets within the Northern Inland Bioregion, the Department must identify and monitor trends in the condition of these resources. This is achieved through application of an Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) framework (Fletcher, *et al.*, 2010) to identify, in a hierarchical manner, the key ecological resources that require ongoing monitoring and assessment. (See *How to Use* section for more details). The key ecological assets identified for the Northern Inland Bioregion are identified in Northern Inland Overview Figure 1 and their current risk status reported on in the following sections.



NORTHERN INLAND ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT FIGURE 1

Component tree showing the ecological assets identified and separately assessed for the Northern Inland Bioregion.

External Drivers

External factors include factors impacting at the bioregional-level that are likely to affect the ecosystem as whole and may not fall within the direct control of Fishery legislation (e.g. climate

change). An understanding of these factors, which are typically environmental (e.g. cyclones, floods and droughts) is necessary to fully assess the performance of the ecological resource. The main

external drivers identified with potential to affect the Northern Inland Bioregion include climate change and introduced pests and diseases¹.

Climate

External Drivers	Current Risk Status
Climate	MODERATE

The Northern Inland Bioregion is predicted to have relatively minor impacts from climate change in the coming decade, compared to more southerly Bioregions.

Captured Species

FINFISH

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Native Finfish	Freshwater	LOW

The LASCFC operates throughout Lake Argyle using gillnets to target silver cobbler (*N. midgleyi*). Gillnets have relatively low habitat impacts and fishers actively avoid fishing in areas where the nets may become entangled on submerged vegetation. Therefore, the Fishery is considered to be a negligible risk to the habitats of Lake Argyle. As silver cobbler is essentially the only retained species, the main impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem are likely to be due to the removal of individuals of this species. The Fishery removes only a small portion of the overall biomass of this species within the lake.

Listed Species

Fish

Listed Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Fish	Freshwater	NEGILGIBLE

The stocks of native freshwater fishes are not under threat.

Non-Fish

Listed Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Birds and Reptiles	Freshwater	LOW

There is an incidental capture of freshwater or Johnston's crocodiles (*Crocodylus johnstoni*) and some tortoises by the LASCFC. Where practicable freshwater crocodiles are released alive, however, there is an incidental mortality of some individuals that do not impact the ongoing sustainability of the species. It should be noted that Lake Argyle is an impoundment and despite incidental capture, the population of crocodiles in that water body is considerably larger than it was in its pre-impoundment state.

Habitats and Ecosystems

Category	Aquatic zone	Current Risk Status
Habitats	Freshwater	LOW
Ecosystems	Freshwater	LOW

The Northern Inland Bioregion occurs north of Shark Bay (27°S), from the coastline to the Northern Territory borders. Within the Bioregion are a series of freshwater rivers and wetlands which have native fringing vegetation and aquatic plants and provide habitat for birds, frogs, reptiles, native fish and macroinvertebrates.

Lake Argyle, with its large capacity, deep water and rapidly fluctuating water levels, provides a range of habitats not available at the adjacent Lake Kununurra or downstream Ord River. Most of the eastern and southern shoreline of Lake Argyle is bare sediment, with highly variable water levels preventing the establishment of plants. There are areas of emergent sedges (*Eleocharis brassii*), as well as submerged aquatic plants such as *Myriophyllum spp.*, *Najas tenuifolia* and *Potamogeton sp.* However, distribution is limited to localised patches where large weed mats can form. The western and northern shorelines are generally steeper and consist of rock exposed by wave action.

¹ Biosecurity issues are now reported by the Biosecurity pillar of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

FISHERIES

NORTHERN INLAND LAKE ARGYLE FINFISH RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

S. Newman, G. Mitsopoulos and L. Wiberg

OVERVIEW

The Lake Argyle Silver Cobbler Fishery (LASCF) is the only commercial freshwater fishery in Western Australia. This gillnet fishery is located in the artificially created Lake Argyle in the north-eastern Kimberley (Lake Argyle Silver Cobbler Figure 1) and specifically targets silver cobbler (*Neoarius midgleyi*), with catches of barramundi (*Lates calcarifer*) not permitted. A small recreational and charter boat fishery also operates

in Lake Argyle and surrounding waters for silver cobbler and barramundi, with fishing activities peaking during the dry season (winter months).

In addition to the waters of Lake Argyle, recreational anglers can fish in all creeks and tributaries that feed into the Ord River and Lake Argyle.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020 Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (93-180t)	Total Catch 2019: 69t	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (NA)	Total Catch 2019: NA	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Silver Cobbler	Below target commercial catch range	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Low Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$ <1 m)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Social (low amenity)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Stable	Acceptable
External Drivers	Low Risk	Acceptable



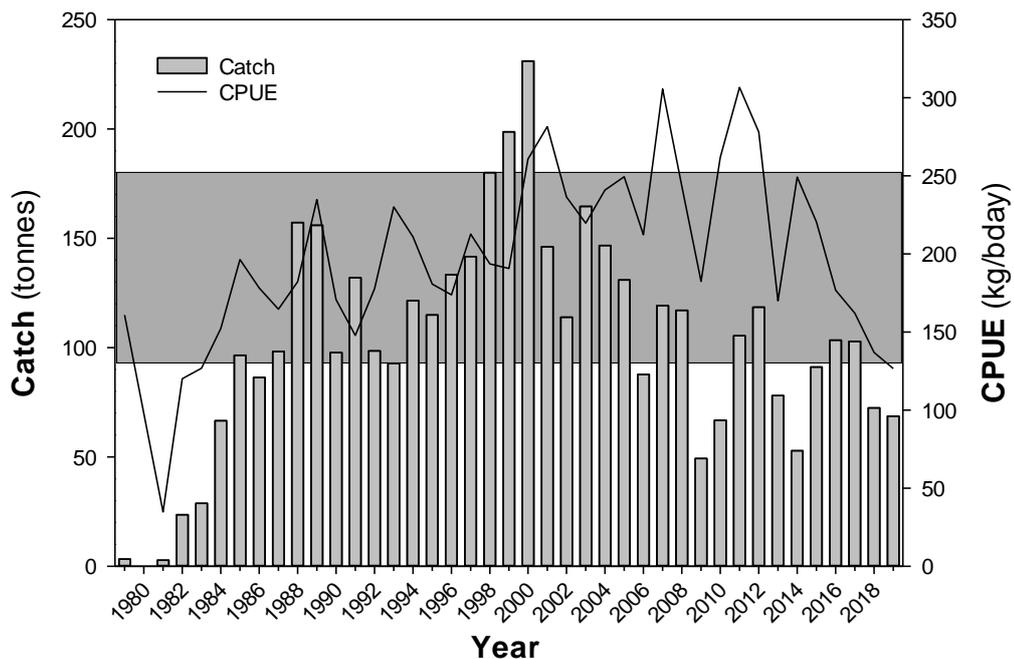
LAKE ARGYLE SILVER COBBLER FIGURE 1.

Location of the Lake Argyle Silver Cobble Fishery in northwestern Australia illustrating the remoteness and extent of the fishery.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

Following the damming of the Ord River in 1971 and the creation of Lake Argyle, the commercial fishery first developed in 1979 with annual catches of silver cobble landed up to 1984 being less than 41 t (Lake Argyle Silver Cobble Figure 2). From 1984 catches increased to reach a

historical peak of 231 t in 2000 and then, following reductions in effort, catches steadily declined to a low of <50 t in 2009 (Lake Argyle Silver Cobble Figure 2). Catches from 2009 to 2019 have fluctuated between 49 t and 119 t. In 2019, the catch of silver cobble was 69 t.



LAKE ARGYLE SILVER COBBLER FIGURE 2.

The annual catch and catch per unit effort (CPUE, kg block day⁻¹) for silver cobble in the Lake Argyle Silver Cobble Fishery over the period from 1979 to 2019. The upper and lower bounds of the target commercial catch range are shown by the shaded catch area between 93 and 180 tonnes.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Northern Inland (Sustainable-Adequate)

Data for assessing the status of the silver cobbler stock in Lake Argyle are derived from the catch and effort returns provided by industry. These data are compiled annually and used as the basis for this assessment. Biological data on the species' specialised reproductive behaviour and low fecundity are used to interpret these assessments. There remains uncertainty around the biological parameters (e.g. longevity, growth rate) for silver cobbler.

The level of catch in the fishery in 2019 is below the acceptable catch range. This level of catch is considered acceptable as the effort in the fishery is relatively low and catch rate is within the historical range. The lower level of catch in the fishery in recent years is likely to have allowed the spawning stock biomass to increase. The above evidence indicates the biomass of this stock is unlikely to be depleted and recruitment is unlikely to be impaired and that current levels of fishing mortality (catch) are unlikely to cause the stock to become recruitment impaired.

On the basis of the evidence provided above, the silver cobbler stock is classified as **sustainable-adequate**.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

As a result of the large mesh size used relative to the species present in the lake, there is minimal fish by-catch in this fishery. **Negligible** risk.

Protected species

Although Lake Argyle is an artificially-created aquatic environment it is now designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. There is an incidental capture of freshwater or Johnston's crocodiles (*Crocodylus johnstoni*) and some turtles by the silver cobbler fishery in Lake Argyle. Where practicable, freshwater crocodiles and turtles are released alive, and based on the reports by fishers, only low levels of crocodile and turtle capture occur and this is considered to be of **low** risk to the stock.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

The gillnets used in this fishery have minimal impact on the habitat. This results in a **negligible** risk to the overall ecosystem from the fishery.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

During 2019, four vessels fished in the LASC, with an average crew of 2 people per vessel, indicating that eight people were directly employed in the fishery, which operates from 1 January to 31 October each year. Additional employment occurs throughout the fish processing and distribution networks. **Low** risk.

Economic

The fishery's score value in 2019 was estimated to be Level 1 (i.e. Risk level – **Low**; Economic value – < \$1 million). There is limited social amenity value for the silver cobbler fishery. There is currently a **low** level of risk to these values.

Recreational fishers make a significant contribution to Western Australia's economy, and support economic activity in many regional towns on the coast and near inland fishing spots. These resources contribute in part to the \$2.4 billion attributed to the value of recreational fishing to the State's economy each year.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The harvest strategy for silver cobbler in the Lake Argyle Silver Cobbler Fishery in the Northern Inland Bioregion of Western Australia is based on a constant exploitation approach where the annual commercial catches of silver cobbler are allowed to vary proportional to stock abundance within the target catch range.

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels (Acceptable)

The target commercial catch range is calculated based on catch information from 1990 – 1998, a period during which the fishery was stable and levels of exploitation were considered to have been sustainable. The catch range is specified as the values within the minimum and maximum catches observed during the reference period. The target catch range is 93 – 180 t. The level of catch in the fishery in 2019 is below the target acceptable catch range. The catch rate is within the historical range, and the lower level of catch in the fishery in recent years is likely to have allowed

the stock to increase and it is thus considered **adequate**.

Compliance

A licence condition restricts the net type permitted, with fishers permitted to use no more than 1,500 m of set nets at any one time. These nets must have a minimum mesh size of 159 mm and maximum net drop of 30 meshes.

The management arrangements for the fishery are contained in the *Prohibition on Commercial Fishing (Lake Argyle) Order 2012*. The six Fishing Boat Licences listed are prohibited from taking any fish by means of nets during the period from 1 November to 31 December in any year. This seasonal closure is aimed at protecting silver cobbler during the spawning season. Additionally, at this time of the year water temperatures in the lake are high and would cause spoilage of fish in the nets. Commercial operators in the LASCFC are not permitted to take barramundi at any time and all nets used by LASCFC fishers must be suitably marked with licence identification.

Consultation

The Aquatic Resource Management Division of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development undertakes consultation directly with licensees on operational issues. Industry Management Meetings are convened by the West Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who are also responsible for statutory

management plan consultation under a Service Level Agreement with the Department. Consultation processes for the recreational fishing sector are facilitated by Recfishwest under a Service Level Agreement with the Department, although the Department undertakes direct consultation with the community on specific issues.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives (Stable)

The next management review for the Fishery is scheduled for 2019/20. The Lake Argyle Silver Cobbler Fishery Ecological Code of Practice is being reviewed and updated by industry.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

A number of external factors may impact on the silver cobbler biomass. These include the introduced cane toad (*Rhinella marina*) which has been observed in Lake Argyle and may affect prey and predators of silver cobbler.

The population of the freshwater crocodile (*Crocodylus johnstoni*) has increased and is likely to impact silver cobbler biomass in the form of predation and competition for food. The external drivers currently pose a **low** risk to the stock.

SOUTHERN INLAND BIOREGION

ABOUT THE BIOREGION

This region contains WA's only natural permanent freshwater rivers, which are fed by rainfall through winter and spring. These permanent rivers are restricted to the high-rainfall south-west corner of the State and flow through native forest areas. Some of the rivers are more saline in their upper reaches owing to the effects of agricultural clearing of native vegetation.

Across the remainder of the Southern Inland Bioregion, rivers flow primarily during the winter, with occasional summer flows from inland, rain-bearing depressions, resulting from decaying cyclones. Most large fresh water bodies are man-made drinking water dams, irrigation water supply dams or stock-feeding dams.

There is a diverse variety of natural water bodies in this region ranging from numerous small springs and billabongs, up to Lake Jasper, the largest permanent freshwater Lake in the South West region, with 440 ha of open water up to 10 m deep. In combination, these diverse natural and man-made permanent waterbodies provide valuable habitat for fish and freshwater crustaceans during the summer months. Some natural salt lakes also occur but these generally dry out over summer each year.

The few natural freshwater rivers and man-made lakes support native fish and crustaceans and create an environment, particularly in forest areas, which is highly valued by the community for a variety of recreational pursuits.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES POTENTIALLY IMPACTING THE BIOREGION

Climate Change

The Southern Inland Bioregion is expected to be affected similarly to the West and South Coast Bioregions, mainly a result of predicted further reductions in rainfall and increases in temperature.

Commercial Fishing

There are currently no commercial fisheries in the Southern Inland Bioregion.

Recreational Fishing

The Southern Inland Bioregion provides significant recreational fishing opportunities. The major species fished recreationally are native marron, trout (both rainbow and brown trout) produced and stocked by the Department into public dams and rivers, and feral redfin perch, an introduced, self-perpetuating species. The native freshwater cobbler is also taken in small numbers.

Aquaculture

Aquaculture development in the Southern Inland Bioregion is dominated by the farm-dam production of yabbies, which can reach about 200 t annually depending on rainfall and market demand. Semi-intensive culture of marron in purpose-built pond systems provides around 60 t per year and has some potential to expand.

Rainbow trout have historically been the mainstay of finfish aquaculture production in this region, originating from the heat-tolerant stock maintained at the Department's Pemberton Freshwater Research Centre. Silver perch are also grown in purpose-built ponds to supply local markets.

Tourism

The bioregion is a popular tourist destination with known for its national parks and wineries. Recreational fishing in the region's lakes and rivers is also important for both residents and tourists.

BIOREGIONAL SPECIFIC ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Within each Bioregion there are a range of management measures that have been implemented to manage the potential impact of activities (See the Ecosystem Management Section for an overview). Management measures specific to the South Inland Bioregion are detailed below.

The conservation of the 11 species of freshwater native fishes in freshwater ecosystems in the South-West of WA is an issue for the Department. Most of these species are only found in WA, all have had major contractions in their distribution as a result of habitat loss. Many species now only consist of small, fragmented populations, and half are now listed as threatened. They are under

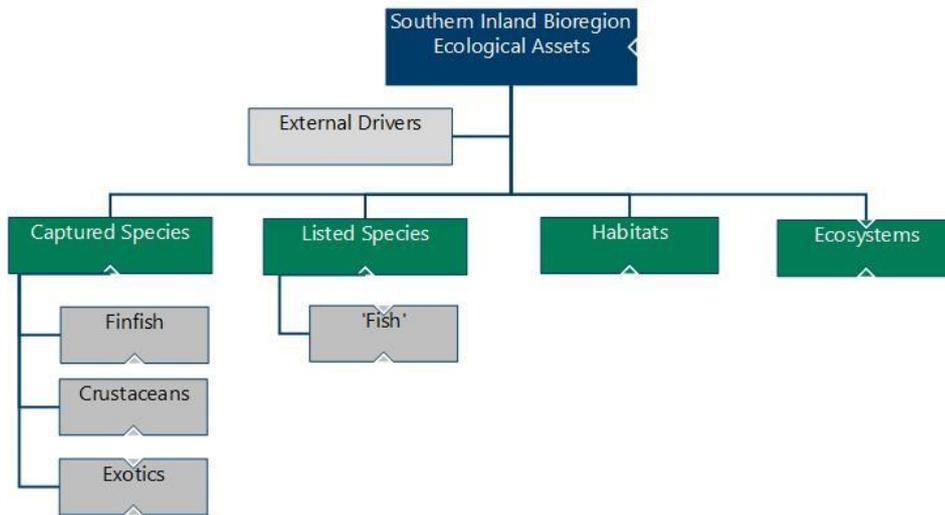
pressure from feral fish populations, migration barriers (bridges and dams) and urban land-use development, particularly in the form of unfiltered storm water discharge from roads into natural waterbodies.

The Department undertakes a risk-based approach to managing the spread of feral fish in the bioregion. To support this, it has developed a community based reporting tool and education program to support its own routine surveillance activity. Information on aquatic pest distribution is used to prioritise management actions aimed at limiting the impact and preventing the spread of high risk pest fish within the State’s freshwater ecosystems.

A key element of reducing the risk of feral fish is the approval process that the Department has in place for assessing proposals to translocate live non-endemic fish species into and within Western Australia, so as to minimise the environmental risks to freshwater ecosystems associated with this activity.

ECOSYSTEM MONITORING AND STATUS

In order to assess the adequacy of management arrangements aimed at ensuring sustainability of the ecological assets within the Southern Inland Bioregion, the Department must identify and monitor trends in the condition of these resources. This is achieved through application of an Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) framework (Fletcher, *et al.*, 2010) to identify, in a hierarchical manner, the key ecological resources that require ongoing monitoring and assessment. (See How to Use section for more details). These key ecological assets identified for the Southern Inland Bioregion are identified in Southern Inland Overview Figure 1 and their current risk status reported on in the following sections.



SOUTHERN IN LAND ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT FIGURE 1
Component tree showing the ecological assets identified and separately assessed for the Southern Inland Bioregion.

External Drivers

External drivers include factors impacting at the bioregional-level that are likely to affect the ecosystem as a whole and may not fall within the direct control of Fishery legislation (e.g. climate change). An understanding of these factors, which are typically environmental (e.g. floods and droughts) is necessary to fully assess the performance of the ecological resource. The main external drivers identified with potential to affect the Southern Inland Bioregion include climate (i.e. a drying climate), habitat loss and introduced pests and diseases.

Climate

External Drivers	Current Risk Status
Climate	MODERATE

The south west of Western Australia is predicted to be heavily influenced by the impacts of climate change (e.g. increasing sea temperatures, declines in rainfall). Further reductions in rainfall are expected for the Southern Inland Bioregion.

Captured Species

Native Finfish

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Native Finfish	Freshwater	HIGH (non-fishing)

The abundance and distribution of most native fish, include the native cobbler (*Tandanus boostockii*), have been severely impacted due to land and water management practices. This has led to widespread fragmentation of native fish populations (i.e. local extinctions). Competition with feral fishes has also decreased abundance of native fishes in freshwater systems in the Southern Inland region.

Native Crustaceans

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Native Crustaceans	Freshwater	HIGH (non-fishing)

The recreational marron fishery has its own licence. The abundance of smooth marron (*C. cainii*) has been monitored at regular intervals for a number of decades. The fishery arrangements have been through a number of significant updates to ensure that the catch is sustainable. The biggest threat to these stocks is from non-fishing causes, especially due to reduced rainfall and habitat loss.

Exotics

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Exotics (stocked)	Freshwater	LOW

Anglers require a south-west freshwater angling licence to capture trout, native cobbler and other freshwater angling species. Trout have been stocked into a limited number of streams in WA for decades. The trout are produced from the Pemberton Freshwater Research Centre and are tolerant of warmer water temperatures. Research activities are aimed at improving growth rate by increasing the number of sterile fish produced at the Centre. Trout are unlikely to breed naturally in local conditions. Combined with a decreased number of locations stocked with trout has reduced this ecological risk score.

Listed Species

Fish

Listed species	Ecological Risks
Fish*	SIGNIFICANT (non-fishing)

*Crustaceans are classified as fish under the FRMA 1994

Listed freshwater species in the Southern Inland region are subject to the same non-fishing ecological pressures as noted under Native Finfish.

Hairy marron (*C. tenuimanus*) are only found in the upper reaches of Margaret River and are a totally protected species. They are threatened due to being outcompeted by smooth marron (*C. cainii*). Some fishing is still reported despite hairy marron being totally protected. This species is expected to number less than 100 in the wild.

Habitats and Ecosystems

Habitat / Ecosystem	Aquatic zone	Current Risk Status
Habitat	Freshwater	SIGNIFICANT(non-fishing)
Ecosystems	Freshwater	HIGH (non-fishing)

The community structure of most river and lake systems in this bioregion are substantially altered from historical levels. A survey of the main areas has been completed through a state NRM funded project that found that 24% no longer have any fish and less than 5% have native fish populations, the rest contain feral species.

In addition, there is concern that climate change may lead to a drying climate that could potentially alter the habitats and ecosystems in the bioregion. Given that these lakes are predominantly groundwater fed, a significant contributing factor is the over-extraction of water to supply Perth's increasing human population. This is causing the ground water levels to drop and is recognised as being unsustainable for either fish or people.

