



# Report on Operations

## DEPARTMENT OUTPUTS

Integrated Fisheries Management

Commercial Fisheries

Recreational Fisheries

Pearling and Aquaculture

Fish and Fish Habitat Protection

# INTEGRATED Fisheries Management

Integrated Fisheries Management (IFM) is an initiative aimed at addressing the issue of how fish resources can be best shared between competing Indigenous, recreational (including charter) and commercial users, within the broad context of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD).

This new approach, believed to be a world-first, will ensure that Western Australia's fisheries are maintained for the future.

The previous Minister for Fisheries launched the Government's IFM initiative and policy in October 2004. The Government has continued its strong commitment to the IFM process with \$4.9 million funding over the next four years (from 2005/06 to 2008/09). These funds will be applied to the implementation of the IFM process including consultation, management, policy, fisheries research and education and compliance.

The Minister also established the Integrated Fisheries Allocation Advisory Committee (IFAAC) in October 2004 to investigate resource allocation issues and make recommendations on optimal resource use.

IFM involves:

- setting the total sustainable harvest level of each resource that allows for an ecologically sustainable level of fishing;
- allocation of explicit catch shares for use by commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishers;
- continual monitoring of each sector's harvested catch;
- managing each sector within its allocated catch share; and
- developing mechanisms to enable the reallocation of catch shares between sectors.

As the community's use of fish resources changes, "reallocation mechanisms" will be introduced to enable changes in catch allocation to take place over time.

Catch allocation and any subsequent adjustments will follow a series of consultations before a final report is presented by the Integrated Fisheries Allocation Advisory Committee (IFAAC) to the Minister for Fisheries.

IFAAC's first role is to provide advice and recommendations on allocations for the western rock lobster resource, the abalone resource (with emphasis on the Perth metropolitan fishery) and the West Coast Demersal Finfish resource (with emphasis on dhufish, baldchin groper and snapper as indicator species).

Major progress was made in 2004/05 in the western rock lobster resource IFM process. The Department released *Fisheries Management Paper; No. 192 Integrated Fisheries Management Report – Western Rock Lobster Resource*, which includes the sustainable harvest level that is determined by the Executive Director. The report will be used by IFAAC as a principal source of information in its consideration of the allocations for the Western Rock Lobster resource.

IFAAC has undertaken preliminary investigations on Western Rock Lobster resource sharing issues and consultation with stakeholders and is now preparing its Draft Allocation Report. It is anticipated that this report will be released for public comment in early 2005/06. It is expected that IFAAC's final advice on allocations will be provided to the Minister in 2005/06.

The Department also prepared a Fisheries Management Paper, *Integrated Fisheries Management Report – Abalone Resource*, for release in August 2005. IFAAC plans to finalise its recommendations to the Minister on the abalone resource in 2005/06.

More information about IFM and membership of IFAAC can be found at [www.fish.wa.gov.au](http://www.fish.wa.gov.au).

## MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS 2004/05

- formed the Integrated Fisheries Allocation Advisory Committee (IFAAC) to investigate resource allocation issues and make recommendations on optimal resource use to the Minister;
- developed the Integrated Fisheries Management Allocations Process;
- preliminary investigations undertaken by IFAAC on western rock lobster resource sharing issues included consultation with stakeholders and work towards the preparation of its Draft Allocation Report;
- released *Fisheries Management Paper No. 192 Integrated Fisheries Management Report – Western Rock Lobster Resource*;
- appointed a manager and support group to drive the implementation of IFM; and
- developed a fisheries data collection program for West Coast Demersal Finfish to underpin the IFM process.

## MAJOR INITIATIVES 2005/06

- developing a 10-year strategic plan and out years budget for implementation of IFM;
- providing final advice by the IFAAC to the Minister on allocations to sectors in the western rock lobster resource;
- releasing a Fisheries Management Paper on the *Integrated Fisheries Management Report – Abalone Resource*;
- providing IFAAC's final advice to the Minister on allocations to sectors in the abalone resource;
- implementing a change of management process within the Department to align with and support the IFM approach;
- preparing an assessment of the need for legislative change flowing from the implementation of IFM;
- scoping a project to address the need to develop a mechanism to allow reallocations between the sectors; and
- implementing a fisheries data collection program for West Coast Demersal Finfish to underpin the IFM process.

# COMMERCIAL Fisheries

Commercial fishing occurs along the entire 12,500km of the Western Australian coast providing jobs, income to the State and premium seafood to people around the globe.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for 2003/04 valued Western Australia's fisheries exports at \$468 million, while the WA Fishing Industry Council estimates commercial fishing contributes about \$1.2 billion to the State's economy.

The mission of the Department's Commercial Fishing Program is to deliver the optimum long-term return to Western Australia from its commercial fisheries, while taking into account environmental issues and community social values.