FISHERIES

SOUTH-WEST RECREATIONAL FRESHWATER RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

R. Duffy, F. Trinnie, K. Ryan and L. Wright



OVERVIEW

The South-West Recreational Freshwater Resource (SWRFR) incorporates the Recreational Marron Fishery and the South West Recreational

Freshwater Angling (SWRFA) fishery. Both fisheries have separate recreational licenses and are managed with rules around gear, bag limits, size limits and spatial and temporal closures.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery	Total Catch 2019: NA	NA
Recreational marron fishery (50,000- 100,000 marron)	Total Catch 2019: 66,619 (\pm 4,972 s.e.) marron	Acceptable
Recreational angling (50,000 – 120,000 fish – review required)	Total Catch 2018/19: 89,174 fish (\pm 7,751 s.e.)	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Marron	Above limit of 50,000 marron	Adequate
Trout (Rainbow & Brown)	Adequate numbers stocked	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Low Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Significant Risk	Management Action
Habitat	Medium Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP)	NA	NA
Social (High amenity)	Moderate Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Negligible Risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	Significant Risk	Acceptable

CATCH AND LANDINGS

Marron (*Cherax cainii*): The estimated total recreational catch for marron (by number) of 66,619 (\pm 4,972 s.e.) in 2019 was higher, but not significantly different to the catch in 2018 of 59,890 (\pm 4,516 s.e.) and within the catch range of the last 10 years. The average number of marron caught per fisher of 9.7 (\pm 0.72 s.e.) in 2019, was similar to 2018 (9.10 (\pm 0.69 s.e.)). Catch of marron from dams and rivers has remained stable over the last 10 years (approximately 30% from dams and 70% from rivers), as too has the distribution of effort (also approximately 30% dams, 70% rivers).

The total number of licensed fishers was 13,355 in 2019, very similar to the 13,721 in 2018. Estimated total effort was significantly higher in 2019, than 2018 (23,465 (\pm 1,296 s.e.) cf. 19,348 days (\pm 1,168 s.e) respectively) (Recreational Fishery Figure 1). The average number of days fished per fisher of 3.42 days (\pm 0.19 s.e.) is significantly higher than 2018 (2.94 days (\pm 0.18 s.e.)), and within the range surveyed over the last 10 years.

More licensed marron fishers resided in the country (8,732) than the metro area (4,623). Participation rates of licence holders in 2019 was 49%, higher than 46% in 2018, which equates to

SOUTHERN INLAND BIOREGION

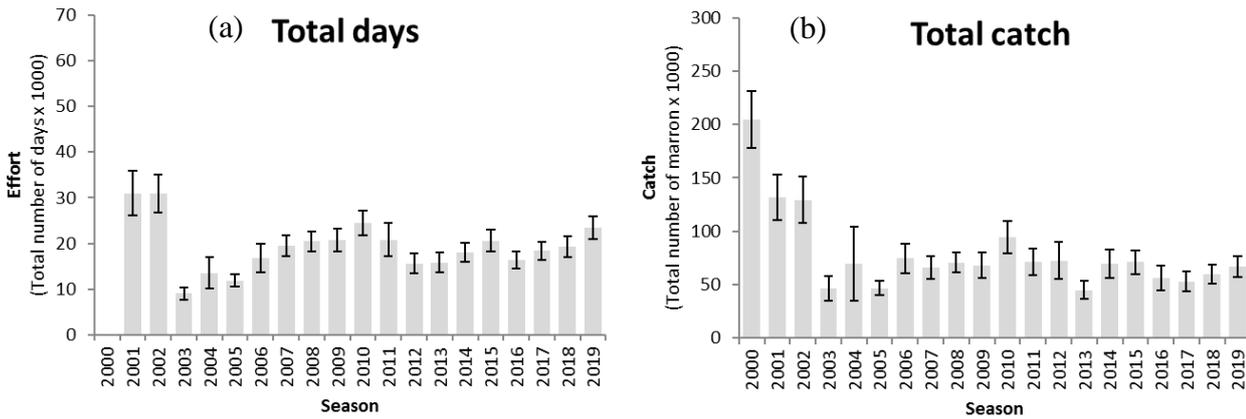
an estimated total number of 6,868 active fishers in 2019. Licence holders that reside in the country are more likely to actively participate (55%) than licence holders from the metro area (44%).

SWRFA: Children under the age of 16 are no longer required to hold a Freshwater Angling licence since March 2016. Survey design does not permit apportioning of the contribution of this age group to historical surveys. Therefore, the 2017 survey onwards, is not directly comparable to previous surveys.

The estimated total recreational catch from SWRFA across all species for was 89,174 fish

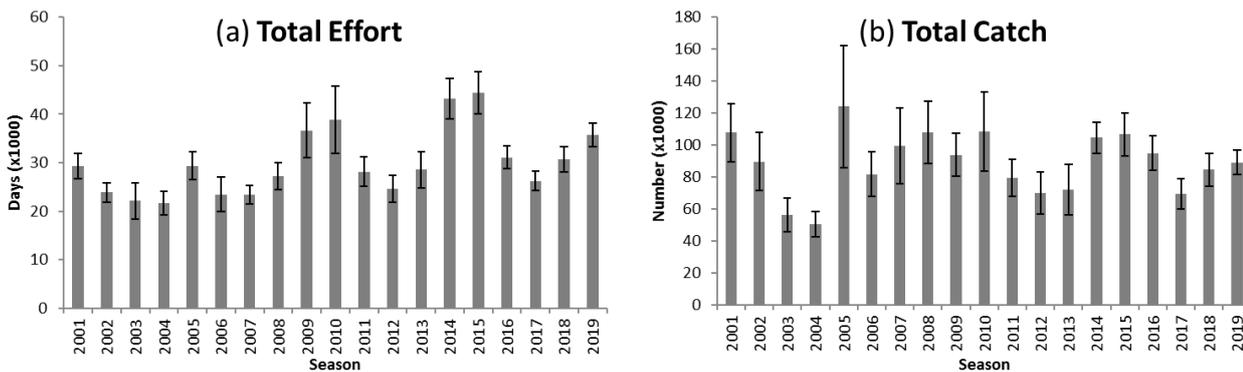
(±7,751 s.e.) of which 57,252 fish (±6,799 s.e.) were kept and 31,922 fish (±3,617 s.e.) were released. These figure are similar to the previous season (Recreational Fishery Figure 2).

The estimated total number of licensed fishers was 8,146 in 2018/19, continuing a downward trend since 2017, and participation rate was similar (46% of licence holders). However, the total estimated fishing effort of 35,741 days (±2,501 s.e.) is the highest since 2015, prior to changes to licencing arrangements.



RECREATIONAL FISHERY FIGURE 1.

Estimated (a) total days people went marroning and (b) total number of marron caught, from 2000 to 2019 for marron licence holders in the Recreational marron fishery. Note, changes to season length and bag limits have occurred since 2000, so annual differences are not directly comparable. Refer to Southern Inland Freshwater Fishery Resource Assessment Report (*in prep.*) for further information.



RECREATIONAL FISHERY FIGURE 2.

Estimated (a) total days fished and (b) total number of finfish caught, from 2001 to 2019 for licence holders in the SWRFA fishery.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Marron (Sustainable-Adequate)

Smooth marron (*Cherax cainii*), are the third largest crayfish in the world and endemic to Western Australia (Beatty *et al.* 2016). The Marron fishery is composed of many discrete populations (Beatty *et al.* 2016) that exhibit biological and life history traits that differ among

systems (Beatty *et al.* 2011), including fecundity (Beatty *et al.* 2016) and growth (Lawrence 2007). Refer to the Southern Inland Freshwater Fishery Resource Assessment Report (RAR) (*in prep.*) for further information.

Overall marron stocks are considered **sustainable-adequate** due to stable recreational catches above 50,000 marron. Fishery

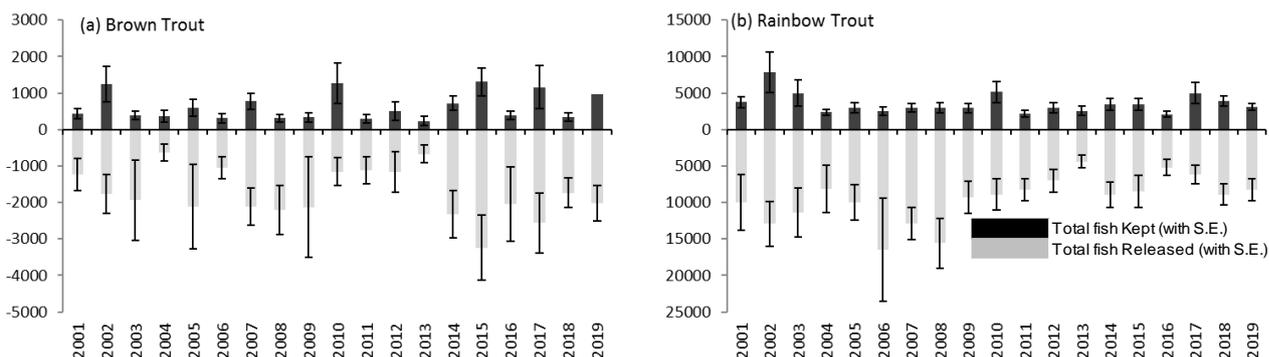
independent survey data collected up until 2016, however, indicated that marron stocks are under pressure from environmental conditions (reduced rainfall and river flow), illegal fishing and potentially unsustainable levels of fishing at some easily accessed and popular sites. For more information, refer to the RAR (*in prep.*).

Trout (Annually Stocked)

Rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and Brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) are produced at the Pemberton Freshwater Research Centre and

released into rivers and dams of south-west WA. Wild self-sustaining populations are thought to be limited; therefore, stock levels are largely dependent on release rates and are supplemented annually.

The total estimated recreational catches of brown and rainbow trout in 2018/19 (2,976 (± 563 s.e.) & 11,318 ($\pm 1,783$ s.e.) respectively) were similar to brown and rainbow trout catches since 2016/17 (Recreational Fishery Figure 3). For information on other freshwater fish species, refer to the RAR (*in prep.*).



RECREATIONAL FISHERY FIGURE 3.

Total kept and released by species (a) Brown trout (b) Rainbow trout for 2001 to 2019 seasons.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

The Marron Fishery also reports captures of small quantities of non-target species, principally gilgies (*Cherax quinquecarinatus*, *C. crassimanus*) and koonacs (*C. plebejus*, *C. glaber*). The impact of the Marron Fishery on these species is thought to be low as gilgies and koonacs are smaller than marron and are not targeted by recreational marron fishers. The introduced yabby also comprises a small part of the fishery. There is little to no bycatch in the SWRFA Fishery due to the small size of non-target native species. Therefore, the impact of the fishery on bycatch is a **low** risk.

Protected Species

Trout stocking occurs only in waterways where protected species are absent, therefore the fishery has no impact on protected species. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Redfin Perch, are still illegally stocked and translocated by fishers. Therefore, they have the potential to negatively impact protected species through direct predation.

A second species of marron, the critically endangered hairy marron, *Cherax tenuimanus*, occurs only in Margaret River. The largest negative impact on the hairy marron has resulted through the illegal introduction of the

recreationally fished smooth marron. In late 2002, recreational marron fishing within Margaret River, upstream of Ten Mile Brook Junction was prohibited to remove the impacts of fishing on the remaining hairy marron stocks. Illegal fishing is still reported in this reach of the Margaret River, and combined with the small population size (and degrading habitats (e.g. reduced rainfall)) is considered a **significant** risk.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

The major habitat impacts of the Marron Fishery and the SWRFA Fishery are litter in surrounding areas, and fishers trampling riparian vegetation and subsequent bank erosion. However, they can also provide an environmental benefit through the removal of large numbers of feral redfin perch (*Perca fluviatilis*). However, fishers can also deliberately spread redfin perch into new water bodies. Therefore, impact on habitat is considered a **moderate** risk.

Ecosystem

The removal of legal-sized marron from freshwater rivers is unlikely to have a significant effect on ecosystem function as the bulk of the marron biomass is below legal size, and marron of

SOUTHERN INLAND BIOREGION

all sizes have similar food and habitat requirements. Marron taken from man-made dams are already living in highly modified habitats, as such their removal does not significantly impact on ecosystem function.

Stocking of trout has occurred in WA waters for over 100 years. To minimise adverse impacts of trout on native species, they are stocked only in rivers where non-native fish species are also present, and protected species are absent. SWRFA is largely a lure and fly fishery, however there is a small risk to the ecosystem through bait collection, its use, the release of unwanted live bait (mainly for redfin perch), and potential to spread disease and parasites, e.g. *Thelohania*. Therefore, the resource is considered to have a **moderate** risk to the ecosystem.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

The Marron Fishery in particular is iconic, whilst the SWRFA has an enthusiastic base of fishers and a dedicated angling group (Western Australian Trout and Freshwater Angling Association (WATFAA)), therefore the resource has high social amenity. Both fisheries attract tourists to regional areas.

The effect of reduced rainfall on the availability of marron habitat is expected to increase awareness of changes in climate patterns in the South-West. Social aspects are identified as having **high** amenity and a **moderate** risk.

Economic

The SWRFR is likely to support tourism to regional towns in the South-West. A risk score that captures non-GVP related risk has not been developed.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

The marron fishery is managed under a constant catch harvest strategy, although the harvest strategy has not been formalised. The SWRFA fishery is based on stocking (inputs). While a stocking committee determines numbers and locations to be stocked, there is currently no formal harvest strategy for this fishery.

Allowable Catch Tolerance Levels (Acceptable)

Marron: In 2006, the Recreational Freshwater Fisheries Stakeholder Subcommittee (RFFSS) proposed that, based on the available science the

fishery be managed to a catch range of 96,000-136,000 marron. This level of catch has rarely been achieved with the exception of 2010, a year of extremely low rainfall. Recreational catch has largely fluctuated between 50,000 and 100,000 animals since 2001. Fishery independent surveys indicate negative impacts of fishing on stocks, therefore, although catch is considered **acceptable** it should be reviewed.

SWRFA: Allowable catch and tolerance levels are reported in the annual report table as 50,000 to 120,000. Review of this catch range is required as trout are stocked annually. Trout stocking numbers and strategies are currently being modified to improve the fishery.

Compliance

Southern Region Fisheries and Marine Officers apply compliance through the delivery of an Operational Plan. Areas of high interest have been identified and patrols are designed to frequent those, and other areas. Patrol and compliance planning focuses on out-of-season illegal fishing, illegal use of fishing gear, and a high profile presence through the marron season. Compliance activities are supported by educational activities.

Consultation

Meetings between the Department, Recfishwest, Freshwater Fisheries Reference Group and freshwater fishers are held regularly.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

The South West freshwater angling season is now open all-year round.

The Western Australian Inland Freshwater Research Advisory Committee was established in mid-2019 to enhance freshwater recreational fishing experienced in the South-West. The Committee includes members from the Department, Recfishwest and WATFAA and is initially focusing on reviewing existing trout stocking strategies.

The Department continues to support a licence-free weekend for the SWRFA. The licence-free weekend occurred in early October 2020 to coincide with the beginning of the peak recreational freshwater fishing season and the annual TroutFest family fishing day run by Recfishwest.

The licence-free weekend applied to all inland waters south of Greenough (29°S) and above the tidal influence, including all lakes, dams, rivers and their tributaries. All other freshwater recreational fishing rules still applied.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Rainfall in the south-west of Western Australia has declined by 10-15% since 1975 according to CSIRO models and it predicts an additional 7% decrease in rainfall by 2030 (CSIRO 2009). The decline has been most noticeable in autumn and early winter rains. The impact of reduced rainfall has included a greater than 80% reduction of runoff into dams. This has negative implications for rivers and lakes in the south-west and the associated fish and crustacean assemblages. The

major impact of these changes will be through a reduction in habitat availability, with negative implications for fish and crustacean abundance. Reduced river flows inhibit movement, and combined with increasing salinity, could negatively impact populations of all freshwater species. In addition, the drying climate may lead to more frequent and higher intensity bushfires that can impact the fisheries through restricting fisher access, and associated impacts of fire and fire management methods on stream fauna.

Significant risk.

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STATEWIDE BIOREGION

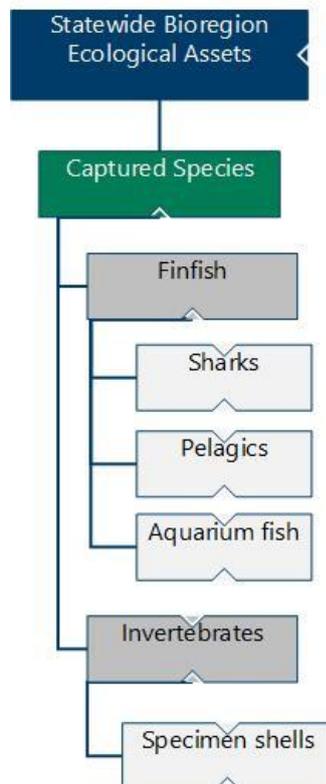
ECOSYSTEM BASED FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Identification of Statewide Ecological Assets using the EBFM framework

While the bioregional scale of management has been adopted by the Department through the implementation of an Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) framework (see How to Use section for more details), due to their life histories or broader impacts, a small number of ecological assets cannot realistically be managed at a single bioregional level but need to be considered at either a Statewide or at a multiple bioregional level.

Risk Assessment of Statewide Ecological Assets and External Drivers

The EBFM process identifies the ecological assets in a hierarchical manner such that the assets outlined in Statewide Ecosystem Management Figure 1 are often made up of individual components at species or stock levels. The risks to each of the individual stocks or lower level components are mostly detailed in the individual fishery reports presented in this document. The following Ecosystem sections provide an overview and cumulative assessment of the current risks to those ecological assets that function at a Statewide. These risk levels are used by the Department as a key input into the Department's Risk Register which, combined with an assessment of the economic and social values and risks associated with these assets, is integral for use in the annual planning cycle for assigning priorities for activities across all Divisions for Statewide issues.



STATEWIDE ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT FIGURE 1

Component tree showing the Statewide ecological assets and external drivers identified and separately assessed.

Captured Species

FINFISH

Sharks (and other Elasmobranchs)

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Sharks	South and lower west	MODERATE
	Mid West – North	MODERATE

The stock levels of most sharks in the south and lower west regions (some of which migrate seasonally into the north) are now either at acceptable levels or are deemed to be recovering at acceptable rates following management intervention.

The stocks levels of sharks in the mid west and north regions are considered to be recovering with some more productive species having recovered.

Pelagic

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Finfish	Pelagic	LOW

Large pelagic species of finfishes are targeted throughout the State. In the North Coast and Gascoyne Coast Bioregions, Spanish mackerel, grey mackerel, billfishes and other species are regularly captured by commercial fisheries and recreational fishers. Samsonfish, Spanish mackerel and a range of other large pelagic

species are landed by commercial and recreational fishers in temperate bioregions.

Spanish Mackerel are the only large pelagic species heavily targeted, mainly by the by the Mackerel Managed Fishery (MMF) and recreational fishers. The MMF operates in the North Coast, Gascoyne Coast and West Coast Bioregions and the Spanish mackerel stock is at an acceptable level. Few other pelagic species are exploited at any significant levels and these stocks are lightly impacted by fishing.

Aquarium Fish

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Aquarium Fish	Marine	MODERATE

The level of capture is low and the management arrangements ensure that species are not at risk. Management arrangements are being reviewed to address levels of uncertainty of some stocks status'.

INVERTEBRATES

Captured Species	Aquatic zone	Ecological Risk
Specimen Shells	Marine	MODERATE

The level of capture is low and the management arrangements are such that these species are not considered at risk.

FISHERIES

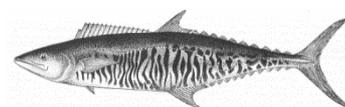
STATEWIDE LARGE PELAGIC FINFISH RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

P. Lewis, N. Blay and M. Watt

OVERVIEW

The large pelagic finfish resource is distributed throughout Western Australia (WA) and includes a range of tropical and temperate pelagic species. The three indicator species for the resource are Spanish mackerel (*Scomberomorus commerson*) and grey mackerel (*S. semifasciatus*) representing the tropical suite, and Samson fish (*Seriola hippos*) for the temperate suite (DOF 2011).

Commercially the resource is predominantly accessed by the Mackerel Managed Fishery (MMF) in the North Coast (NCB) and Gascoyne Coast Bioregions (GCB) targeting Spanish mackerel. In the West Coast (WCB) and South Coast Bioregions (SCB) the major retained



temperate species is Samson fish, mostly as bycatch in a number of line and net fisheries (see relevant chapters for more details). The recreational fishery for large pelagic fish is dominated by Spanish mackerel, which by weight is the 5th highest retained finfish species (Appendix 2) and the equal 2nd highest retained in charter/fishing tour operator catch. For most other large pelagic species, the majority of the recreational catch is released (Ryan *et al.* 2019). For further details see the Statewide Large Pelagic Scalefish Resource Assessment Report https://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/resource_assessment/resource_assessment_report_019.pdf

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (Spanish mackerel 430 t, Grey mackerel 180 t)	Total catch 2019: 291 t (Spanish mackerel), 8 t (Grey mackerel)	Acceptable
Recreational fishery	Total catch 2017/18: 87–121 t (boat-based only)	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Spanish mackerel	MEDIUM Risk, no formal HS, catches within tolerance ranges but declining nominal catch rates	Breeding stock status - Adequate
Grey mackerel	Low risk, catch only	Breeding stock status - Adequate
Samson fish	Low risk, catch only	Breeding stock status - Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Negligible risk	Adequate
Habitat	Low risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Low risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP Level 2)	Low risk	Acceptable
Social (Moderate amenity)	Moderate risk	Acceptable
Governance	Stable	Acceptable
External Drivers	Moderate risk	Acceptable



LARGE PELAGIC FINFISH FIGURE 1.
Map showing boundaries of the Mackerel Managed Fishery.

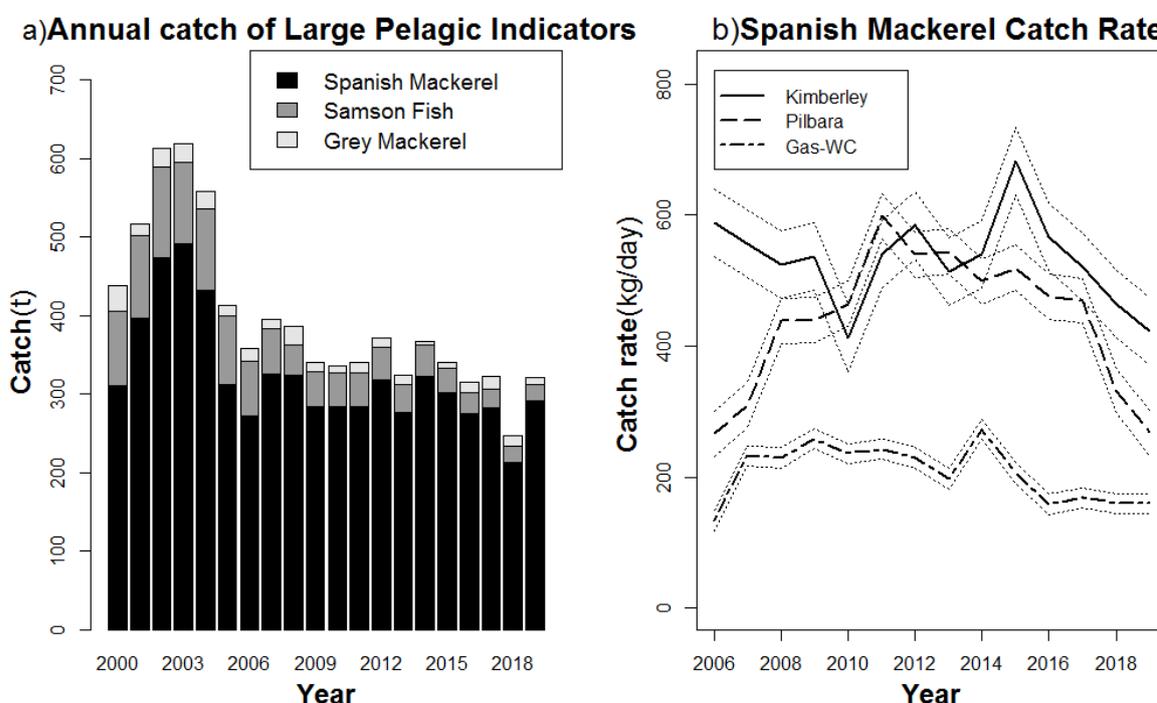
CATCH AND LANDINGS

The combined commercial landings of all Large Pelagic species in WA have ranged from 294-433 t over the past 10 years and were at 394 t in 2019, after a low in 2018. The main commercial catch is of Spanish mackerel by the MMF which has been 270-330 t since quotas were introduced in 2006 and in 2019 was at 291.5 t (Large Pelagic Finfish Figure 2a). The commercial catch of grey mackerel in 2019 was 8 t and has been consistently below 20 t since 2006. The commercial landings of other tropical Large Pelagic species in the NCB and GCB such as Amberjack (*Seriola dumerili*), Cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*) and Golden Trevally (*Gnathanodon speciosus*) were 11.5 t, 17.5 t, and 20 t, respectively, with remaining species <10 t in 2019. For the temperate large pelagic species

only the combined WCB and SCB catch of 32.7 t for Samson fish in 2019 was > 10 t.

The fishing tour operator annual catches of the three large pelagic indicator species have been 27-54 t since 2010, with grey mackerel contributing <1 t annually.

The statewide top 10 pelagic scalefish species (or species groupings) in 2017/18 represented 85% of the total resource catch (kept by numbers). The estimated recreational harvest range for the top 10 pelagic species was steady at 104 t (95% CI 87-121 t) in 2017/18 compared with 106 t (95% CI 93-118 t) in 2015/16, but lower than 143 t (95% CI 124-163 t) in 2013/14 and 174 t (95% CI 154-193 t) in 2011/12 (Ryan *et al.* 2019). In each survey a similar or higher amount of the Large Pelagic Resource was released.



LARGE PELAGIC FINFISH FIGURE 2.

a) Annual statewide commercial catch (t) for the three large pelagic indicator species and b) Annual nominal catch rate (kg/day) of Spanish mackerel in the MMF by management area, with dotted line around each representing +/- standard errors.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Spanish mackerel (Sustainable-Adequate)

Spanish mackerel are fast growing, moderately long lived (to 26 years), grow to a large size (to 40 kg), have high fecundity and have a young age at sexual maturity (less than 2 years) (Mackie *et al.* 2003) indicating a moderate resilience to fishing pressure. Spanish mackerel in WA form a complex of meta populations (Buckworth *et al.* 2007) and are likely a shared biological stock with the Northern Territory.

The 2019 Spanish mackerel catch of 291 t (Large Pelagic Finfish Figure 2a) is a return to the previously relatively stable catch and effort throughout the MMF of 270-320 t since 2006, after the lowest catch in 2018. The low catch can be partially attributed to a significant change in operators in the MMF but may also be due to widespread environmental changes in Northern Australia, with catches declining in other states. The nominal catch rates in the Kimberley and Pilbara management areas are generally decreasing (Large Pelagic Finfish Figure 1b),

STATEWIDE

which is partially due to changes in operators but may also indicate a decline in the spawning stock after the influence of the 2016 northern heat pulse during the spawning period. The catch rate in the southern GCB-WCB area has declined after a peak in 2014 when catches were high, possibly due to the effects of the marine heatwave (Pearce 2011).

The annual charter boat operators' catch of Spanish mackerel in WA has been stable at 17-37 t since 2003 with 34-61% released/discarded, 21 t was caught in 2019 with 75% taken in the NCB and 32% released.

The estimated recreational harvest range of Spanish mackerel was steady in 2017/18 (37-58) compared with 2015/16 (35-54), and lower than 2013/14 (69-103) and 2011/12 (78-108) (Ryan *et al.* 2019). The decline in catch can be partly attributed to the 20-35% decline in recreational effort in the North and Gascoyne Coast Bioregions, particularly during the months from April-August, when higher catches of these species occur.

The estimated retained catch (by number) of Spanish mackerel in the West Coast Bioregion was steady in 2017/18 (775, SE=233) and 2015/16 (704, SE=233), but lower than 2013/14 (2,376, SE=425) and 2011/12 (2,927, SE=443) (Ryan *et al.* 2019). This is likely due to lower water temperatures reducing the abundance of the tropical species in the southern extent of their range.

On the basis of the evidence including trends in catch, effort, catch rates, and a vulnerability assessment the current risk level for Spanish mackerel is **medium**. Thus, the breeding stock of Spanish mackerel in Western Australia is considered to be **sustainable-adequate**.

Grey mackerel (Sustainable-Adequate)

Grey mackerel in WA likely constitute a single biological stock (Newman *et al.* 2010). Grey mackerel are fast growing, relatively short lived (to 12 years) and have a young age at sexual maturity (less than 2 years) (Cameron and Begg 2002) indicating resilience to fishing pressure.

Grey mackerel catches in the MMF since 2000 have been relatively low at 3.5 to 24 t (Large Pelagic Finfish Figure 1a). In 2019 the WA catch of 8 t, was predominantly taken by two vessels (93%), split between both the Pilbara and GCB-WCB areas. This level of catch is well below the TACC (60 t for each of the three management areas) for grey mackerel and negligible when compared to the 1200 t landed annually in Australia (SAFS 2018). The low levels of catch are likely to reflect the gear limitations (line only) and limited targeting of the species in the MMF by only two vessels.

The annual charter boat operators' catch of grey mackerel in WA has been 1 t or less since 2003.

The estimated recreational retained catch of grey mackerel was 1-5 t in 2017/18 but has been <1 t in 2011/12, 2013/14 and 2015/16, although the uncertainty is high for this species (Ryan *et al.* 2019).

On the basis of the evidence provided above, the current risk level for grey mackerel is **low** and the breeding stock is classified as **sustainable-adequate**.

Samson fish (Sustainable-Adequate)

Samson fish in WA is likely to constitute a shared biological stock with South Australia. The species are moderately long lived (to 29 years), can grow to a large size (40 kg+), mature at four years of age, can undertake large scale movements and are able to withstand capture from deep water (Rowland 2002), indicating resilience to fishing pressures.

The statewide commercial catch of Samson fish in 2019 was 32 t, which is an increase on 2018 which was the lowest on record and split between the WCB and SCB. Since 2008 catches have been at historically low levels of <45 t (Large Pelagic Finfish Figure 1a), due primarily to reductions in the WCB since management changes in the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Interim Managed Fishery (WCDSIMF) and Temperate Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Managed Fisheries (TDGDLMF). Over the past 5 years the catches of Samson fish have been 5-16 t in each of the South Coast open access line fishery, WCDSIMF, and TDGDLMF.

The annual charter boat operators' total estimated catch of Samson fish in WA since 2017 have been the lowest on record at 6 t with 95% taken in the WCB and 60-70% released. Previously the total catch has been up to 48 t, in 2003, but has been <20 t since 2010 with 68-76% released/discarded.

The species is also targeted recreationally with the majority (>70%) released/discarded. The estimated recreational harvest range of Samson fish was steady in 2017/18 (10-17) compared with 2015/16 (11-19), 2013/14 (16-28) and 2011/12 (14-22), with similar high release rates of 74-86% (Ryan *et al.* 2019).

On the basis of the evidence provided above, the current risk level for Samson fish is **low** and the breeding stock is classified as **sustainable-adequate**.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

The non-mackerel bycatch taken by the MMF are predominantly other large pelagic species which annually contribute <1 t (2019). Thus, there is **negligible** risk to the breeding stocks of other

finfish species, by fishers targeting the large pelagic resource.

Protected species

Due to the selectivity of the fishing methods used by commercial and recreational fishers targeting large pelagic species, and the low level of interactions with protected species by the MMF there is considered to be a **negligible** risk to listed species.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat

The surface and midwater troll fishing methods used by the MMF, fishing tour operators and recreational fishers when targeting large pelagic species do not impact with the benthic marine environment (DEWHA 2009). On longer fishing trips the vessels may anchor but the impacts from anchoring are considered to be minimal, as anchors are set in naturally dynamic environments.

Ecosystem

The amount of Spanish mackerel removed from the ecosystem is unlikely to impact trophic interactions, as mackerel are generalist carnivores and consume a wide range of fish and invertebrate species from both pelagic and demersal habitats (Mackie *et al.* 2003).

Therefore, the fishery is considered to be a **low** risk to both habitat structure or ecosystem interactions.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

Fifteen boats fished in the MMF during the 2019 season, primarily from May – November, with approximately 35-40 people directly employed in the MMF. The estimated participation rate for recreational fishing in the population of WA is 31.1% in 2015/16 (DoF 2016). Recreational boat based surveys indicate that Spanish mackerel is the 5th highest retained finfish species by weight (Appendix 2), with retained catches highest in the North and Gascoyne Coast Bioregions (Ryan *et al.* 2019). Meanwhile other iconic large pelagic species are targeted but released/discarded in high numbers, such as Samson fish with 79% released.

The large pelagic resource provides a **moderate/high** social amenity to recreational fishing, diving and consumers via commercial fish

supply to markets and restaurants. There is currently a **low** level of risk to these values through external drivers.

Economic

In 2019, the estimated value (to fishers) of the Spanish mackerel annual catch was Level 2, approximately \$2.5 million. The value of the annual catch of grey mackerel, Samson fish and other Large Pelagic species is estimated at less than \$500,000.

Recreational fishers make a significant contribution to Western Australia's economy, and support economic activity in many regional towns on the coast and near inland fishing spots. These resources contribute in part to the \$2.4 billion attributed to the value of recreational fishing to the State's economy each year (McLeod and Lindner 2018). As detailed in this report the sportfishing value of large pelagic fish to the recreational spend is much higher than for other species.

There is currently a **low** level of risk to this return.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Harvest Strategy

For Spanish mackerel the current method of assessment focuses on analysis of catch and catch rates (Levels 1 and 2), with previous analyses having been used to determine the Tolerance Levels and TACC.

A preliminary harvest strategy has been developed for the MMF using reference levels for the catch rates of Spanish mackerel which were derived from data collected over a reference period (2006 to 2011) when fishing was considered sustainable. Daily logbook catch rates are being examined and biological data is currently being collected to inform an age based (Level 3) stock assessment, to be conducted in 2020. This will inform the harvest strategy which will be developed for this fishery.

Annual Catch Tolerance Levels (Acceptable)

The 2019 catch is within the target commercial catch range for Spanish mackerel in the MMF of 246-430 t. In the Kimberley area the 2019 Spanish mackerel catch of 208 t is within the range (110-225 t) while the catches of 71 t in the Pilbara and 13 t in the GCB/WCB are below the respective tolerance ranges of 80-126 t and 56-79 t. Although the Pilbara catch is often below the tolerance range and the GCB/WCB catch has been for almost all years since 2006. In 2018 there was a significant change in operators within the MMF contributing to the lower catches. Environmental conditions across northern

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Australia, particularly the 2016 heat pulse, may have also contributed to low catches.

Due to the likely short-term influence of major changes in operators in the MMF and possible environmental factors the catch levels are deemed **acceptable**.

Compliance

All boats in the MMF are fitted with an Automatic Location Communicator (ALC), which enables the Department to monitor the fleet using a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS). Masters of an authorised boat within the MMF are also required to submit daily logbook records along with catch and disposal records (CDRs). The Department also undertakes vessel inspections at sea to ensure fishing is being undertaken in accordance with the governing legislation (e.g. gear requirements, catch reporting).

Consultation

Management Meetings are held annually between the Department and MMF licensees, in conjunction with the Industry Consultation Unit of the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), with the latest meeting held in February 2019.

Consultation on recreational fishing regulations or relevant commercial management changes is undertaken through the peak body, Recfishwest.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives (Stable)

In August 2015, the MMF received an exemption from the export controls of the EPBC for a period of ten years. In 2018 an Instrument of Exemption was issued to all licence holders which provides for operational and economic efficiencies relating to nomination requirements.

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EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Many large pelagic species experience annual variations in recruitment strength and adult movement due to environmental fluctuations. The changing marine environment off the WA coast can temporarily benefit some tropical species in the southern parts of their range, as seen during the 2010/11 marine heatwave off WA when Spanish mackerel distribution shifted southwards (Pearce *et al.* 2011), but can be detrimental in northern parts, if coinciding with spawning season as seen in the 2016 heat pulse. Other external factors on the fishery include the petroleum industry restricting access to fishing grounds and the detrimental influence of marine seismic surveys, particularly in some parts of the Pilbara area.

The high proportion of released/discarded charter and recreationally caught large pelagic fish with an unknown level of mortality along with the increasing mortality of hooked and discarded large pelagic species by depredation, particularly in some higher effort areas, are factors affecting the large pelagic resource.

Finally, the past four Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) assessments of the Spanish mackerel catch have determined the species is overfished, subject to overfishing and requires the catch of 160,000 t to be reduced by 30% (IOTC 2019). However, this outcome does not apply to the Western Australian component of the northern Australian stock which is distinct from that of other parts of the Indian Ocean.

However, these external factors constitute an overall **low/medium** risk to WA's Large Pelagic resource, with possible impacts varying among individual species.

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STATEWIDE MARINE AQUARIUM FISH AND HERMIT CRAB RESOURCES STATUS REPORT 2020

S. Newman, C. Bruce and L. Wiberg

OVERVIEW

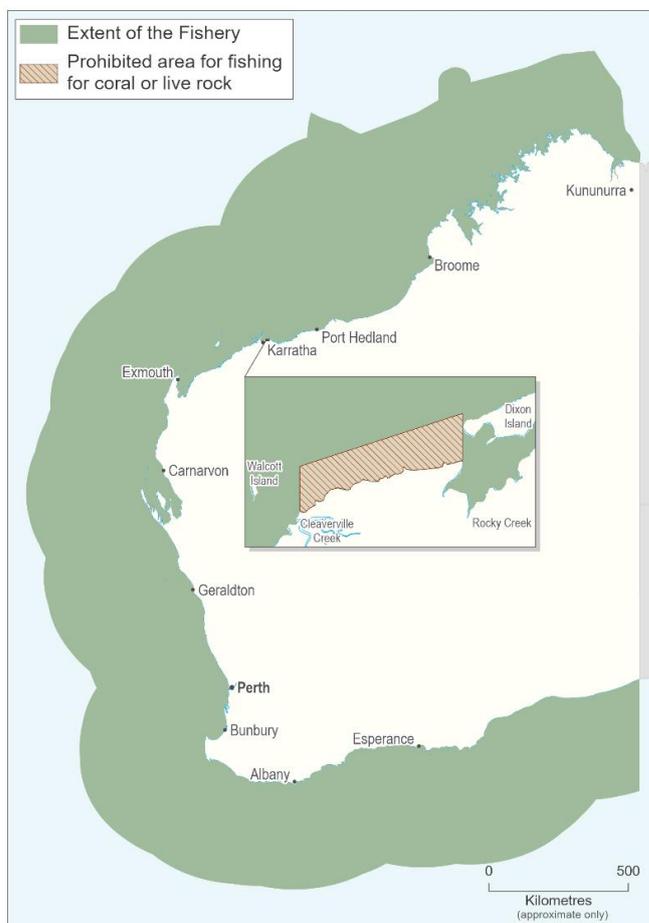
The Marine Aquarium Fish Managed Fishery (MAFMF) is able to operate in all State waters (between the Northern Territory border and South Australian border, Marine Aquarium Fish Figure 1). The fishery is typically more active in waters south of Broome with higher levels of effort around the Capes region, Perth, Geraldton, Exmouth, Dampier and Broome. The MAFMF resource potentially includes more than 1,500 species of marine aquarium fishes under the *Marine Aquarium Fish Managed Fishery Management Plan 2018*. Operators in the MAFMF are also permitted to take coral, live rock, algae, seagrass and invertebrates.

The Hermit Crab Fishery (HCF) specifically targets the Australian land hermit crab (*Coenobita variabilis*) for the domestic and international live pet trade. The fishery operates throughout the year and is one of two land-based commercial fisheries in Western Australia. The HCF operates under Ministerial Exemptions and is currently permitted to fish Western Australian waters north of and including Exmouth Gulf (22°30'S, Marine Aquarium Fish Figure 2).

There are no documented recreational or customary fisheries.

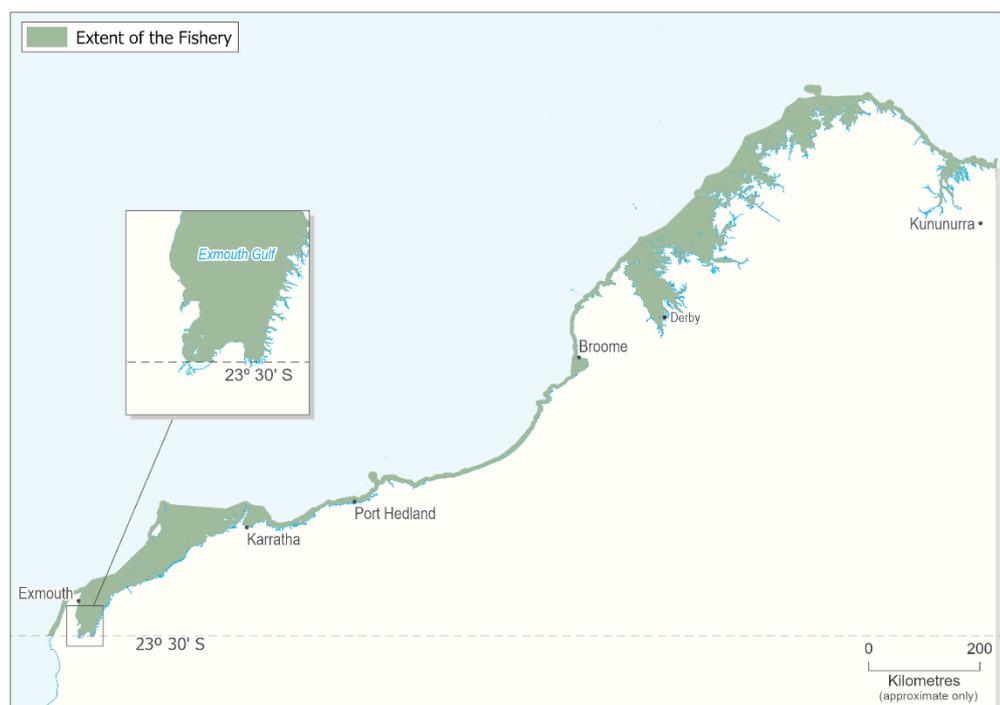
SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (NA)	Total Catch 2019: Fish (n) – 11,925	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (NA)	Total Catch 2019: NA	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Syngnathid (n) – 103; Invertebrates (n) -; 54,582; Hard coral (kg) – 13,449.66; Soft coral (kg) – 5,357; Living rock & Living sand (kg) – 17,519; Sponges (n) – 2,836; Algae/Seagrasses (l) – 12	Small numbers of individual species taken annually.	Adequate
Hermit crabs (n) - < 60,0000	Lowest level of catch in last 12 years	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Low Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$1-5 m)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Social (low amenity)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Low risk	Acceptable
External Drivers	Negligible Risk	Acceptable



MARINE AQUARIUM FISH FIGURE 1

The extent of the Statewide Marine Aquarium Fish Managed Fishery of Western Australia. This map is indicative only regarding the extent of the fishery, and does not contain prohibited fishing areas such as Marine Parks.



MARINE AQUARIUM FISH FIGURE 2.

The Hermit Crab Fishery of Western Australia operates in Western Australian waters north of and including Exmouth Gulf (22°30'S).

CATCH AND LANDINGS

There were ten out of the twelve licences that were active in the MAFMF in 2019 and there was one active licence in the HCF (out of a total of five licences) during 2019. The total catch in the MAFMF in 2019 was 69,446 fishes, 36.325 t of coral, live rock & living sand and 12 L of marine plants and live feed. MAFMF fish catches were dominated by Scribbled Angelfish (*Chaetodontoplus duboulayi*, n = 2,657), Blue And Yellow Wrasse (*Anampses lennardi*, n = 1,005), Black-axil Chromis (*Chromis atripectoralis*, n = 905), Allen's Glidergoby (*Valenciennea alleni*, n = 771), Margined Coralfish (*Chelmon marginalis*, n = 711), and Yellowtail Angelfish (*Chaetodontoplus personifer*, n = 448; Marine Aquarium Table 1), with nearly 200 other fish taxa also reported. In addition, more than 100 invertebrate taxa were also landed in the MAFMF dominated by gastropods, crabs and anemones. The main coral species landed in 2019 were the coral-like anemones of the Corallimorphidae family with 2,616 kg (Marine Aquarium Fish Table 2).

The total catch in the HCF in 2019 was less than 60,000 Australian land hermit crabs. The catch range of Australian land hermit crabs over the last 12 years (2008-2019) is ~58,000-118,203.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Statewide MAFMF & HCF (Sustainable-Adequate)

Due to the large number of species captured in the MAFMF and the relatively low numbers per species, traditional stock assessments are not undertaken. Catches at the lowest taxonomic level are annually monitored based on fisher returns. A risk assessment was undertaken with industry and other marine management groups in 2014 which determined that the risk these fisheries are imposing on the stocks is **low**.

This is a result of all specimens being collected for the live market. Therefore, fishers are restricted in the quantities that they can safely handle and transport (for example, by boat to shore, by vehicle to the holding facility and then on to the retailer) without impacting on the quality of the product. The size of the holding facility and access to regular freight and infrastructure services (such as airports, particularly in the remote northern locations of Western Australia), restricts the levels of effort, and therefore catches, that can be expended in the fishery at any given time.

The above evidence indicates that the biomass of individual species in the MAFMF is unlikely to be depleted and that recruitment is unlikely to be impaired and that current levels of fishing mortality

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(catch) is unlikely to cause any individual species to become recruitment impaired. Thus the breeding stocks of landed species in the MAFMF are classified as **sustainable-adequate**.

The level of harvest of the Australian land hermit crab in the HCF is low relative to the large area in which this species is distributed in WA. In addition, a Productivity Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) was conducted for the Australian land hermit crab. The derived PSA score was 2.18. This indicates a low risk score given the known life history attributes (fast growing, early maturation, long life). The above evidence indicates that the biomass of Australian land hermit crab in the HCF is unlikely to be depleted, recruitment is unlikely to be impaired and that current levels of fishing mortality (catch) is unlikely to cause the Australian land hermit crab to become recruitment impaired. Thus the breeding stocks of the Australian land hermit crab in the HCF are classified as **sustainable-adequate**.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

There is no bycatch in either fishery as both fisheries target specific taxon by hand (with the MAFMF also targeting specific taxon by fishing line), therefore chances of retaining non-targeted species are negligible. This results in a **negligible** risk for bycatch interactions.

Protected species

The potential for listed species interactions is limited due to low fishing effort and small areas accessed on each trip. The MAFMF has a small take of syngnathids under a WTO from the Commonwealth. However, there is a prohibition on the take of leafy sea dragons (*Phycodurus eques*). This results in a **low** risk for protected species interactions.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat and ecosystem impacts are considered **negligible**. This is due to the small scale of the fisheries and the hand collection methods. While the fisheries can potentially operate over large areas, catches are relatively low due to the special handling requirements of live fish. Fishing operations are also heavily weather-dependent due to the small vessels used (MAFMF) and beach access (HCF). This results in a **negligible** risk to the overall ecosystem from the fishery.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

Eleven licences were active in 2019 across the MAFMF and the HCF. Collections by the MAFMF are usually undertaken on SCUBA or surface supplied air (hookah) from small vessels, typically in small teams of 2 – 3 people. Operators in the HCF use four-wheel drive vehicles to access remote beaches where collection occurs on foot. There is currently a **low** level of risk to these values.

Economic

The value per individual aquarium fish and hermit crab licence is relatively high but difficult to estimate directly as operators can sell direct to the public, to wholesalers or they have vertically integrated businesses including export. It is likely the combined value of both fisheries exceeds several million dollars (value is estimated to be \$1-5 million). There is currently a **low** level of economic risk to these values.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

The current effort level in these fisheries is low and relatively consistent from year to year. The impact of these fisheries is very low relative to the widespread distribution of the numerous species targeted. No other fisheries exploit the majority of the species targeted and therefore there is extremely limited potential for any impact on breeding stocks. Therefore, the current level of fishing activity is considered **adequate**.

There are specific performance measures for CITES species taken by the MAFMF as part of its WTO conditions. Catches of CITES species in 2019 were below the WTO limits for hard corals (13,449.66 kg; a total limit of 15,000 kg for all corals (hard and soft coral combined – excluding *Corallimorpharia* and *Zoanthidae* spp) applies, with individual species-specific limits, see DPIRD 2018a), *Tridacnid* clams (397 individuals; limit of 2,400 across all species) and seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp. – 73 individuals; a total limit of 2000 across all Syngnathiformes applies); Syngnathids (total all species 103; a total limit of 2000 across all Syngnathiformes applies).

Harvest Strategy

The harvest strategy for the Marine Aquarium Fish Resource of Western Australia (2018 – 2022) was published in September 2018 (DPIRD 2018a). The Harvest Strategy defines Threshold Levels for a range of species. No threshold levels were exceeded in 2018.

In October 2014, an ecological risk assessment (ERA) workshop was held to assess the impact of

the MAFMF on the marine aquarium fish resource of Western Australia. Outcomes of the ERA are reported in DPIRD (2018b).

Compliance

On the 1st November 2018 a new online detailed daily reporting system (Fisheye) was introduced for the MAFMF and replaces the old logbook system. Operators in the HCF are required to complete statutory catch and effort returns on a monthly basis. The low risks to the sustainability of the stocks imposed by these fisheries results in a **low** risk and low level of non-compliance.

Consultation

Consultation with licensees occurs directly on operational issues and through industry Management Meetings convened by the West Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC) under a Service Level Agreement with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. The most recent Management

Meeting for the MAFMF occurred in September 2018.

Consultation with non-fisher stakeholders is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines.

Management Initiatives

A new management plan was introduced in 2018 that includes formal quota management arrangements for coral, *Tridacnid* clams, 'live rock' and syngnathiformes.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Fishers are typically limited by sea and weather conditions, and access to beaches. Consumer demand and unit prices also influence the target species and numbers landed. The external drivers pose a **negligible** risk to these fisheries.

MARINE AQUARIUM FISH TABLE 1

Summary of the reported catch (number of individuals) of the main fish (excluding Syngnathids) species landed from the Marine Aquarium Fish Managed Fishery for 2019, and catches over the previous four years.

		2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
<i>Chaetodontoplus duboulayi</i>	Scribbled Angelfish	2,657	3,553	3,602	2,670	1,668
<i>Anampses lennardi</i>	Blue And Yellow Wrasse	1,005	1,552	1,448	92	121
<i>Chromis atripectoralis</i>	Black-axil Chromis	905	1,301	340	2,106	2,400
<i>Valenciennea alleni</i>	Allen's Glidergoby	771	760	647		310
<i>Chelmon marginalis</i>	Margined Coralfish	711	1,934	1,888	943	827
<i>Chaetodontoplus personifer</i>	Yellowtail Angelfish	448	556	530	196	126
<i>Chromis cinerascens</i>	Green Chromis	404				931
<i>Ecsenius bicolor</i>	Bicolor Combtooth Blenny	397	71	16		
<i>Entomacrodus decussatus</i>	Wavy-lined Blenny	360	1,337	655		
<i>Valenciennea muralis</i>	Mural Glidergoby	358	487	433	714	1,458

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MARINE AQUARIUM FISH TABLE 2

Summary of the reported catch (kg) of the main coral species landed from the Marine Aquarium Fish Managed Fishery for 2019, and catches over the previous four years.

Species	Common Name	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
<i>Corallimorphidae - undifferentiated</i>	Corallimorphidae Coral-like Anemones	2,616	362	60		
<i>Euphyllia ancora</i>	Hammer Hard Coral	2,556.2	770.4	821	421.8	535.1
<i>Euphyllia glabrescens</i>	Torch Hard Coral	1,461.2	752.8	467.4	290.1	362.52
<i>Order Zoantharia - undifferentiated</i>	General Zoanthid Anemones	1,251	470	14	340	609
<i>Symphyllia wilsoni</i>	Symphyllia wilsoni Hard Coral	984.6	169.9	206.5	57	42.5
<i>Catalaphyllia jardinei</i>	Catalaphyllia Elegant Hard Coral	782	306.2	106.5	164.7	229.5
<i>Dipsastraea spp.</i>	Dipsastraea Hard Coral	749.5	311.8	91.7	151.3	127
<i>Trachyphyllia geoffroyi</i>	Trachyphyllia Hard Coral	729.9	326.6	528.5	272.9	279.3
<i>Duncanopsammia axifuga</i>	Duncanopsammia axifuga Whisker Hard Coral	707.4	315.37	382.3	375.7	505.99
<i>Goniopora spp.</i>	Goniopora Hard Corals	686.8	401	175.9	234.65	251.22
<i>Acropora spp.</i>	Acropora Staghorn Hard Corals	462	376.8	305.8	173.2	198.37
<i>Lobophyllia spp.</i>	Lobophyllia Hard Coral	441.8	422.6	168.9	145.4	439.82
<i>Sarcophyton spp.</i>	Toadstool Soft Corals	429.5	390.5	456	455.7	430
<i>Euphyllia paraancora</i>	Branching Hammer Hard Coral	314.5	32.6	18.7	106.6	48.5
<i>Alveopora spp.</i>	Alveopora Hard Corals	286	21.1	17.7	31	14.2
<i>Lobophyllia hemprichii</i>	Lobophyllia hemprichii	277	112			
<i>Zoanthidae - undifferentiated</i>	Zoanthidae Zoanthid Anemones	252	1,273	1,035.7	748.5	1,976
<i>Acanthastrea lordhowensis</i>	Lordhowensis Acanthastrea Hard Coral	239.6	9.5		29.2	22
<i>Order Corallimorpharia - undifferentiated</i>	General Coral-like Anemones	225	331.2	49.	369	282
<i>Echinophyllia spp.</i>	Echinophyllia Hard Coral	198.1	142.1	52.3	51.2	104.2

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STATEWIDE SPECIMEN SHELL RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

A. Hart, C. Bruce and A. Steele

OVERVIEW

The Specimen Shell Managed Fishery (SSMF) is based on the collection of individual shells for the purposes of display, collection, cataloguing, classification and sale.

About 200 species of Specimen Shell are collected each year, using a variety of methods. The main methods are by hand by small groups of divers operating from small boats in shallow coastal waters, by wading along coastal beaches below the high water mark or, in some instances, by use of remotely operated underwater vehicles. While the fishery covers the entire Western Australian coastline, some concentration of effort occurs in areas adjacent to population centres such as Broome, Exmouth, Shark Bay, Geraldton, Perth, Mandurah, the Capes area and Albany.

This fishery is managed through input controls in the form of limited entry, gear restrictions and permanent closed areas. There are also operational limitations – depth, time and tide. The

fishery has 31 licences with a maximum of 4 divers allowed in the water per licence at any one time and specimens may only be collected by hand or by use of remotely operated underwater vehicles (limited to one per licence) under an exemption for the trail of this collection method..

There are a number of closed areas where the SSMF is not permitted to operate. These include within various marine parks and aquatic reserves and other closed waters such as Reef Observation Areas and Fish Habitat Protection Areas. Much of the west side of North-West Cape and the Ningaloo Marine Park are prohibited areas for the SSMF. The exclusion of Marmion Marine Park in the Perth metropolitan area is also important because of its populations of two rare cowrie species. There are no documented recreational fisheries.

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
Commercial fishery (NA)	Total Catch 2019: Shells (n) – 7,232	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (NA)	Total Catch 2019: NA	Acceptable
EBFM		
Assessment Indicator		
Catch: 10,000 to 25,000 shells Catch rate: 10 – 40 shells per day	7,232 shells. 16 shells per day	Adequate Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Low Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Economic (Level 1 GVP <\$1 million)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Social (low amenity)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Stable	Acceptable
External Drivers	Negligible Risk	Acceptable



SPECIMEN SHELL FIGURE 1
Map showing the boundaries of the Specimen Shell Managed Fishery.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

In 2019, the total number of specimen shells collected was 7,232 distributed over 241 species. This is based on 100% of submitted catch returns. In the past 5 years, more than 450 separate species of molluscs have been collected, with an average of more than 200 species per year – the majority in low numbers per species.

There is some focus of effort on mollusc families most popular with shell collectors, such as cowries, cones, murexes and volutes. Cypraeidae or cowries are noted for their localised variations in both shape and colour, making them attractive to collectors.

Of the 31 licences in the fishery, 17 fished in 2019. Effort in 2019 was 460 days, which was 176 fishing days less than the number of fishing days reported in 2018 (636 days). Over the past five years, there was an annual average of around 598 days fished..

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

Statewide SSMF

During the 2019 season, the catch rate was approximately 16 shells per day.

Ponder and Grayson (1998) examined the specimen shell industry on a nationwide basis, rating vulnerability to over-exploitation on the basis of species biology, accessibility to collection, and rarity. Species collected in Western Australia which were identified by Ponder and Grayson as potentially vulnerable comprised of 6 cowries (*Cypraea (Austrocypraea) reevei*, *Cypraea (Zoila) friendii vercoi*, *Cypraea (Zoila) marginata (albanyensis)*, *Cypraea (Zoila) marginata (consueta)*, *Cypraea (Zoila) rosselli* and *Cypraea (Zoila) venusta*) and 2 volutes (*Amoria damoni (keatsiana)* and *Amoria damoni (reevei)*).

Shell sighting is the abundance category used to monitor the 8 vulnerable species. Of the 8 vulnerable species an overall average of approximately 45% of the shells sighted were not harvested in 2019. The measure of the number of shells sighted is reported correctly in about 99% of cases where one of the vulnerable species is

reported. It is anticipated that current sightings are an under estimate of the available populations. Thus the breeding stocks of landed species are classified as **sustainable-adequate**.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

There is no bycatch in this fishery owing to the highly selective fishing methods. This results in a **negligible** risk for bycatch interactions.

Protected species

The fishery reported no interactions with listed protected species during 2019. Reports of interactions with listed protected species are required to be recorded on monthly catch and effort returns. This results in a **negligible** risk for protected species interactions.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat and ecosystem impacts are considered **negligible**. This is due to the small scale of the fishery and the hand collection methods. While the fisheries can potentially operate over large areas, catches are relatively low due to the special handling requirements. For example, specimens with slight visual imperfections are often overlooked by collectors, meaning their reproductive potential to the population can still be realised. This results in a **negligible** risk to the overall ecosystem from the fishery.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

In 2019, around 9 licences recorded consistent activity, with around 15 people operating occasionally in the fishery. It is expected that approximately 22 people are employed regularly in this fishery. There is currently a **low** level of risk to these values.

Economic

The value per individual specimen shell can be relatively high but difficult to estimate as operators

can sell direct to the public, to wholesalers or through vertically integrated businesses including export. Estimated annual economic value of this fishery is currently not assessed. There is currently a **low** level of economic risk to these values.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

The performance measures for the fishery relate to the maintenance of breeding stocks, as indicated by catch levels and catch rates. In 2019, the catch level of approximately 7,232 shells was within the range set, i.e. 10,000 – 25,000 shells and the catch rate of 16 shells/day was within the range set, i.e. 10 – 40 shells/day.

Harvest Strategy

The fishery currently operates under an informal harvest strategy based on a constant exploitation approach. There is no formal harvest strategy for this fishery.

Compliance

Operators in the SSMF are required to complete statutory catch and effort returns on a monthly basis. The low risks to the sustainability of the stocks imposed by the SSMF results in a **low** risk and low level of compliance.

Consultation

The Department undertakes consultation directly with licensees on operational issues as well as through the Professional Shell Fisherman's Association of Western Australia. Industry Management Meetings are convened by the Department through the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who also undertake consultation on statutory management plan amendments on behalf of the Department under a Service Level Agreement.

Management Initiatives

A review of the management arrangements for the SSMF is planned for 2019/2020.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

Fishers are typically limited by sea and weather conditions and access to beaches. Consumer demand and unit prices also influence the target species and numbers landed. The external drivers pose a **low** risk to the SSMF.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

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APPENDIX 2

The following tables contain data reported for commercial catches, estimated recreational and charter catches, aquaculture production, reported bycatch of protected and listed species from

commercial fisheries and fish prices reported from land based processors. The reporting period is dependent on the most recent data available.

Table of catches from commercial fishers' statutory returns for 2018/19

This table contains the estimated live weight¹ of species recorded in the compulsory catch and fishing effort returns provided by commercial fishers each month. These data include the catch taken as by-product as well as the targeted catch.

These catch data may differ slightly from some of the catch estimates presented for specific fisheries as the latter may include additional data from other sources, such as research log books and processors. The figures may also differ slightly from previously reported figures, as additional data may have been received by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. The table represents the latest year for which a complete set of data is available.

While scientific names have been included wherever possible, it should be noted that many fish recorded under a common name cannot be identified as belonging to a particular single species and therefore must be reported as being part of a commercial grouping of several species. For example, the common name 'Redfish' may be used for several species of the genus *Centroberyx*.

Data for species with live weight catches of less than 500 kg have been combined into the general or 'other' category within each class. Data for the Marine Aquarium fish Fishery, Specimen Shell Fishery and Hermit Crab Fishery are presented in the next table. Data for the Indian Ocean Territories Fishery have not been included.

Category Family Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name	Live Weight (tonnes)
FISH			
SCALEFISH			
Acanthuridae, Zanclidae	Surgeonfishes & Moorish Idols	Acanthuridae, Zanclidae - undifferentiated	11
Acropomatidae, Percichthyidae, Serranidae, Polyprionidae, Moronidae, Callanathiidae, Centrogeniidae, Ostracoberycidae	Temperate Basses & Rockcods	Percichthyidae, Serranidae - undifferentiated	72
Ariidae	Forktail Catfishes	Ariidae - undifferentiated	7
Ariidae	Silver Cobbler	<i>Neoarius midgleyi</i>	75
Arripidae	Australian Herring	<i>Arripis georgianus</i>	65
Arripidae	Western Australian Salmon	<i>Arripis truttaceus</i>	208
Atherinidae	Hardyheads & Tusked Silversides	Atherinidae, Dentatherinidae - undifferentiated	2
Balistidae, Monacanthidae	Triggerfishes & Leatherjackets	Balistidae, Monacanthidae - undifferentiated	32
Berycidae	Bight Redfish	<i>Centroberyx gerrardi</i>	58
Berycidae	Redfishes	Berycidae - undifferentiated	5
Berycidae	Yelloweye Redfish	<i>Centroberyx australis</i>	7
Caesionidae, Lutjanidae, Symphysanodontidae	Fusiliers, Tropical Snappers & Slopefishes	Caesionidae, Lutjanidae, Symphysanodontidae - undifferentiated	1
Carangidae	Amberjack	<i>Seriola dumerili</i>	12
Carangidae	Black Pomfret	<i>Parastromateus niger</i>	3
Carangidae	Golden Trevally	<i>Gnathanodon speciosus</i>	15
Carangidae	Samsonfish	<i>Seriola hippos</i>	29
Carangidae	Silver Trevally	<i>Pseudocaranx georgianus</i> spp. complex	3
Carangidae	Trevallies	Carangidae - undifferentiated	235
Carangidae	Yellowtail Kingfish	<i>Seriola lalandi</i>	3
Carangidae	Yellowtail Scad	<i>Trachurus novaezelandiae</i>	13

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Category Family Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name	Live Weight (tonnes)
Centrolophidae	Blue-Eye Trevalla	<i>Hyperoglyphe antarctica</i>	10
Cheilodactylidae	Blue Morwong	<i>Nemadactylus valenciennesi</i>	45
Cheilodactylidae	Morwongs	Cheilodactylidae - undifferentiated	1
Clupeidae	Australian Sardine	<i>Sardinops sagax</i>	1,092
Clupeidae	Blue Sprat	<i>Spratelloides robustus</i>	2
Clupeidae	Perth Herring	<i>Nematalosa vlaminghi</i>	3
Clupeidae	Sandy Sprat	<i>Hyperlophus vittatus</i>	37
Clupeidae	Scaly Mackerel	<i>Sardinella lemuru</i>	453
Fishes (multi-family groups)	Flounders	Bothidae, Psettodidae & Pleuronectidae	2
Glaucosomatidae	Northern Pearl Perch	<i>Glaucosoma buergeri</i>	39
Glaucosomatidae	West Australian Dhufish	<i>Glaucosoma hebraicum</i>	64
Haemulidae	Grunter Breems	Haemulidae - undifferentiated	69
Haemulidae	Javelinfishes	Pomadasys spp.	33
Haemulidae	Painted Sweetlips	<i>Diagramma labiosum</i>	41
Hemiramphidae	Southern Garfish	<i>Hyporhamphus melanochir</i>	7
Labridae	Baldchin Groper	<i>Choerodon rubescens</i>	7
Labridae	Pigfishes	Bodianus spp.	2
Labridae	Tuskfishes	Choerodon spp.	13
Labridae	Western Blue Groper	<i>Achoerodus gouldii</i>	31
Labridae	Wrasses	Labridae - undifferentiated	1
Latidae	Barramundi	<i>Lates calcarifer</i>	49
Lethrinidae	Bluespotted Emperor	<i>Lethrinus punctulatus</i>	464
Lethrinidae	Drab Emperor	<i>Lethrinus ravus</i>	5
Lethrinidae	Grass Emperor	<i>Lethrinus laticaudis</i>	4
Lethrinidae	Longnose Emperor	<i>Lethrinus olivaceus</i>	15
Lethrinidae	Mozambique Seabream	<i>Wattsia mossambica</i>	3
Lethrinidae	Redspot Emperor	<i>Lethrinus lentjan</i>	52
Lethrinidae	Redthroat Emperor	<i>Lethrinus miniatus</i>	43
Lethrinidae	Robinson's Seabream	<i>Gymnocranius grandoculis</i>	33
Lethrinidae	Spangled Emperor	<i>Lethrinus nebulosus</i>	91
Lethrinidae	Spotcheek Emperor	<i>Lethrinus rubrioperculatus</i>	1
Lethrinidae	Yellowtail Emperor	<i>Lethrinus atkinsoni</i>	7
Lutjanidae	Brownstripe Snapper	<i>Lutjanus vitta</i>	163
Lutjanidae	Chinamanfish	<i>Symphorus nematophorus</i>	10
Lutjanidae	Crimson Snapper	<i>Lutjanus erythropterus</i>	293
Lutjanidae	Darktail Snapper	<i>Lutjanus lemniscatus</i>	19
Lutjanidae	Goldband Snapper	<i>Pristipomoides multidentis</i>	807
Lutjanidae	Mangrove Jack	<i>Lutjanus argentimaculatus</i>	14
Lutjanidae	Moses' Snapper	<i>Lutjanus russellii</i>	67
Lutjanidae	Red Emperor	<i>Lutjanus sebae</i>	416
Lutjanidae	Rosy Snapper	<i>Pristipomoides filamentosus</i>	9
Lutjanidae	Ruby Snapper	<i>Etelis carbunculus</i>	5
Lutjanidae	Saddletail Snapper	<i>Lutjanus malabaricus</i>	340
Lutjanidae	Sharptooth Snapper	<i>Pristipomoides typus</i>	17
Lutjanidae	Tropical Snappers	Lutjanus spp.	49

Category Family Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name	Live Weight (tonnes)
Mugilidae	Sea Mullet	<i>Mugil cephalus</i>	195
Mugilidae	Yelloweye Mullet	<i>Aldrichetta forsteri</i>	16
Mullidae	Goatfishes	Mullidae - undifferentiated	40
Nemipteridae	Rainbow Monocle Bream	<i>Scolopsis monogramma</i>	4
Nemipteridae	Threadfin Breems	Nemipteridae - undifferentiated	214
Oplegnathidae	Knifejaw	<i>Oplegnathus woodwardi</i>	1
Pentacerotidae	Boarfishes	Pentacerotidae - undifferentiated	6
Platycephalidae	Flatheads	Platycephalidae - undifferentiated	14
Plotosidae	Estuary Cobbler	<i>Cnidoglanis macrocephalus</i>	38
Polynemidae	Blue Threadfin	<i>Eleutheronema tetradactylum</i>	1
Polynemidae	King Threadfin	<i>Polydactylus macrochir</i>	16
Polyprionidae	Bass Groper	<i>Polyprion americanus</i>	3
Polyprionidae	Hapuku	<i>Polyprion oxygeneios</i>	57
Pomatomidae	Tailor	<i>Pomatomus saltatrix</i>	20
Priacanthidae	Bigeyes	Priacanthidae - undifferentiated	36
Psettodidae	Australian Halibut	<i>Psettodes erumei</i>	2
Rachycentridae	Cobia	<i>Rachycentron canadum</i>	20
Scaridae	Parrotfishes	Scaridae - undifferentiated	8
Sciaenidae	Black Jewfish	<i>Protonibea diacanthus</i>	3
Sciaenidae	Mulloway	<i>Argyrosomus japonicus</i>	13
Scomberidae	Grey Mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus semifasciatus</i>	12
Scomberidae	Spanish Mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus commerson</i>	232
Scorpididae	Sea Sweep	<i>Scorpis aequipinnis</i>	1
Serranidae	Banded Grouper	<i>Epinephelus amblycephalus</i>	11
Serranidae	Barcheek Coral Trout	<i>Plectropomus maculatus</i>	27
Serranidae	Blackspotted Rockcod	<i>Epinephelus malabaricus</i>	30
Serranidae	Breaksea Cod	<i>Epinephelides armatus</i>	5
Serranidae	Common Coral Trout	<i>Plectropomus leopardus</i>	1
Serranidae	Duskytail Grouper	<i>Epinephelus bleekeri</i>	15
Serranidae	Eightbar Grouper	<i>Hyporthodus octofasciatus</i>	9
Serranidae	Goldspotted Rockcod	<i>Epinephelus coioides</i>	58
Serranidae	Radiant Rockcod	<i>Epinephelus radiatus</i>	1
Serranidae	Radiant Rockcod/Comet Grouper	<i>Epinephelus Radiatus/Morrhua</i>	1
Serranidae	Rankin Cod	<i>Epinephelus multinotatus</i>	248
Serranidae	Spotted Cod	<i>Epinephelus Microdon/Areolatus/Bilobatus</i>	87
Serranidae	Tomato Rockcod	<i>Cephalopholis sonnerati</i>	2
Siganidae	Rabbitfish	<i>Siganus</i> spp.	2
Sillaginidae	King George Whiting	<i>Sillaginodes punctatus</i>	17
Sillaginidae	Whitings	Sillaginidae - undifferentiated	38
Sillaginidae	Yellowfin Whiting	<i>Sillago schomburgkii</i>	106
Sparidae	Black Bream	<i>Acanthopagrus butcheri</i>	58
Sparidae	Frypan Bream	<i>Argyrops spinifer</i>	58
Sparidae	Pink Snapper	<i>Chrysophrys auratus</i>	141
Sparidae	Tarwhine	<i>Rhabdosargus sarba</i>	9

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Category Family Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name	Live Weight (tonnes)
Sparidae	Western Yellowfin Bream	<i>Acanthopagrus morrisoni</i>	21
Sphyraenidae	Pikes	Sphyraenidae - undifferentiated	3
Sphyraenidae	Snook	<i>Sphyraena novaehollandiae</i>	5
Terapontidae	Striped Grunters	Terapontidae - undifferentiated	2
TOTAL SCALEFISH			7,693
SHARKS & RAYS			
Carcharhinidae	Bronze Whaler	<i>Carcharhinus brachyurus</i>	39
Carcharhinidae	Dusky Whaler	<i>Carcharhinus obscurus</i>	156
Carcharhinidae	Sandbar Shark	<i>Carcharhinus plumbeus</i>	32
Carcharhinidae	Spinner Shark	<i>Carcharhinus brevipinna</i>	22
Carcharhinidae	Tiger Shark	<i>Galeocerdo cuvier</i>	2
Lamnidae	Shortfin Mako	<i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i>	1
Orectolobidae	Wobbegong	Orectolobidae - undifferentiated	25
Pristiophoridae	Common Sawshark	<i>Pristiophorus cirratus</i>	4
Rajidae	Skates	Rajidae, Arhynchobatidae - undifferentiated	24
Sphymidae	Hammerhead Sharks	Sphymidae - undifferentiated	39
Triakidae	Gummy Shark	<i>Mustelus antarcticus</i>	348
Triakidae	School Shark	<i>Galeorhinus galeus</i>	1
Triakidae	Whiskery Shark	<i>Furgaleus macki</i>	137
Trygonorrhinidae	Banjo Rays	Trygonorrhinidae - undifferentiated	1
	Other Sharks	Sharks - undifferentiated	10
TOTAL SHARKS & RAYS			841
OTHER FISH	Other Fish		105
TOTAL FISH			8,638
INVERTEBRATES			
CRABS			
Geryonidae	Crystal Crab	<i>Chaceon bicolor</i>	156
Hypothalassiidae	Champagne Crab	Hypothalassia spp.	4
Menippidae	Giant Crab	<i>Pseudocarcinus gigas</i>	9
Portunidae	Blue Swimmer Crab	<i>Portunus armatus</i>	691
Portunidae	Brown Mud Crab	<i>Scylla olivacea</i>	1
Portunidae	Green Mud Crab	<i>Scylla serrata</i>	5
TOTAL CRABS			866
LOBSTERS			
Palinuridae	Southern Rock Lobster	<i>Jasus edwardsii</i>	24
Palinuridae	Western Rock Lobster	<i>Panulirus cygnus</i>	6,211
Scyllaridae	Moreton Bay Bug	Thenus spp.	12
TOTAL LOBSTERS			6,246
MOLLUSCS			
Cephalopoda	Squid	Order Teuthoidea - undifferentiated	42
Haliotidae	Brownlip Abalone	<i>Haliotis conicopora</i>	22
Haliotidae	Greenlip Abalone	<i>Haliotis laevigata</i>	42
Haliotidae	Roe's Abalone	<i>Haliotis roei</i>	54
Octopodidae	Octopuses	Octopodidae - undifferentiated	369
Pteriidae	Silverlip Pearl Oyster	<i>Pinctada maxima</i>	201

Category Family Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name	Live Weight (tonnes)
Sepiidae	Cuttlefish	Sepia spp.	64
Veneridae	Ballot's Saucer Scallop	<i>Ylistrum balloti</i>	1,418
TOTAL MOLLUSCS			2,212
PRAWNS			
Penaeidae	Banana Prawn	<i>Penaeus merguensis</i>	330
Penaeidae	Blue Endeavour Prawn	<i>Metapenaeus endeavouri</i>	291
Penaeidae	Brown Tiger Prawn	<i>Penaeus esculentus</i>	815
Penaeidae	Velvet Prawn	<i>Metapenaeopsis</i> spp.	123
Penaeidae	Western King Prawn	<i>Melicertus latisulcatus</i>	1,012
Stomatopoda	Mantis Shrimps	Order Stomatopoda - undifferentiated	58
TOTAL PRAWNS			2,630
OTHER INVERTEBRATES	Other Invertebrates		34
TOTAL INVERTEBRATES			11,988
GRAND TOTAL			20,627

1. Live weight: refers to the landings converted to a live weight basis. This is often referred to as the 'live weight equivalent of the landings', shortened to the 'live weight'. Although live weight may be the preferred unit it is rarely obtained as a direct measure. Live weight has to be derived and this is usually done by applying a conversion factor to the landed weight. Landed weight: refers to the mass (or weight) of a product at the time of landing, regardless of the state in which it is landed. That is, the fish may be whole, gutted or filleted etc. This unit is of limited use for further analysis except where it is known that the product is very homogenous in nature. Where more detailed analysis of the data is required the landed weight is generally converted to a more meaningful measure, the most frequently used being termed live or whole weight or 'nominal catch'.
 2. Weight figures are round off to the nearest tonnage.
 3. Common names are from the CAAB – Codes for Australian Biota database.
- More information may be obtained from the 'CWP Handbook of Fishery Statistical Standards' at the website <http://www.fao.org/fishery/cwp/handbook/B/en>.

Table of catches from marine aquarium fish, specimen shell and hermit crab commercial fishers' statutory returns for 2018/19

Common Name	Quantity (numbers)	Weight (kg)	Volume (litres)
MARINE AQUARIUM FISH FISHERY			
Fish	18,182		
Syngnathidae (not included in Fish)	82		
Invertebrates (not including Corals)	45,666		
Hard Coral		10,909.56	
Soft Coral*		5,740	
Living Rock & Living Sand		22,183	
Sponges	4,245		
Algae/Seagrasses			11
SPECIMEN SHELL FISHERY			
Specimen Shells - Mollusca	7,457		
HERMIT CRAB FISHERY			
Land Hermit Crabs only - <i>Coenobita variabilis</i>	**		

* The 'Soft coral' category for the Marine Aquarium Fish Fishery includes 5,037 kg of coral like anemone groups such as corallimorphs and zoanthids in the Class Anthozoa. These are not part of the annual coral TAC.

** Industry figures have not been included to protect the confidentiality of individual authorisation holders, as there are less than three active authorisation holders.

Table of catches from boat-based recreational fishers and charter returns for 2017/18

This table contains the estimated number¹ and weight² of species retained in the state-wide survey of boat-based recreational fishers and charter returns for 2017/18 (1 September 2017 – 31 August 2018). These estimates include catch from targeted and non-targeted recreational fishing. Estimates are reported at species level where adequate sample size and precision were

obtained, otherwise species were grouped to general or 'other' categories within each class. Uncertainty around estimates from the state-wide survey is not included in this table (refer to Ryan *et al.* 2019 for this information). Estimates of shore-based recreational catches are not available. The table represents the latest year for which a complete set of data is available.

Category / Family	Common Name	Scientific Name	Est Kept Catch (number)	Est Kept Catch (tonnes)	Charter Kept Catch (number)	Charter Est Kept Catch (tonnes)
FISH						
SCALEFISH						
Acropomatidae, Percichthyidae, Serranidae, Polyprionidae, Moronidae, Callanhiidae, Centrogeniidae, Ostracoberycidae	Temperate Basses & Rockcods	Percichthyidae, Serranidae - undifferentiated	4,277	N/A	1,913	N/A
Apistidae, Neosebastidae, Pteroidae, Scorpaenidae, Sebastidae, Setarchidae, Synanceiidae, Tetrarogidae	Scorpionfishes	Apistidae, Neosebastidae, Pteroidae, Scorpaenidae, Sebastidae, Setarchidae, Synanceiidae & Tetrarogidae - undifferentiated	id	id	58	N/A
Ariidae	Forktail Catfishes	Ariidae - undifferentiated	id	id	113	N/A
Arripidae	Australian Herring	<i>Arripis georgianus</i>	94,991	17	38	Neg
	Western Australian Salmon	<i>Arripis truttaceus</i>	1,717	7	13	Neg
Aulopidae	Sergeant Baker	<i>Latropiscis purpurissatus</i>	2,057	2	133	< 0.5
Berycidae	Bight Redfish	<i>Centroberyx gerrardi</i>	12,209	16	2,819	4
	Swallowtail	<i>Centroberyx lineatus</i>	2,550	2	912	< 1
Caesionidae, Lutjanidae, Symphysanodontidae	Fusiliers, Tropical Snappers & Slopefishes	Caesionidae, Lutjanidae, Symphysanodontidae - undifferentiated	id	id	N/A	N/A
Carangidae	Amberjack	<i>Seriola dumerili</i>	id	id	48	< 0.5
	Golden Trevally	<i>Gnathanodon speciosus</i>	2,085	10	216	1
	Queenfish	Scomberoides spp.	199	N/A	303	N/A
	Samsonfish	<i>Seriola hippos</i>	1,718	13	307	2
	Silver Trevally	<i>Pseudocaranx georgianus</i>	25,556	23	657	< 1
	Trevallies	Carangidae - undifferentiated	2,953	N/A	949	N/A
	Yellowtail Kingfish	<i>Seriola lalandi</i>	1,102	7	49	< 0.5
Cheilodactylidae	Blue Morwong	<i>Nemadactylus valenciennesi</i>	4,336	14	388	1
Clupeidae & Pristigasteridae	Herrings & Ilishas	Clupeidae, Pristigasteridae - undifferentiated	id	id	id	id
Glaucosomatidae	Northern Pearl Perch	<i>Glaucosoma buergeri</i>	478	< 1	1,692	4
	West Australian Dhufish	<i>Glaucosoma hebraicum</i>	27,926	161	2,172	12
Haemulidae	Grunter Breems	Haemulidae - undifferentiated	id	id	84	< 0.5
	Painted Sweetlips	<i>Diagramma labiosum</i>	1,092	3	172	< 1
Hemiramphidae	Garfishes	Hemiramphidae - undifferentiated	id	id	35	Neg

Category / Family	Common Name	Scientific Name	Est Kept Catch (number)	Est Kept Catch (tonnes)	Charter Kept Catch (number)	Charter Est Kept Catch (tonnes)	
Labridae	Baldchin Groper	<i>Choerodon rubescens</i>	16,551	51	3,896	12	
	Blackspot Tuskfish	<i>Choerodon schoenleinii</i>	3,200	9	224	< 1	
	Blue Tuskfish	<i>Choerodon cyanodus</i>	1,980	6	N/A	N/A	
	Brownspotted Wrasse	<i>Notolabrus parilus</i>	3,799	2	30	Neg	
	Foxfish	<i>Bodianus frenchii</i>	1,471	1	242	< 0.5	
	Western King Wrasse	<i>Coris auricularis</i>	5,345	3	94	Neg	
	Wrasses	Labridae - undifferentiated	2,241	N/A	338	N/A	
Latidae	Barramundi	<i>Lates calcarifer</i>	1,587	6	1,124	5	
Lethrinidae	Bluespotted Emperor	<i>Lethrinus punctulatus</i>	id	id	640	< 0.5	
	Emperors	Lethrinidae - undifferentiated	id	id	55	Neg	
	Grass Emperor	<i>Lethrinus laticaudis</i>	13,726	18	2,023	3	
	Longnose Emperor	<i>Lethrinus olivaceus</i>	id	id	779	N/A	
	Redthroat Emperor	<i>Lethrinus miniatus</i>	7,899	9	3,919	4	
	Robinson's Seabream	<i>Gymnocranius grandoculis</i>	971	3	1,186	4	
	Spangled Emperor	<i>Lethrinus nebulosus</i>	8,290	20	4,153	10	
	Chinamanfish	<i>Symphorus nematophorus</i>	id	id	403	2	
	Crimson Snapper	<i>Lutjanus erythropterus</i>	1,301	2	799	1	
	Goldband Snapper	<i>Pristipomoides multidens</i>	3,876	15	3,204	13	
Lutjanidae	Golden Snapper	<i>Lutjanus johnii</i>	1,181	2	3,414	5	
	Mangrove Jack	<i>Lutjanus argentimaculatus</i>	1,941	2	2,139	2	
	Moses' Snapper	<i>Lutjanus russellii</i>	753	N/A	431	N/A	
	Red Emperor	<i>Lutjanus sebae</i>	7,909	28	2,965	10	
	Rosy Snapper	<i>Pristipomoides filamentosus</i>	id	id	1,713	3	
	Ruby Snapper	<i>Etelis carbunculus</i>	id	id	260	2	
	Saddletail Snapper	<i>Lutjanus malabaricus</i>	id	id	2,037	4	
	Sharptooth Snapper	<i>Pristipomoides typus</i>	id	id	1,939	4	
	Stripey Snapper	<i>Lutjanus carponotatus</i>	5,132	4	1,196	1	
	Mugilidae	Mulletts	Mugilidae - undifferentiated	id	id	1,359	N/A
	Mullidae	Goatfishes	Mullidae - undifferentiated	626	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Nemipteridae	Threadfin Breams	Nemipteridae - undifferentiated	id	id	N/A	N/A
		Western Butterfish	<i>Pentapodus vitta</i>	3,887	2	id	id
Platycephalidae	Flatheads	Platycephalidae - undifferentiated	4,866	N/A	187	N/A	
Polynemidae	Threadfin Salmons	Polynemidae - undifferentiated	2,062	7	966	N/A	
Pomatomidae	Tailor	<i>Pomatomus saltatrix</i>	5,427	4	39	Neg	
Rachycentridae	Cobia	<i>Rachycentron canadum</i>	1,206	8	287	2	
Scaridae	Parrotfishes	Scaridae - undifferentiated	id	id	15	N/A	
Sciaenidae	Black Jewfish	<i>Protonibea diacanthus</i>	id	id	167	< 1	
	Mulloway	<i>Argyrosomus japonicas</i>	394	2	384	1	
Scombridae	Bonitos	<i>Sarda australis</i> & <i>Cybiosarda elegans</i>	id	id	4	N/A	
	Longtail Tuna	<i>Thunnus tonggol</i>	id	id	111	< 1	
	Mackerel Tuna	<i>Euthynnus affinis</i>	576	3	67	< 0.5	
	Mackerels	Scombridae - undifferentiated	2,961	N/A	689	N/A	
	School Mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus queenslandicus</i>	682	1	87	< 0.5	
	Shark Mackerel	<i>Grammatorcynus bicarinatus</i>	421	2	43	< 0.5	
	Southern Bluefin Tuna	<i>Thunnus maccoyii</i>	1,823	8	76	< 0.5	
	Spanish Mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus commerson</i>	5,221	48	1,437	13	
	Spotted Mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus munroi</i>	id	id	31	Neg	
	Yellowfin Tuna	<i>Thunnus albacares</i>	606	6	135	1	

APPENDICES

Category / Family	Common Name	Scientific Name	Est Kept Catch (number)	Est Kept Catch (tonnes)	Charter Kept Catch (number)	Charter Est Kept Catch (tonnes)
Scorpididae	Sea Sweep	<i>Scorpis aequipinnis</i>	2,491	3	346	< 0.5
	Sweep	Scorpididae - undifferentiated	604	< 1	N/A	N/A
Serranidae	Breaksea Cod	<i>Epinephelides armatus</i>	15,892	20	2,557	3
	Chinaman Rockcod	<i>Epinephelus rivulatus</i>	9,962	7	1,196	< 1
	Coral Trout	<i>Plectropomus maculatus</i> & <i>P leopardus</i>	8,096	21	1,672	4
	Goldspotted Rockcod	<i>Epinephelus coioides</i>	2,597	12	359	2
	Harlequin Fish	<i>Othos dentex</i>	2,953	6	169	< 0.5
	Rankin Cod	<i>Epinephelus multinotatus</i>	6,477	27	4,230	17
Sillaginidae	King George Whiting	<i>Sillaginodes punctata</i>	42,239	29	180	< 0.5
	School Whiting	<i>Sillago bassensis</i> , <i>vittata</i> and <i>schomburgkii</i>	196,341	24	N/A	N/A
	Whittings	Sillaginidae - undifferentiated	id	id	568	N/A
Sparidae	Black Bream	<i>Acanthopagrus butcheri</i>	6,406	4	N/A	N/A
	Breams	<i>Sparidae</i> - undifferentiated	id	id	312	N/A
	Pink Snapper	<i>Chrysophrys auratus</i>	30,889	77	9,916	25
	Tarwhine	<i>Rhabdosargus sarba</i>	1,300	< 1	42	Neg
	Western Yellowfin Bream	<i>Acanthopagrus morrisoni</i>	id	id	N/A	N/A
Sphyraenidae	Pikes	Sphyraenidae - undifferentiated	id	id	21	N/A
	Snook	<i>Sphyraena novaehollandiae</i>	1,181	1	33	Neg
SHARKS & RAYS						
Carcharhinidae, Hemigaleidae	Whaler & Weasel Sharks	Carcharhinidae, Hemigaleidae - undifferentiated	778	N/A	90	N/A
	Sharks	Sharks - undifferentiated	1,546	N/A	79	N/A
INVERTEBRATES						
CRABS						
Portunidae	Blue Swimmer Crab	<i>Portunus armatus</i>	278,299	63	238	Neg
	Mud Crab	<i>Scylla</i> spp.	3,423	3	1,849	N/A
LOBSTERS						
Palinuridae	Tropical Rock Lobster	<i>Panulirus</i> spp. except <i>P. cygnus</i>	id	id	N/A	N/A
	Western Rock Lobster	<i>Panulirus cygnus</i>	454,604	274	15,985	10
MOLLUSCS						
Cephalopoda	Squid	Order Teuthoidea - undifferentiated	85,565	N/A	397	N/A
Octopodidae	Octopuses	Octopodidae - undifferentiated	1,752	N/A	10	N/A
Sepiidae	Cuttlefish	<i>Sepia</i> spp.	3,058	N/A	15	N/A

Kept catch (number): refers to the estimated number of retained fish in the state-wide survey of boat-based recreational fishing (Ryan *et al.*, 2019), or reported number of retained fish in the Tour Operator Returns (Charter Logbooks). "id" indicates insufficient data where relative standard error > 40% (i.e. standard error > 40% of estimate) and < 30 diarists recorded catches of the species for the state-wide survey, or < 3 licensees for the Tour Operator Returns.

Kept catch (tonnes): refers to the kept catch (number) converted to a weight from estimates of average weight based on state-wide biological surveys or the Tour Operator Returns. Weight estimates are round off to the nearest tonnage. N/A indicates estimate of average weight is unavailable. "Neg" indicates negligible catch (< 0.1 tonnes).

Common names are from the CAAB – Codes for Australian Biota database.

Table of growout production for the Western Australian aquaculture industry in 2018/19

This table contains the data collected on annual production returns received from all Western Australian aquaculture licence holders.

Some species produced in Western Australian aquaculture have been grouped together and reported under 'Other' as they are produced by less than three contributing licences, so making the data confidential. Species in this category in 2018/19 include abalone, barramundi, live rock, Murray cod, mussels, western rock oysters and yellowtail kingfish.

Common name	Productive licences	Quantity	Units*	Average price/kg or individual	Value
Marron	188	61	Tonnes	\$35.81	\$2,186,122
Yabbies	7	18	Tonnes	\$24.54	\$431,408
Silver Perch	10	16	Tonnes	\$19.84	\$325,369
Goldfish & Koi carp	5	62,477	No.	n/a	\$206,438
Ornamental Fish	6	37,451	No.	n/a	\$158,828
Ornamental Invertebrates	6	34,693	No.	n/a	\$148,050
Rainbow Trout	5	4	Tonnes	\$14.67	\$58,696
Other Species**		2409	Tonnes	n/a	\$24,773,120
Algae	< 3	**			**
Total (not including algae or pearls)					\$28,288,031

* Tonnes refer to whole weight.

** Industry figures have not been included to protect the confidentiality of individual producers, as there are less than three productive licensees

Table of reported bycatch of protected and listed species from commercial fisheries for 2019

This table contains the numbers of accidental captures and fate of protected and listed animals by commercial fishers, as reported in statutory fishing returns and Catch Disposal Records, during calendar year 2019¹. To the extent possible, other types of recorded interactions (primarily sightings) with protected and listed species have been excluded. For the purpose of this report, protected and listed species (or taxa) are defined as those listed as: Totally Protected

Fish² under the WA Fish Resources Management Act 1994 (FRMA); Specially Protected Fauna under the WA Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 (WCA); cetaceans and species that are listed as Threatened under the Australian Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC). As other reports may include records that do not meet these definitions, these data may differ from other accounts.

Class	Common Name	Scientific Name	Release Condition (number)		
			ALIVE	DEAD	UNKNOWN
Birds	Australian Darter	<i>Anhinga novaehollandiae</i>	1		
	Cormorant (Unspecified)	<i>Phalacrocoracidae</i>	7	8	
	Flesh-footed Shearwater	<i>Ardenna carneipes</i>	69	6	
Fish	Green Sawfish	<i>Pristis zijsron</i>	37	11	
	Grey nurse Shark	<i>Carcharias taurus</i>	11		
	Narrow Sawfish	<i>Anoxypristis cuspidata</i>	6	2	
	Sawfish (Unspecified)	Pristidae	75	13	5
	Syngnathids (Unspecified)	Syngnathidae	58	39	
	White Shark	<i>Carcharodon carcharias</i>	13	4	
Mammals	Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	2	11	
	Dolphin (Unspecified)	Delphinidae	1	1	
	Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaengliae</i>	7		
	Snubfin Dolphin	<i>Orcaella heinsohni</i>	2		
Reptiles	Freshwater crocodile	<i>Crocodylus johnstoni</i>	7	52	
	Freshwater turtle	Chelidae	24	16	
	Green Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	18		
	Loggerhead Turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>	10		
	Saltwater crocodile	<i>Crocodylus porosus</i>	68	23	
	Seasnake (Unspecified)	Hydrophiinae	3667	315	
	Turtle (Unspecified)	Cheloniidae	57		

1. Reports by other sources (eg. members of public and Government officials) of whale entanglements in fishing gear, dead seabirds that have washed ashore, etc. are usually not attributable to particular fishers, fisheries, dates or locations. Although these ancillary interaction records are reported in Annual Reports to Parliament and elsewhere, they are inconsistent with the more-detailed information from statutory fishing records and are therefore not included here.

2. Except those listed as Totally Protected Fish in reference to their sex, size, weight, reproductive cycle, area from which they are taken or specific period of time.

Table of Fish Prices for 2018/19

This table contains the average price per kilogram paid for each marine species caught in Western Australia in 2018/19. The prices are based on prices reported by WA land based processors; the average prices reported are weighted and are based on whole weight. Where prices aren't available for a financial year a default

price, based on the average of prices reported in previous years, is used. The prices have been adjusted to reflect the beach price paid. That is, the beach price is the price paid per kilogram to commercial fishers for their catch when they first land and excludes any marketing, transport or handling costs.

Category / Family	Common Name	Scientific Name	Price per Kilogram
FISH			
SCALEFISH			
Acropomatidae, Percichthyidae, Serranidae, Polyprionidae, Moronidae, Callanthiidae, Centrogeniidae, Ostracoberycidae, Apistidae, Neosebastidae, Pteroidae, Scorpaenidae, Sebastidae, Setarchidae, Synanceiidae, Tetrarogidae	Temperate Basses & Rockcods	Percichthyidae, Serranidae - undifferentiated	\$9.83
	Scorpionfishes	Apistidae, Neosebastidae, Pteroidae, Scorpaenidae, Sebastidae, Setarchidae, Synanceiidae & Tetrarogidae - undifferentiated	\$5.65
Ariidae	Forktail Catfishes	Ariidae - undifferentiated	\$2.92
	Silver Cobbler	<i>Neoarius midgleyi</i>	\$4.04
Arripidae	Australian Herring	<i>Arripis georgianus</i>	\$2.18
	Western Australian Salmon	<i>Arripis truttaceus</i>	\$0.93
Balistidae, Monacanthidae	Triggerfishes & Leatherjackets	Balistidae, Monacanthidae - undifferentiated	\$3.78
	Longtoms	Belonidae - undifferentiated	\$2.48
	Bight Redfish	<i>Centroberyx gerrardi</i>	\$7.75
Belonidae	Redfishes	Berycidae - undifferentiated	\$10.20
	Swallowtail	<i>Centroberyx lineatus</i>	\$3.77
	Yelloweye Redfish	<i>Centroberyx australis</i>	\$4.25
Caesionidae, Lutjanidae, Symphysanodontidae	Fusiliers, Tropical Snappers & Slopefishes	Caesionidae, Lutjanidae, Symphysanodontidae - undifferentiated	\$3.97
	Amberjack	<i>Seriola dumerili</i>	\$3.21
	Black Pomfret	<i>Parastromateus niger</i>	\$8.74
	Golden Trevally	<i>Gnathanodon speciosus</i>	\$3.05
	Longnose Trevally	<i>Carangoides chrysophrys</i>	\$3.26
Carangidae	Rainbow Runner	<i>Elagatis bipinnulata</i>	\$4.54
	Samsonfish	<i>Seriola hippos</i>	\$2.94
	Silver Trevally	<i>Pseudocaranx georgianus</i> spp. complex	\$3.38
	Trevallies	Carangidae - undifferentiated	\$3.26
	Yellowtail Kingfish	<i>Seriola lalandi</i>	\$7.25
	Yellowtail Scad	<i>Trachurus novaezelandiae</i>	\$1.78
Centrolophidae	Blue-Eye Trevalla	<i>Hyperoglyphe antarctica</i>	\$7.96
Cheilodactylidae	Blue Morwong	<i>Nemadactylus valenciennesi</i>	\$3.95
	Morwongs	Cheilodactylidae - undifferentiated	\$1.51
	Australian Sardine	<i>Sardinops sagax</i>	\$1.11
Clupeidae	Hairback Herring	<i>Nematalosa come</i>	\$4.40
	Sandy Sprat	<i>Hyperlophus vittatus</i>	\$3.72
	Scaly Mackerel	<i>Sardinella lemuru</i>	\$1.28
Coryphaenidae	Mahi Mahi	<i>Coryphaena</i> spp.	\$4.97
Fishes (multi-family groups)	Flounders	Bothidae, Psettodidae & Pleuronectidae	\$11.94
Gempylidae	Gemfish	<i>Rexea solandri</i>	\$0.74

Gerreidae	Common Silverbiddy	<i>Gerres subfasciatus</i>	\$3.69
	Northern Pearl Perch	<i>Glaucosoma buergeri</i>	\$7.51
Glaucosomatidae	West Australian Dhufish	<i>Glaucosoma hebraicum</i>	\$15.41
	Goldspotted Sweetlips	<i>Plectorhinchus flavomaculatus</i>	\$5.05
Haemulidae	Grunter Breams	Haemulidae - undifferentiated	\$5.05
	Javelinfishes	Pomadasys spp.	\$4.11
	Painted Sweetlips	<i>Diagramma labiosum</i>	\$5.05
Hemiramphidae	Southern Garfish	<i>Hyporhamphus melanochir</i>	\$6.60
Istiophoridae	Marlins	Istiophoridae - undifferentiated	\$6.07
	Baldchin Groper	<i>Choerodon rubescens</i>	\$12.95
	Bluespotted Tuskfish	<i>Choerodon cauteroma</i>	\$6.62
	Goldspot Pigfish	<i>Bodianus perditio</i>	\$6.78
Labridae	Pigfishes	Bodianus spp.	\$6.78
	Tuskfishes	Choerodon spp.	\$6.62
	Western Blue Groper	<i>Achoerodus gouldii</i>	\$5.61
	Wrasses	Labridae - undifferentiated	\$4.08
Latidae	Barramundi	<i>Lates calcarifer</i>	\$7.66
	Bluespotted Emperor	<i>Lethrinus punctulatus</i>	\$4.38
	Drab Emperor	<i>Lethrinus ravus</i>	\$4.25
	Emperors	Lethrinidae - undifferentiated	\$4.96
	Grass Emperor	<i>Lethrinus laticaudis</i>	\$6.40
	Longnose Emperor	<i>Lethrinus olivaceus</i>	\$6.23
	Mozambique Seabream	<i>Wattsia mossambica</i>	\$6.66
Lethrinidae	Paddletail Seabream	<i>Gymnocranius euanus</i>	\$5.86
	Redspot Emperor	<i>Lethrinus lentjan</i>	\$5.13
	Redthroat Emperor	<i>Lethrinus miniatus</i>	\$7.01
	Robinson's Seabream	<i>Gymnocranius grandoculis</i>	\$5.07
	Seabreams	Gymnocranius spp.	\$5.86
	Spangled Emperor	<i>Lethrinus nebulosus</i>	\$6.44
	Spotcheek Emperor	<i>Lethrinus rubrioperculatus</i>	\$4.62
	Yellowtail Emperor	<i>Lethrinus atkinsoni</i>	\$4.59
Lobotidae	Tripletail	<i>Lobotes surinamensis</i>	\$7.65
	Brownstripe Snapper	<i>Lutjanus vitta</i>	\$3.93
	Chinamanfish	<i>Symphorus nematophorus</i>	\$5.58
	Crimson Snapper	<i>Lutjanus erythropterus</i>	\$5.26
	Darktail Snapper	<i>Lutjanus lemniscatus</i>	\$5.47
	Fiveline Snapper	<i>Lutjanus quinquelineatus</i>	\$3.93
	Goldband Snapper	<i>Pristipomoides multidentis</i>	\$9.24
	Golden Snapper	<i>Lutjanus johnii</i>	\$4.90
	Indonesian Snapper	<i>Lutjanus bitaeniatus</i>	\$3.97
Lutjanidae	King Snappers	Pristipomoides spp.	\$8.27
	Mangrove Jack	<i>Lutjanus argentimaculatus</i>	\$5.45
	Moses' Snapper	<i>Lutjanus russellii</i>	\$6.49
	Red Emperor	<i>Lutjanus sebae</i>	\$11.53
	Rosy Snapper	<i>Pristipomoides filamentosus</i>	\$9.35
	Ruby Snapper	<i>Etelis carbunculus</i>	\$8.02
	Saddletail Snapper	<i>Lutjanus malabaricus</i>	\$5.53
	Sharptooth Snapper	<i>Pristipomoides typus</i>	\$8.58
	Stripey Snapper	<i>Lutjanus carponotatus</i>	\$3.93

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	Tang's Snapper	<i>Lipocheilus carnolabrum</i>	\$6.69
	Tropical Snappers	Lutjanus spp.	\$3.93
Mugilidae	Sea Mullet	<i>Mugil cephalus</i>	\$2.30
	Yelloweye Mullet	<i>Aldrichetta forsteri</i>	\$1.21
Mullidae	Goatfishes	Mullidae - undifferentiated	\$3.51
Nemipteridae	Rainbow Monocle Bream	<i>Scolopsis monogramma</i>	\$2.93
	Threadfin Breems	Nemipteridae - undifferentiated	\$4.00
Neosebastidae	Bighead Gurnard Perch	<i>Neosebastes pandus</i>	\$3.74
Ophidiidae	Pink Ling	<i>Genypterus blacodes</i>	\$6.20
Oplegnathidae	Knifejaw	<i>Oplegnathus woodwardi</i>	\$2.01
Pentacerotidae	Boarfishes	Pentacerotidae - undifferentiated	\$4.22
Platycephalidae	Flatheads	Platycephalidae - undifferentiated	\$5.38
	Rock Flathead	<i>Platycephalus laevigatus</i>	\$7.35
Plotosidae	Estuary Cobbler	<i>Cnidoglanis macrocephalus</i>	\$3.74
	Blue Threadfin	<i>Eleutheronema tetradactylum</i>	\$11.17
	King Threadfin	<i>Polydactylus macrochir</i>	\$11.69
Polynemidae	Threadfin Salmon	Polynemidae - undifferentiated	\$4.88
	Bass Groper	<i>Polyprion americanus</i>	\$7.60
	Hapuku	<i>Polyprion oxygeneios</i>	\$7.87
Pomatomidae	Tailor	<i>Pomatomus saltatrix</i>	\$4.71
Priacanthidae	Bigeyes	Priacanthidae - undifferentiated	\$2.70
Psettodidae	Australian Halibut	<i>Psettodes erumei</i>	\$7.68
Rachycentridae	Cobia	<i>Rachycentron canadum</i>	\$4.52
Scaridae	Parrotfishes	Scaridae - undifferentiated	\$6.39
Scatophagidae	Striped Scat	<i>Selenotoca multifasciata</i>	\$4.54
Sciaenidae	Black Jewfish	<i>Protonibea diacanthus</i>	\$5.05
	Mulloway	<i>Argyrosomus japonicus</i>	\$4.83
	Albacore	<i>Thunnus alalunga</i>	\$4.51
	Bigeye Tuna	<i>Thunnus obesus</i>	\$8.15
	Blue Mackerel	<i>Scomber australasicus</i>	\$10.97
	Grey Mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus semifasciatus</i>	\$8.99
	Longtail Tuna	<i>Thunnus tonggol</i>	\$3.83
	Mackerel Tuna	<i>Euthynnus affinis</i>	\$8.36
	Mackerels	Scombridae spp. (tribes Scomberomorini & Scombrini)	\$3.40
Scombridae	Northern Bluefin Tuna	<i>Thunnus orientalis</i>	\$3.83
	Oriental Bonito	<i>Sarda orientalis</i>	\$11.86
	School Mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus queenslandicus</i>	\$10.68
	Shark Mackerel	<i>Grammatorcynus bicarinatus</i>	\$2.86
	Skipjack Tuna	<i>Katsuwonus pelamis</i>	\$8.43
	Spanish Mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus commerson</i>	\$10.75
	Spotted Mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus munroi</i>	\$12.97
	Tunas	Scombridae spp. (tribes Sardini & Thunnini)	\$4.51
	Wahoo	<i>Acanthocybium solandri</i>	\$5.64
	Yellowfin Tuna	<i>Thunnus albacares</i>	\$13.01
Scombridae	Banded Sweep	<i>Scorpius georgiana</i>	\$1.10
	Moonlighter	<i>Tilodon sexfasciatus</i>	\$4.54
	Sea Sweep	<i>Scorpius aequipinnis</i>	\$2.01
Serranidae	Banded Grouper	<i>Epinephelus amblycephalus</i>	\$9.83
	Barcheek Coral Trout	<i>Plectropomus maculatus</i>	\$15.47

	Birdwire Rockcod	<i>Epinephelus merra</i>	\$9.83
	Blackspotted Rockcod	<i>Epinephelus malabaricus</i>	\$7.40
	Breaksea Cod	<i>Epinephelides armatus</i>	\$10.12
	Chinaman Rockcod	<i>Epinephelus rivulatus</i>	\$6.52
	Comet Grouper	<i>Epinephelus morrhua</i>	\$6.29
	Common Coral Trout	<i>Plectropomus leopardus</i>	\$15.47
	Convict Grouper	<i>Epinephelus septemfasciatus</i>	\$7.23
	Coral Rockcod	<i>Cephalopholis miniata</i>	\$9.83
	Coral Trout	<i>Plectropomus</i> spp. & <i>Variola</i> spp.	\$15.47
	Duskytail Grouper	<i>Epinephelus bleekeri</i>	\$6.97
	Eightbar Grouper	<i>Hyporthodus octofasciatus</i>	\$8.42
	Flowery Rockcod	<i>Epinephelus fuscoguttatus</i>	\$6.09
	Frostback Rockcod	<i>Epinephelus bilobatus</i>	\$6.09
	Goldspotted Rockcod	<i>Epinephelus coioides</i>	\$6.64
	Harlequin Fish	<i>Othos dentex</i>	\$4.54
	Radiant Rockcod	<i>Epinephelus radiatus</i>	\$6.29
	Radiant Rockcod/Comet Grouper	<i>Epinephelus Radiatus/Morrhua</i>	\$6.29
	Rankin Cod	<i>Epinephelus multinotatus</i>	\$8.29
	Spotted Cod	<i>Epinephelus Microdon/Areolatus/Bilobatus</i>	\$6.09
	Striped Grouper	<i>Epinephelus latifasciatus</i>	\$9.83
	Tomato Rockcod	<i>Cephalopholis sonnerati</i>	\$7.46
	White-Edge Coronation Trout	<i>Variola albimarginata</i>	\$15.47
	Yellowedge Coronation Trout	<i>Variola louti</i>	\$9.83
	Yellowspotted Rockcod	<i>Epinephelus areolatus</i>	\$6.09
	Goldenline Whiting	<i>Sillago analis</i>	\$6.80
	King George Whiting	<i>Sillaginodes punctatus</i>	\$12.27
Sillaginidae	Southern School Whiting	<i>Sillago bassensis</i>	\$7.28
	Whitings	Sillaginidae - undifferentiated	\$0.95
	Yellowfin Whiting	<i>Sillago schomburgkii</i>	\$4.21
	Black Bream	<i>Acanthopagrus butcheri</i>	\$6.28
	Frypan Bream	<i>Argyrops spinifer</i>	\$5.93
Sparidae	Pink Snapper	<i>Chrysophrys auratus</i>	\$8.72
	Tarwhine	<i>Rhabdosargus sarba</i>	\$4.33
	Western Yellowfin Bream	<i>Acanthopagrus morrisoni</i>	\$4.32
	Yellowback Bream	<i>Dentex spariformis</i>	\$6.79
Sphyraenidae	Pikes	Sphyraenidae - undifferentiated	\$4.20
	Snook	<i>Sphyraena novaehollandiae</i>	\$5.11
Terapontidae	Striped Grunters	Terapontidae - undifferentiated	\$0.88
Xiphiidae	Swordfish	<i>Xiphias gladius</i>	\$8.27
Zeidae	John Dory	<i>Zeus faber</i>	\$7.06
SHARKS & RAYS			
Alopiidae	Thresher Shark	<i>Alopias vulpinus</i>	\$2.05
	Bronze Whaler	<i>Carcharhinus brachyurus</i>	\$2.12
	Dusky Whaler	<i>Carcharhinus obscurus</i>	\$4.41
Carcharhinidae	Grey Reef Shark	<i>Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos</i>	\$2.03
	Sandbar Shark	<i>Carcharhinus plumbeus</i>	\$2.92
	Spinner Shark	<i>Carcharhinus brevipinna</i>	\$1.34
	Tiger Shark	<i>Galeocerdo cuvier</i>	\$0.30
Hexanchidae	Sevengill Sharks	Heptanchias spp.	\$2.05

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Lamnidae	Shortfin Mako	<i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i>	\$0.38
Orectolobidae	Wobbegong	Orectolobidae - undifferentiated	\$1.28
Pristiophoridae	Common Sawshark	<i>Pristiophorus cirratus</i>	\$0.69
Rajidae	Skates	Rajidae, Arhynchobatidae - undifferentiated	\$4.53
Sphyrnidae	Hammerhead Sharks	Sphyrnidae - undifferentiated	\$1.11
Squatinae	Angel Shark	<i>Squatina spp.</i>	\$2.05
	Gummy Shark	<i>Mustelus antarcticus</i>	\$4.50
Triakidae	Pencil Shark	<i>Hypogaleus hyugaensis</i>	\$1.03
	Whiskery Shark	<i>Furgaleus macki</i>	\$4.02
Trygonorrhinidae	Banjo Rays	Trygonorrhinidae - undifferentiated	\$0.40
	Shark Fins	NULL	\$11.07
	Other Sharks	Sharks - undifferentiated	\$2.05
	Other Fish	NULL	\$4.54
INVERTEBRATES			
CRABS			
Geryonidae	Crystal Crab	<i>Chaceon bicolor</i>	\$49.84
Hypothalassiidae	Champagne Crab	Hypothalassia spp.	\$19.00
Menippidae	Giant Crab	<i>Pseudocarcinus gigas</i>	\$60.33
	Blue Swimmer Crab	<i>Portunus armatus</i>	\$5.91
Portunidae	Common Sand Crab	<i>Ovalipes australiensis</i>	\$10.20
	Coral Crab	<i>Charybdis feriata</i>	\$10.29
LOBSTERS			
Palinuridae	Southern Rock Lobster	<i>Jasus edwardsii</i>	\$60.00
	Western Rock Lobster	<i>Panulirus cygnus</i>	\$65.45
Scyllaridae	Bug	Ibacus & Thenus spp.	\$22.03
MOLLUSCS			
	Molluscs	Mollusca - undifferentiated	\$6.92
Arcidae	Cockle	Anadara spp.	\$7.68
Cephalopoda	Squid	Order Teuthoidea - undifferentiated	\$15.33
Haliotidae	Brownlip Abalone	<i>Haliotis conicopora</i>	\$46.70
	Greenlip Abalone	<i>Haliotis laevis</i>	\$56.18
	Roe's Abalone	<i>Haliotis roei</i>	\$27.86
Octopodidae	Octopuses	Octopodidae - undifferentiated	\$11.14
Sepiidae	Cuttlefish	Sepia spp.	\$5.05
Veneridae	Ballot's Saucer Scallop	<i>Ylistrum balloti</i>	\$3.87
PRAWNS			
Penaeidae	Banana Prawn	<i>Penaeus merguensis</i>	\$10.86
	Black Tiger Prawn	<i>Penaeus monodon</i>	\$19.01
	Blue Endeavour Prawn	<i>Metapenaeus endeavouri</i>	\$8.70
	Brown Tiger Prawn	<i>Penaeus esculentus</i>	\$14.91
	Velvet Prawn	<i>Metapenaeopsis spp.</i>	\$4.37
	Western King Prawn	<i>Melicertus latisulcatus</i>	\$13.45
Stomatopoda	Mantis Shrimps	Order Stomatopoda - undifferentiated	\$1.25
SEA CUCUMBERS			
Holothuriidae	Deepwater Redfish (Sea Cucumber)	<i>Actinopyga echinites</i>	\$2.24
	Sandfish (Sea Cucumber)	<i>Holothuria scabra</i>	\$4.68

APPENDIX 3

INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES RESOURCE STATUS REPORT 2020

S. Newman, L. Bellchambers, C. Skepper, S. Evans and L. Wiberg

OVERVIEW

In November 2002, the territorial seas (out to 12 nautical miles) of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island were declared as 'excepted waters' from the Commonwealth's *Fisheries Management Act 1991*. Management responsibilities were transferred from the Australian Fisheries Management Authority to the Commonwealth Government. The Government of Western Australia now has the management responsibilities for the marine territorial waters of the Indian Ocean Territories (IOTs) on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (DITRDC). The location of the IOTs and their proximity to the Western Australian coast are illustrated in Indian Ocean Territories Figure 1.

Under a Service Delivery Agreement with the DITRDC, the Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) manages commercial, recreational and aquaculture activities at Cocos (Keeling) Islands (Indian Ocean Territories Figure 2) and Christmas Island (Indian Ocean Territories Figure 3), and also provides fish health diagnostic, biosecurity, fish pathology and licensing services. The Commonwealth Minister for the DITRDC holds responsibility for these excepted waters under the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994 (WA) (CI/CKI)* (the 'Applied Acts').

The commercial Christmas Island Line Fishery (CILF) primarily targets pelagic species, mainly

wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*) and yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*). In addition, demersal fishing activities are also undertaken targeting deepwater demersal fish, mainly the deepwater snappers.

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands Marine Aquarium Fish Fishery (CKIMAFF) primarily targets the endemic Cocos Angelfish or Yellowheaded Angelfish (*Centropyge jocularis*), and to a lesser extent the lemonpeel angelfish (*Centropyge flavissima*).

Recreational and artisanal fishing are undertaken around the Cocos (Keeling) and Christmas Islands targeting both finfish and invertebrate species. The Cocos (Keeling) Islands consist of a diverse range of aquatic environments that include a sheltered lagoon, fringing reefs and offshore 'blue water'. These environments support a range of demersal and pelagic finfish species, as well as various crustaceans (e.g. lobsters, crabs) and molluscs (e.g. gong gong, clams) that are highly sought after by fishers for both individual and community purposes. Christmas Island has no lagoon and a limited range of environments available for fishing; these are the fringing reef surrounding the island and offshore 'blue water', both of which primarily support pelagic fish species, a limited range of demersal finfish species and some invertebrates (e.g. lobster, clams).

SUMMARY FEATURES 2020

Asset (Allowable catch &/or effort)	Outcome	Status
CILF (NA)	Total Catch 2019: Not reportable*	Acceptable
CKIMAFF (NA)	Total Catch 2019: Not reportable*	Acceptable
Recreational fishery (NA)	Total Catch 2019: NA	Acceptable
EBFM		
Indicator species		
Wahoo (CILF)	Catch is low	Adequate
Cocos Angelfish (CKIMAFF)	Catch is within historical range	Adequate
Ecological		
Bycatch	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Listed Species	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Habitat	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Ecosystem	Negligible Risk	Adequate
Economic (GVP \$ <1 m)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Social (low amenity)	Low Risk	Acceptable
Governance	Stable	Acceptable
External Drivers	Negligible Risk	Acceptable

* Activities in these fisheries involved less than three licence holders in 2019 and cannot be reported for confidentiality reasons.



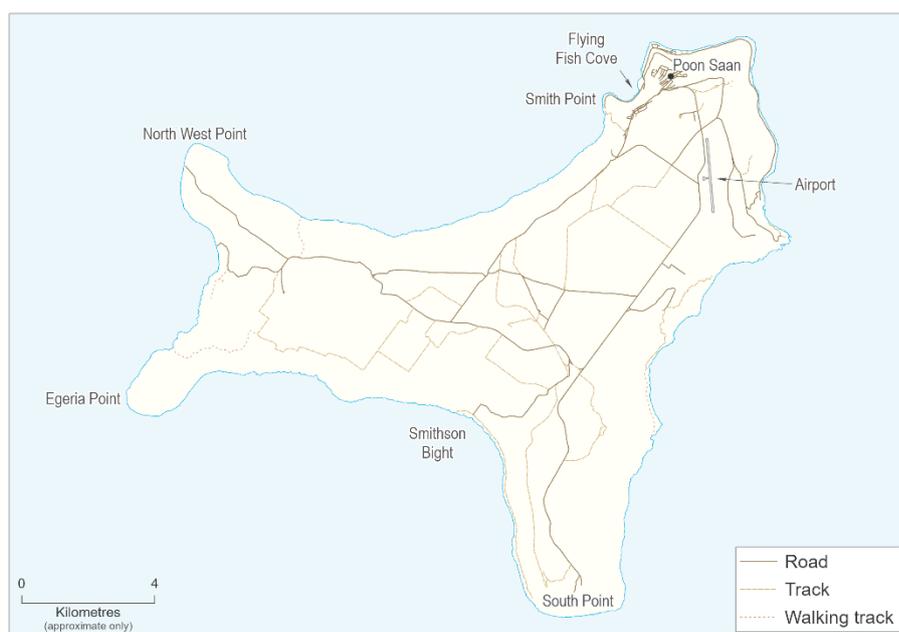
INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES FIGURE 1

Location of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island comprising the Indian Ocean Territories within the Indian Ocean, illustrating their proximity to the Western Australian coast.



INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES FIGURE 2

Location of the major Islands and landmarks within the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in the Indian Ocean.



INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES FIGURE 3

Location of the key landmarks around Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean.

CATCH AND LANDINGS

Pelagic species dominate the catch of the CILF, comprising 100% of the total reported catch in 2019. Wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*) is the main target species of the CILF, comprising 81% of the total reported catch in 2019. Other pelagic species are also targeted during the trolling operations and primarily include yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) and other tunas (except southern bluefin tuna (*Thunnus maccoyii*), which may not be taken), and to a lesser extent mahi mahi (*Coryphaena* spp.). Some commercial fishing activities are also undertaken for demersal fish species, mainly deep slope species such as ruby snapper (*Etelis* spp.) although no demersal species were reported as part of the catch in 2019. The commercial catch for Christmas Island usually consists of catch data from only two vessels and catch data are not reportable due to confidentiality provisions. The total reported catch for this fishery has been less than 10 t per annum over the last ten years.

There is no commercial line fishery at the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

The CKIMAFF targets the endemic Cocos Angelfish or Yellowheaded Angelfish (*Centropyge jocularis*), and to a lesser extent the lemonpeel angelfish (*Centropyge flavissima*). As there is currently only one active license in the CKIMAFF the catch data is not reportable due to confidentiality provisions. The catch is within the historical catch range.

Recreational and artisanal fishing vessels operate around the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island. The amount and magnitude of the recreational fishing catch and effort at these islands has not been assessed.

INDICATOR SPECIES ASSESSMENTS AND STOCK STATUS

IOT Finfish & IOT Invertebrate

Finfish:

Data on the abundance of finfish species is being collected and collated to determine changes over time.

The pelagic species that are targeted by the CILF (e.g. wahoo, yellowfin tuna) are part of a wider Indian Ocean stock. However, the demersal species are likely to be localised stocks that are reliant upon self-recruitment.

There is anecdotal evidence of potential localised depletion of some deep slope species like rosy snapper (*Pristipomoides filamentosus*) and ruby snapper (*Etelis* spp.) around Christmas Island. Recreational fishers use electric-powered lines to

target deep-slope demersal finfish species at the IOTs, thereby increasing the fishing efficiency for these species.

The primary target of the CKIMAFF is *Centropyge jocularis* which is endemic to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island, inhabiting fringing reefs between 15 and 70 m. The biology of *C. jocularis* has not been examined, although Allen *et al.* (2007) reported this species as being abundant on Christmas Island.

Invertebrates:

Holothurians: The holothurian community is strongly influenced by habitat and although some species are wide-ranging and found in relatively high densities, they tend to be of low economic value. In contrast, species of moderate to high economic value were recorded at densities too low to support commercial fisheries and typically had very restricted distributions. The holothurian community found at the Cocos (Keeling) Islands is near to pristine due to a lack of historical fishing pressure. Holothurian stocks are sensitive to fishing exploitation and have been overexploited in other areas of the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Gong Gong: The common spider conch or gong gong (*Lambis lambis*) is a recreationally-targeted gastropod inhabiting shallow waters of the lagoon of Cocos (Keeling) Islands. This species is vulnerable to over-fishing as it is highly accessible and presumably shares biological traits with other exploited conch species, including slow growth and late maturity. Monitoring data indicates that the current abundance of gong gong is lower than historically recorded. While heavy fishing pressure has presumably contributed to the reduction in gong gong numbers, further monitoring is required to determine the role of recruitment variability in maintaining gong gong populations at the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and changes in the lagoon system.

Giant Clams: Three species of giant clams (*Tridacna gigas*, *Tridacna derasa* and *Tridacna maxima*) have historically been reported at the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. Monitoring data indicates that currently only *T. maxima* occurs in sufficient numbers to be assessed. This data also shows a decline in relative stock abundance of *T. maxima* before they reach the size of sexual maturity (150mm). Heavy fishing pressure is presumed to contribute to this reduction, with further monitoring required to monitor sustainability of these stocks.

Reef Health: On-going reef monitoring has been established to monitor natural and anthropogenic impacts on the reef and lagoon communities at Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island.

BYCATCH AND PROTECTED SPECIES INTERACTIONS

Bycatch

Fishing in the CILF for pelagic species such as wahoo uses specialised trolling gear to target the fish and involves limited discarding. Species occasionally caught but generally discarded include billfish, barracuda, shark and trevally. A high proportion of the above species are expected to survive capture and release by the fishery. Consequently, it is considered likely that the pelagic fishery has a **negligible** impact on stocks of discarded species.

Fishing for demersal species in the CILF particularly those in the deep slope waters involves limited discarding as most species are retained for processing. However, catches can be lost to sharks (depredation).

Protected species

The line fishing methods used in CILF are not known to interact with any listed species. However, there is some potential for low levels of seabird bycatch at Christmas Island. Overall, it is considered that the pelagic fishery has a **negligible** impact on listed species.

The fishing techniques used to capture fish in the CKIMAFF involves using hand or scoop nets, or a small seine net of specific dimensions (the seine net cannot exceed 16 metres in length, must have a mesh of less than or equal to 28mm and a drop of not more than 3 metres) and fishers may use SCUBA equipment. Thus, the CKIMAFF has **negligible** bycatch due to the highly selective nature of fishing activities.

No listed species interactions have been reported for the CKIMAFF. Therefore, it is considered that the CKIMAFF has a **negligible** impact on listed species.

HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM INTERACTIONS

Habitat impacts are considered **negligible**. The line fishing methods used in the CILF and the hand collection method used in the CKIMAFF are likely to have minimal impact on the habitat. This results in a **negligible risk** to the overall ecosystem from these fisheries.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Social

At least two people were employed in the CILF around Christmas Island during 2019. This estimate is based on the number of vessels

reporting catches and the average number of crew on each boat.

At least two people were employed in the CKIMAFF around Cocos (Keeling) Islands during 2019.

Due to their sport fishing and eating qualities, wahoo and other pelagic species are popular target species for recreational anglers and fishing charter operators at the IOTs, particularly at Christmas Island. They are usually captured from small boats, although shore-based fishing is also undertaken.

A large variety of demersal and lagoon finfish and invertebrate species are caught by artisanal and recreational fishers at Cocos (Keeling) Islands involving the use of a large number of small vessels. Similarly, recreational fishers at Christmas Island undertake fishing activities from small vessels and also from the shore and catch a large variety of demersal finfish species, including a large number of deep slope species. **Low** risk.

Economic

The value of the CILF is not reportable. The value of the CKIMAFF is also not reportable, although *C. jocularis* commands a high price on the international market (reported retail prices in excess of \$1000.00 each in 2017). The combined score value of these fisheries in 2019 was estimated to be Level 1 (i.e. Risk level – **Low**; Economic value – < \$1 million). There is limited social amenity value for these fisheries. There is currently a **low** level of risk to these values.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

The potential recreational fishing effort for both pelagic and demersal fish species at both the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and at Christmas Island is high with a capacity to operate over the entire extent of the fishable area at each island group. Given the restricted amount of habitat and fishing area available it is expected that fishing pressure on some species in some locations at Cocos (Keeling) Islands or Christmas Island may be above sustainable levels. However, overall stocks levels are considered to be **adequate**.

The catch of the CKIMAFF has been small since its inception in 1993. There is little incentive for the single licensee to increase catch or effort since market viability and high prices are maintained by only having small numbers of fish available for sale. Catches are derived from a limited area of species distribution. The current level of fishing activity is considered to be **adequate**.

APPENDICES

Harvest Strategy

Recreational fishing rules and limitations have been developed using a constant catch strategy (maintaining but not increasing catches), although a formal harvest strategy is not currently in place for this resource.

Compliance

Operators in the CILF and CKIMAFF are required to complete statutory catch and effort returns on a monthly basis. The low risks to the sustainability of the stocks imposed by these fisheries results in a **low risk** and low level of compliance.

Consultation

Extensive community engagement and consultation has taken place to develop the first proposed set of dedicated recreational fishing arrangements for the IOTs. More recently community engagement has focussed on the development and agreement to the Cocos Malay Cultural Fishing Arrangements and commercial fishing policy and arrangements.

For the CILF and CKIMAFF consultation occurs directly with operators at Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, with additional community consultation undertaken where applicable.

Direct community consultation is undertaken regularly at the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and

Christmas Island in regard to fisheries science and resource assessment, recreational fishing rules and regulations.

Management Initiatives/Outlook Status

The key IOTs management initiative is the sustainable management of the aquatic resources at the IOTs for the benefit of the on-island communities. Island-specific fisheries management arrangements for the IOTs are currently being scoped and developed.

In 2018/19, four individual commercial fishing licences, four fishing boat licences and a mariculture licence were issued.

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

The demersal fish and invertebrate populations of Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island are likely to consist of small, isolated populations that are expected to experience highly variable recruitment due to environmental fluctuations.

In the summer of 2015/16 widespread thermal coral bleaching was recorded at Christmas Island. No coral bleaching was recorded at Cocos (Keeling) Islands over the same period. Monitoring is ongoing to assess the long-term impact of this event on the coral reef, finfish and invertebrate communities of Christmas Island.

The external drivers pose a **negligible** risk.

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APPENDIX 4

Annual performance for commercial fisheries subject to export approval under the Commonwealth Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

The following table provides a summary of the issues, performance measures and any conditions for fisheries subject to the above Act and their annual performance. The period assessed in each case is the most recent season for which complete data are available. As a result of the duration required for data collection and analysis, the years being assessed in this volume are the 2017/18 season or the calendar year 2018 for fisheries data but up to June 2019 for relevant research or management actions projects and actions.

In addition to this summary, more detailed information on the annual performance of each fishery is provided

in the relevant status reports presented throughout this volume. Within the individual status reports, each performance measure assessed is shown in a highlighted box to assist the reader.

It should also be noted that where naturally occurring fluctuations in fish stocks have required management adjustments or where improvements have been made to methods of analysis, these have in some cases (asterisked) required a revision of the performance measure this year.

Fishery details	Issue/species	Performance measure/Condition	Current performance in 2017/18 or 2018	Comment
<i>Fishery:</i> Abalone <i>Approval type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: August 2004 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025	Greenlip/brownlip abalone Areas 2/3 (spawning stock)	Effort range 907–1,339 diver days; minimum meat weight 140 g greenlip, 160 g brownlip	Inadequate	Performance indicator for Greenlip abalone below threshold in Area 2 and below limit in Area 3.
	Roe's abalone Area 1 (spawning stock)	Effort range 14–43 diver days; total catch 5 t	Acceptable	Exploratory quota.
	Roe's abalone Area 2 (spawning stock)	Effort range 80–106 diver days; total catch 13.2 t	Acceptable	Total catch indicator not met in regional areas. This is due to poor economic and weather conditions.
	Roe's abalone Area 5 (spawning stock)	Effort range 100–140 diver days; total catch 15 t	Acceptable	
	Roe's abalone Area 6 (spawning stock)	Effort range 50-80 diver days; total catch 7.5 t	Acceptable	Total catch indicator set annually by stock prediction model.
	Roe's abalone Area 7 (spawning stock)	Effort range 175–215 diver days; total catch 24 t	Acceptable	
	Roe's abalone Area 8 (spawning stock)	Effort range 0 diver days; total catch 0 t	Inadequate due to environmental conditions	Closed since 2012 due to environmentally induced mortality.
<i>Fishery:</i> Abrolhos Islands and Mid West Trawl <i>Approval type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: March 2005 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025	Scallops (spawning stock)	The survey stock abundance index determines a predicted catch that sets the length of the next season and the fishing season ceases at a catch rate threshold level,	Acceptable	Catch within acceptable range. In 2018, Recruitment levels in parts of the Abrolhos Islands continued to improve.
<i>Fishery:</i> Beche-de-mer <i>Approval type:</i> Wildlife Trade Operation Exemption Initial accreditation: December 2004 Current accreditation: August 2017 Expiry date: May 2025	Beche-de-mer species (spawning stock)	Sandfish acceptable catch range: 20-100 t. Catch rate above 25 kg/hr. Redfish acceptable catch range: 40-100 t. Catch rate above 60 kg/hr.	Acceptable	Harvest strategy is being reviewed and updated. It will specify new performance and condition indicators.

Fishery details	Issue/species	Performance measure/Condition	Current performance in 2017/18 or 2018	Comment
<i>Fishery:</i> Broome Prawn <i>Approval type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: August 2004 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025	Western king prawn (spawning stock)	Annual exploitation rate of king prawns to not exceed 60% in any one year	Acceptable	Minimal fishing occurred in 2018.
	Coral prawns (spawning stock)	Total catch within acceptable range of 20–90 t (7-year catch range)	Acceptable	As above.
<i>Fishery:</i> Exmouth Gulf Prawn <i>Approval Type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: March 2003 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025	Tiger prawn (spawning stock)	Catch rate above 25 kg/hr (6 fathom quad gear) revised from original 8–10 kg/hr (7.5 fathom twin gear)	Acceptable	Catch rate above target level.
	King prawn (spawning stock)	Catch rate above 25 kg/hr (6 fathom quad gear). Total catch within acceptable revised (2017) range of 100–450 t	Acceptable	Catch rate above target level. Catch within revised range.
	Endeavour prawn (spawning stock)	Catch rate above 9 kg/hr (6 fathom quad gear). Total catch within acceptable range of 120–300 t	Acceptable	Catch rate above target level. Catch within range.
	Banana prawn (spawning stock)	Total catch within acceptable range of 10–60 t for years with significant rainfall and 0–2 t for years with low rainfall	Acceptable	
	Coral prawns (spawning stock)	Total catch within acceptable range of 20–100 t	Acceptable	Catch within range.
	Non –Retained species	The major species of bycatch are found in significant numbers outside of the trawled areas	Acceptable	
	Impact to mud/shell (habitat)	< 40% of mud/shell habitat in Exmouth Gulf trawled	Acceptable	
<i>Fishery:</i> Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Managed Fishery <i>Approval type:</i> Wildlife Trade Operation Exemption Initial accreditation: June 2004 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025	Pink snapper (spawning stock)	Spawning biomass > 30% of unexploited spawning biomass, catch rate not to fall below 500 kg/standard June–July boat day	Unacceptable	Performance measures have been reviewed as part of Harvest Strategy (in 2017). Further reductions in quota and spatial closures to be implemented in 2018.
<i>Fishery:</i> Kimberley Prawn <i>Approval Type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: November 2004 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025	Banana prawn (spawning stock)	Total catch within acceptable range of 200–450 t	Acceptable	Catch within range and catch prediction.
	Brown tiger prawn (spawning stock)	Total catch within acceptable range of 15–60 t	Acceptable	Low landings due to targeting on higher catch rates of banana prawns.
	Endeavour prawn (spawning stock)	Total catch within acceptable range of 7–80 t	Acceptable	As above
	Coral prawns (spawning stock)	Total catch within acceptable range of 0–6 t (10-year catch range)	Acceptable	As above
	Black tiger prawn (spawning stock)	Total catch within acceptable range of 0–1 t	Acceptable	
	Squid (spawning stock)	Total catch within acceptable range of 1–50 t	Acceptable	Nil reported landings since 2004.

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Fishery details	Issue/species	Performance measure/Condition	Current performance in 2017/18 or 2018	Comment
<p><i>Fishery:</i> Mackerel <i>Approval type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: November 2004 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025</p>	<p>Spanish mackerel (spawning stock)</p>	<p>Total catch within acceptable range of 246-410 t: acceptable regional catch ranges: Kimberley 110–205 t: Pilbara 80–126 t: Gascoyne/West Coast 56–79 t</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	<p>Total catch below acceptable range for first time, likely due to operator change and environmental conditions. Higher level assessment underway, monitor closely.</p>
<p><i>Fishery:</i> Marine Aquarium Managed Fishery <i>Approval type:</i> Wildlife Trade Operation Exemption Initial accreditation: October 2005 Current accreditation: October 2016 Expiry date: October 2019</p>	<p>There are specific performance measures for CITES species taken by the MAFMF, these include hard corals, tridacnid clams, seahorses and syngnathids (total)</p>	<p>The MAFMF is operating in accordance with the 2018-2022 MAFMF Harvest Strategy. A risk assessment was completed in 2014 for the MAFMF. Catches of CITES species in 2017 were below the WTO limits.</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	
<p><i>Fishery:</i> Northern Demersal Scalefish <i>Approval type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: November 2004 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025</p>	<p>Indicator species spawning stock (red emperor and goldband snapper)</p>	<p>The NDSMF is operating in accordance with the North Coast demersal scalefish resource harvest strategy 2017 – 2021.</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	
<p><i>Fishery:</i> Onslow and Nickol Bay Prawn <i>Approval Type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: November 2004 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025</p>	<p>Banana prawns (spawning stock)</p>	<p>Nickol Bay: total catch in high rainfall years within acceptable range of 40–220 t: in low rainfall years within acceptable range of 0–40 t.</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	<p>Banana prawns within high rainfall catch range.</p>
	<p>Brown tiger prawn (spawning stock)</p>	<p>Onslow: total catch within acceptable range of 2–90 t Acceptable catch ranges of Nickol Bay 2–40 t and Onslow 10–120 t</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	
	<p>Western king prawn (spawning stock)</p>	<p>Acceptable catch ranges of Nickol Bay 20–70 t and Onslow 10–55 t</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	<p>Low effort in Nickol Bay as targeting banana prawns. Limited fishing in Onslow.</p>
	<p>Endeavour prawn (spawning stock)</p>	<p>Total catch within acceptable ranges; Nickol Bay 1-10 t and Onslow 5-20 t.</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	<p>As above</p>
	<p>Coral prawns (spawning stock)</p>	<p>Total catch within acceptable range of Nickol Bay 1–15 t (10-year catch range) and Onslow 4–20 t</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	<p>As above</p>
	<p>Black tiger prawn (spawning stock)</p>	<p>Total catch within acceptable range of 0–2 t</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	
<p><i>Fishery:</i> Octopus <i>Approval type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: September 2011 Current accreditation: August 2017 Expiry date: August 2025</p>	<p>Octopus (<i>Octopus</i> aff. <i>tetricus</i>)</p>	<p>Formal harvest strategy with biological reference points (Target, Threshold, and Limit). These based on standardised catch rate per unit effort (kg per potlift)</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	<p>Catch rates are above the target level</p>

Fishery details	Issue/species	Performance measure/Condition	Current performance in 2017/18 or 2018	Comment
<p><i>Fishery:</i> Pearl Oyster <i>Approval type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: September 2003 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025</p>	<p>Silver-lipped (gold-lipped) pearl oyster (spawning stock)</p>	<p>Fished area should be < 60% of species distribution; catch rates should not decrease by > 50% from historical averages of 29.5 oysters/hr (Zone 2) and 34.8 oysters/hr (Zone 3); > 30% of Zone 1 catch should be > 150 mm shell length</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	<p>Catch rates are above the target performance indicators.</p>
<p><i>Fishery:</i> Pilbara Trawl <i>Approval type:</i> Wildlife Trade Operation Exemption Initial accreditation: November 2004 Current accreditation: May 2014 Expiry date: November 2018</p>	<p>Indicator species spawning stock (red emperor, Rankin cod, bluespotted emperor)</p>	<p>The Pilbara Fish Trawl Fishery is operating in accordance with the North Coast demersal scalefish resource harvest strategy 2017 – 2021.</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	
	<p>Bycatch of listed species - dolphins</p>	<p>All skippers to maintain records of the time, date, shot duration and location of each incidental capture</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	<p>Dolphin mortalities reported in statutory logbooks have reduced since 2006. An industry code of practice has been developed to address interactions with dolphins.</p>
	<p>Bycatch of listed species – turtles</p>	<p>All skippers to maintain records of the time, date, shot duration and location of each incidental capture</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	<p>Mitigation devices implemented in nets in 2006 has reduced the incidental captures of turtles by >95%.</p>
	<p>Bycatch of listed species – syngnathids</p>	<p>All skippers to maintain records of the time, date, shot duration and location of each incidental capture</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	<p>Pipefish and seahorses are released alive.</p>
	<p>Bycatch of listed species – sawfish</p>	<p>All skippers to maintain records of the time, date, shot duration and location of each incidental capture</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	<p>Number of sawfish caught should be < 120/yr; number of sawfish released alive should be increased to 50% of captures by 2008</p>
	<p>General ecosystem – large epibenthos</p>	<p>The total area of the Pilbara demersal fish fishery (encompassing both trawl and trap fisheries) that is closed to trawling is 80%; the total area of the Pilbara demersal fish fishery between depths of 30 m and 120 m should remain at or below the current level of 60%</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	
<p><i>Fishery:</i> Salmon <i>Approval type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: November 2004 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025</p>	<p>Western Australian salmon (spawning stock)</p>	<p>Expected catch range under the current management regime is 0-1,200 t</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	<p>2018 catch was 191 t. Catches continue to be low relative to historic levels, due to low effort in response to limited market demand. Stock level is acceptable, based on age-based assessment completed in 2017.</p>
<p><i>Fishery:</i> Shark Bay Crab Managed Fishery <i>Approval type:</i> Wildlife Trade Operation Exemption Initial accreditation: November 2004 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025</p>	<p>Blue swimmer crab (breeding stock)</p>	<p>CPUE to remain above 1 kg/trap lift</p>	<p>Acceptable</p>	<p>A TACC of 450 tonnes was set in 2016/17 of which 98% was achieved. The commercial catch rate was well above the target.</p>

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Fishery details	Issue/species	Performance measure/Condition	Current performance in 2017/18 or 2018	Comment
<p><i>Fishery:</i> Shark Bay Prawn <i>Approval type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: February 2003 Current accreditation: August 2015 <i>Expiry date:</i> August 2025</p>	Tiger prawn (spawning stock)	Level of spawning stock present based on fishery independent surveys during the spawning season at a target of 25 kg/hr (5.5 fathom quad gear)	Acceptable	
	King prawn (spawning stock)	Level of spawning stock present based on fishery independent surveys during the spawning season at a target of 25 kg/hr (5.5 fathom quad gear) Total catch within historical acceptable range of 1,100–1,600 t, given no change in effort	Acceptable	
	Coral and endeavour prawns (spawning stock)	Total catch within historical acceptable ranges given no change in effort: coral 80–280 t, endeavour 1–30 t	Acceptable	
	Loggerhead turtles (captures)	90% of turtles captured from non-BRD nets returned alive	Acceptable	BRDs are mandatory in all nets so this performance measure is no longer valid. For the 2018 season, 87 turtles were recorded as caught in nets and with all recorded as being returned to the sea alive.
	Discarded fish (abundance)		Acceptable	Majority of bycatch species are found in relatively significant numbers outside of trawled areas
	Impact to sand/shell (habitat)	< 40% of sand/shell habitat in Shark Bay trawled	Acceptable	
	Impact to coral/sponge (habitat)	<20% of the remaining coral/sponge habitat in Shark Bay to be contained within the legally trawled area	Acceptable	
Discarding fish (provisioning)		Acceptable	Reduction in amount of discards and ratio of discards to target catch from pre-catch reduction device levels and in water hopper system increasing survival of some bycatch species.	
<p><i>Fishery:</i> Shark Bay Scallop <i>Approval type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: February 2003 Current accreditation: August 2015 <i>Expiry date:</i> August 2025</p>	Scallop (spawning stock)	Monitoring of recruit/residual stock in northern Shark Bay and Denham Sound to ensure the start date of the season is set so that there is adequate level of breeding stock present when spawning commences.	Acceptable in Denham Sound. Inadequate in northern Shark Bay.	Fishery re opened in 2015. A revised TACC of 271 t (meat weight) was set in 2017/18 and 88% of the quota was achieved. Catches from northern Shark Bay were below expectations surveys indicated very low abundance. This part of the fishery is assessed to be inadequate in 2019 and subject to stock recovery strategies.
	Loggerhead turtles (captures)	90% of turtles captured from non-BRD nets returned alive	Acceptable	As for Shark Bay prawn and four turtles were reported caught and returned alive.

Fishery details	Issue/species	Performance measure/Condition	Current performance in 2017/18 or 2018	Comment
<p><i>Fishery:</i> South Coast Crustacean <i>Approval type:</i> Wildlife Trade Operation Exemption Initial accreditation: September 2004 Current accreditation: August 2017 Expiry date: July 2020</p>	Southern rock lobster (spawning stock)	Catch to remain between 50 to 80 tonnes	Acceptable	Catch of southern rock lobster below acceptable range. However, southern rock lobster stock indicator (cpue) is above the threshold reference levels in Zones 3&4 (Esperance and Bight).
<p><i>Fishery:</i> Specimen Shell <i>Approval type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: 25 May 2005 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025</p>	Specimen shell species (spawning stock)	Preliminary acceptable catch range is from 10,000–25,000 shells; acceptable catch rate 10–40 shells per day	Acceptable	Both catch and catch rate within acceptable ranges
	Dusky and sandbar sharks	Continue to review and report outcomes of actions taken to rebuild stocks	On-going	Recovery of dusky sharks is evident and sandbar sharks is now likely. Stock assessments completed late 2017. Resource Assessment Report published September 2019.
<p><i>Fishery:</i> Temperate Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline (Shark) Fisheries <i>Approval type:</i> Accredited Export Exempt Fishery Initial accreditation: February 2006 Current accreditation: August 2018 Expiry date: August 2021</p>	Australian sea lions	Continue monitoring fishing effort around Australian sea lion colonies following implementation of Gillnet Exclusion Zones and investigate potential management measures to further limit the overlap of gillnet fishing and Australian sea lion foraging areas to support recovery of the species. These management measures could include independent validation of interaction rates	Underway and ongoing	A network of Gillnet Exclusion Zones was established on 29 June 2018 to protect Australian sea lion breeding colonies, covering a total of 17,300 square kilometres along the Western Australian coast. Review of the Gillnet Exclusion Zones is to align with the WTO cycle, the next being August 2021. A pilot FRDC-funded project (FRDC 2017-119) is currently developing novel remote camera approaches to assess and monitor the population status of ASLs. The Department continues monitoring spatio-temporal levels of gillnet effort

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Fishery details	Issue/species	Performance measure/Condition	Current performance in 2017/18 or 2018	Comment
<p><i>Fishery:</i> West Coast Rock Lobster <i>Approval Type:</i> Wildlife Trade Operation Exemption Initial accreditation: August 2002 Current accreditation: May 2018 Expiry date: May 2025</p>	Western rock lobster (spawning stock)	Spawning biomass at Abrolhos Islands and coastal regions to remain above respective levels during the early 1980s with 75% certainty	Acceptable	Current spawning stock levels in all four breeding stock management areas are well above their respective threshold levels
	Octopus (spawning stock)	Catch rate (cpue) not to drop outside of historic range by > 10%	Acceptable	In 2013 the recording of octopus catch was altered with the adoption of Catch Disposal Records (CDR). Octopus cpue is now determined as the catch (kg) per pot lift in waters < 20 fm from CDRs (standardised for month and latitude). Since 2013 the cpue of octopus has ranged from 0.023 to 0.027 kg/potlift. In 2018 the cpue was 0.026, which is within 10% of the historical range.
	Sea lion (captures)	No increase in rate of capture	Acceptable	No sea lion captures were reported.
	Leatherback turtle (entanglements)	No increase in rate of interactions	Acceptable	No entanglements were reported.
	Whales and dolphins (entanglements)	No increase in rate of interactions	Unacceptable	There were 8 confirmed whale entanglements in WRL gear during the 2018 humpback whale migration season. While mitigation measures have reduced whale entanglements by ~2/3 the increase in entanglements necessitates a review of current management measures.
<p><i>Fishery:</i> West Coast Deep Sea Crustacean Managed Fishery <i>Approval type:</i> List of Exempt native Species Initial accreditation: March 2004 Current accreditation: August 2015 Expiry date: August 2025</p>	Champagne and Giant crab (spawning stock)	Unitisation of the fishery has permitted a maximum of 14 t of Champagne crab and Giant crab to be taken in a season	Acceptable	
	Crystal Crab (spawning stock)	The fishery is quota based with catches limited to 154 t of crystal crab per season	Acceptable	TAC achieved with effort within acceptable range. The standardised catch rate of retained legal crabs is within the acceptable range.

APPENDIX 5

Science and Resource Assessment staff adjunct positions and supervision of students

Staff Member	Position
Lynda Bellchambers	Adjunct Researcher, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, University of Western Australia. PhD co-supervision, University of Western Australia, supervises Scott Evans - 'Understanding the relationships between fishery recruitment and essential benthic habitats within an ecosystem based fisheries management framework for prawn fisheries'
Matias Braccini	PhD co-supervision, University of Mar del Plata, Argentina, supervises Marcelo Perez – 'Movement patterns of <i>Mustelus schmitti</i> in the coastal Bonaerense ecosystem based on the use of conventional mark recapture. Implications for management and sustainable exploitation'. PhD co-supervision, Murdoch University, supervises Brenton Pember - 'A multi-disciplinary analysis of connectivity of the sandbar shark (<i>Carcharhinus plumbeus</i>) in the Indo-West Pacific'. MSc co-supervision, University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany, supervises Sarah Jakobs – "Acoustic and conventional tagging support the growth patterns of grey nurse sharks and reveal their large-scale displacements in the west coast of Australia". Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Murdoch University.
Peter Coulson	Adjunct Lecturer. School of Veterinary and Life Sciences, Murdoch University. PhD co- supervision, University of Western Australia, supervises Emma Jade-Tuffley 'Determining variation in catchability of western rock lobsters (<i>Panulirus cygnus</i>)'. PhD co- supervision, University of Western Australia, supervises Michael Brooker - 'An investigation into unexpectedly low catch rates of <i>Panulirus cygnus</i> from an area of historical high catch rates'. PhD co-supervision; Emma-Jade Tuffley, University of Western Australia, "Accounting for variability in western rock lobster (<i>Panulirus cygnus</i>) catchability". PhD co-supervision; Michael Brooker, University of Western Australia, "Low catch rates of Western Rock Lobster (<i>Panulirus cygnus</i>) from an area of historically high catch in the centre of the fishery". PhD co-supervision; Jessica Kolbutz, University of Western Australia, "The role of oceanographic processes in the recruitment of Western Rock Lobster". Masters co-supervision; Daphne Oh, University of Western Australia, "Impacts of seismic testing on post-juvenile Western Rock Lobster". Masters co-supervision; Ash Miller, University of Western Australia, "Fine-scale variability in catch and growth rates of western rock lobsters, <i>Panulirus cygnus</i> George, reveal heterogeneous life-history parameters".
Simon de Lestang	Masters co-supervision, Edith Cowan University, Emily Lette – "Metabonomic profiling of marron haemolymph" Adjunct Senior Lecturer. Department of Environment and Agriculture, Faculty of Science and Engineering. Curtin University.
Rodney Duffy	PhD co-supervision, Brett Crisafulli, Edith Cowan University, "Understanding Recreational Fishing in the advent of the catch and release era" Masters co-supervision, Casper Avenant, Edith Cowan University, Dietary comparison of the tropical herbivore <i>Signanus fuscescens</i> and a range of temperate seagrass-associated omnivorous fishes
David Fairclough	Emeritus Professor, Murdoch University.
Norman Hall	PhD co-supervision, Murdoch University, Rachel Marks – "Key factors affecting the biology and population dynamics of the blue swimmer crab (<i>Portunus armatus</i>) in southwest Western Australia."
Alex Hesp	Adjunct Research Fellows, University of Western Australia
Jason How	PhD co-supervision, Murdoch University, Rachel Marks – "Key factors affecting the biology and population dynamics of the blue swimmer crab (<i>Portunus armatus</i>) in southwest Western Australia."
Danielle Johnston	PhD co-supervision Murdoch University, Inigo Koefoed – "The biology and life history of the endeavour prawn <i>Metapenaeus endeavouri</i> , and the influence of the environment on the life histories and stock dynamics of three species of Penaeid prawn in arid Western Australia.
Mervi Kangas	Adjunct Professor – Department of Environment and Agriculture, Faculty of Science and Engineering, Curtin University.
Stephen Newman	Adjunct Supervisor, Eva Lai "Integrating multiple sources of data to construct a time series of recreational catch/effort for the West Coast Bioregion of Western Australia". PhD, Edith Cowan University. Adjunct Supervisor, Brett Crisafulli "Understanding Recreational Fishing in the advent of the catch and release era". PhD, Edith Cowan University
Karina Ryan	

APPENDICES

Staff Member	Position
	Adjunct Supervisor, Shannon Burchert “A spatio-temporal analysis of recreational fishing data to inform fine scale fisheries management in Western Australia”. PhD, Edith Cowan University.
Lachlan Strain	Adjunct Research Fellow, Faculty of Science and Engineering, Department of Environment and Agriculture, Curtin University of Technology.
	PhD co-supervision, Curtin University of Technology, supervises Aisling Fontanini – ‘Impacts of marine climate change on two commercially and recreationally important Western Australian species: <i>Pagrus auratus</i> and <i>Haliotis roei</i> ’.
Stephen Taylor	PhD co-supervision, Edith Cowen University, Ebenezer Afrifa-Yamoah – “Imputations, modelling and optimal sampling design for remote camera surveys”
Michael Travers	Adjunct Research Scientist, Australian Institute of Marine Science. PhD co-supervision, Curtin University, Sarah Hearne. Ontogenetic niche separation in extinct and extant fishes from the west Kimberly region, Western Australia.
	Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Marine Ecology Group, School of Plant Biology, University of Western Australia.
	Honorary Research Fellow, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.
Corey Wakefield	Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Curtin University of Technology. Masters co-supervision, Curtin University of Technology, supervises Claire Wellington – ‘Description and comparison of demersal fish ecology of the continental slope of Western Australia’.
	Masters co-supervision, Curtin University of Technology, supervises Dion Boddington – ‘Comparison of the life history characteristics, habitat partitioning and stock status of three groupers off the north-western coast of Australia’.
Brent Wise	Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Engineering, Faculty of Health, Engineering and Science, Edith Cowan University.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AFMA	Australian Fisheries Management Authority	FRDC	Fisheries Research and Development Corporation
AFZ	Australian Fishing Zone	FRMA	Fish Resources Management Act
AIMWTMF	Abrolhos Islands and Mid-West Trawl Managed Fishery	FRR	Fisheries Research Report
ASL	Australian sea lion	GAB	Great Australian Bight
BPMF	Broome Prawn Managed Fishery	GDSF	Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Managed Fishery
BRD	Bycatch Reduction Device	HMAS	Her Majesty's Australian Ship
BRUVS	Baited Remote Underwater Video System	IBSS	Independent Breeding Stock Survey
CAES	Catch and Effort Statistics	IFM	Integrated Fisheries Management
CDR	Catch and disposal record	IMCRA	Interim Marine and Coastal Regionalisation for Australia
CI/CKI	Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Island	IMP	Introduced Marine Pests
CILF	Christmas Island Line Fishery	IMS	Introduced Marine Species
CKIMAFF	Cocos (Keeling) Islands Marine Aquarium Fish Fishery	ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
CPUE	Catch Per Unit Effort	ITQ	Individually Transferable Quota
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation	IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
CSLPF	Cockburn Sound (Line and Pot) Managed Fishery	IVR	Integrated Voice Response
CW	Carapace Width	JANSF	Joint Authority Northern Shark Fishery
DFAC	Developing Fisheries Assessment Committee	JASDGLF	Joint Authority Southern Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Managed Fishery
EBFM	Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management	KGBF	Kimberley Gillnet and Barramundi Managed Fishery
ECU	Edith Cowan University	KPMF	Kimberley Prawn Managed Fishery
EPBC	(Commonwealth Government) Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (Act 1999)	LASCF	Lake Argyle Silver Cobbler Fishery
ERLF	Esperance Rock Lobster Managed Fishery	MAF	Marine Aquarium Fish Managed Fishery
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development	MBP	Marine Bioregional Plan
ETP	Endangered, Threatened and Protected	MFL	Managed Fishery Licence
FED	Fish escapement device	MLL	Minimum Legal Length
FHPA	Fish Habitat Protection Area	MOP	Mother-of-Pearl
FMO	Fisheries and Marine Officer	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
		MPA	Marine Protected Area
		MSC	Marine Stewardship Council

OVERVIEW

MSY	Maximum Sustainable Yield
NBPMF	Nickol Bay Prawn Managed Fishery
NDSF	Northern Demersal Scalefish Managed Fishery
NPF	Northern Prawn Fishery
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NTAC	Notional Target Total Allowable Catch
OCL	Orbital Carapace Length
OPMF	Onslow Prawn Managed Fishery
PFRC	Pemberton Freshwater Research Centre
RAP	Research Angler Program
RAR	Resource Assessment Report
RCL	Rostrum Carapace Length
RFBL	Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence
RFSS	Recreational Freshwater Fisheries Stakeholder Subcommittee
RRAMF	Ranked Risk Assessment of Multiple Fisheries
SBBSMNF	Shark Bay Beach Seine and Mesh Net Managed Fishery
SBCIMF	Shark Bay Crab Interim Managed Fishery
SBSF	Shark Bay Snapper Managed Fishery
SCRIP	Strategic Criteria for Rural Investments in Productivity
SCTF	South Coast Trawl Fishery
SDGDLF	Southern Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Managed Fishery
SFD	Standard Fishing Day
SIEV	Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel
SLED	Sea Lion Exclusion Device
SMFG	Size Management Fish Ground
SSF	Specimen Shell Managed Fishery

SWCC	South West Catchment Council
SWTMF	South West Trawl Managed Fishery
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
TACC	Total Allowable Commercial Catch
TAE	Total Allowable Effort
TARC	Total Allowable Recreational Catch
TDGDLF	Western Australian Temperate Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Fisheries
TPSA	Tiger Prawn Spawning Area
UWA	University of Western Australia
VFAS	Voluntary Fisheries Adjustment Schemes
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System
WAFIC	Western Australian Fishing Industry Council
WAFMRL	Western Australian Fisheries and Marine Research Laboratories
WAMSI	Western Australian Marine Science Institute
WANCSF	Western Australian North Coast Shark Fishery
WCB	West Coast Bioregion
WCDGDLF	West Coast Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline (Interim) Managed Fishery
WCDSF	West Coast Demersal Scalefish Fishery
WCDSIMF	West Coast Demersal Scalefish (Interim) Managed Fishery
WCEF	West Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery
WCRLF	West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery
WDWTF	Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery
WTO	Wildlife Trade Operation