Commercial fisheries are managed in line with the objectives of the Act and in accordance with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD). ESD

reports for 27 WA fisheries have now been completed and lodged with the Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH). As of 30 June 2005, 24 have been accredited by the DEH.

The Western Rock Lobster Fishery is currently undergoing a period of significant review and change. The development of new resource sustainability management packages for the fishery and reviews of the management strategy and the minimum unit holding requirement are some of the projects that have been undertaken this year.

A major achievement was Ministerial approval of new measures to ensure the sustainability of sharks, particularly the slow-growing dusky and sandbar sharks.

The Department's satellite linked system for monitoring commercial fishing boats – the Vessel Monitoring Scheme (VMS) – won the 2004 Premier's Award for Governance. The use of VMS had a major impact on the way the State's trawl fisheries operate.

Management plans for the State's managed commercial fisheries can now be viewed electronically through links on the Department's website to the State Law Publisher.

## Wetline Review

The term "wetline" refers to fisheries that are not under formal management arrangements. The term is usually used to describe the catching of scalefish (fish with fins not including sharks), using handlines or droplines. Wetlining is the only commercial fishing activity available to commercial fishermen in WA who do not hold a Managed Fishery Licence.

In 2003 the Minister appointed two panels – a Management Planning Panel (MPP) and a Commercial Access Panel (CAP) – to conduct a review into the commercial scalefish fishery in the West Coast and Gascoyne bioregions. The review was in response to research indicating that catch levels were unsustainable in the long term.

The MPP was appointed to develop specific management arrangements for the "open access" scalefish fisheries in the West Coast and Gascoyne regions and the CAP was appointed to devise a fair and equitable method of determining who will have access to the State's "open access" scalefish fisheries and their level of allocation.

In 2004/05, following extensive consultation, both panels released reports for public comment. The review panels are expected to deliver their final recommendations on the future management of the West Coast and Gascoyne commercial scalefish fisheries to the Minister before the end of 2005.



## Shark Fisheries

In August 2004 the Minister released *Fisheries Management Paper 180* discussing options for improved management of the two temperate shark fisheries. At the same time the Minister expressed concerns with the reliance of the two northern (or tropical) shark fisheries on fins for their revenue and asked that they demonstrate full and appropriate use of all sharks taken.

Subsequently, following consultation with industry and other stakeholders, in late 2004/05 the Minister approved a number of changes to the management of all the State's shark fisheries that will be introduced over the following two years. The measures are aimed at ensuring the conservation and sustainable management of "at risk" shark species (dusky whalers, whiskery and sandbar sharks) and include:

- closures and a 16.6 per cent effort reduction in the temperate shark fisheries to aid in the recovery of whiskery shark stocks, closure of a significant area of the Western Australian North Coast Shark Fishery between North West Cape and Broome to protect sandbar sharks;
- closure of King Sound to shark fishing;
- the implementation of the satellite based Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) in all the State's shark fisheries;
- a prohibition on the possession of sharks and rays by commercial fishers outside the target shark fisheries (with some exceptions);
- the total commercial protection of sawfish from the genus *Pristis*;
- significant increase in penalties for illegally possessing sharks or rays;
- introduction of effort controls in the tropical shark fisheries including limits on fishing days, longline hook numbers and net lengths; and
- introduction of an observer program with 10 per cent coverage for the two tropical shark fisheries.

Further measures are under consideration.



## West Coast Rock Lobster Fishery

This fishery is widely recognised as one of the best-managed fisheries in the world. This reputation is based on the active approach to management of this fishery, which ensures that it remains one of Australia's most valuable single species commercial fisheries.

During the 2004/05 rock lobster season, several significant stakeholder discussion documents regarding the sustainability of the rock lobster resource and its interactions with wildlife were developed and released.

The development of resource sustainability management packages to reduce effective effort in the fishery was necessary as a result of significant increases in fishing efficiency (particularly Zone B), which has caused a downward trend in stock levels and a decline in egg production (particularly in Zone B).

To ensure sustainability of the resource, a minimum of a 15 per cent reduction in effective fishing effort is required in Zones A and B, while a five per cent reduction is required in Zone C. It is anticipated the management measures will be implemented in the 2005/06 season.

As a requirement of the West Coast Rock Lobster Fishery ESD process and Department of Environment and Heritage and Marine Stewardship Council certification/accreditation, it was necessary to investigate and implement the best possible mitigation measures that would eliminate the bycatch of Australian sea lion pups from rock lobster pots while minimising the impact on commercial fishing operations. A discussion paper proposing the implementation of sea lion exclusion devices in the 2005/06 season was released in May.

Also currently under review is the minimum unit holding requirement for the commercial fishery. A detailed investigation and economic analysis has been completed and three options have been released for stakeholder consideration. The options include maintaining the current arrangements, reducing the minimum unit holding level, or removing the requirement from the fishery.

Another major undertaking by the fishery has been the ongoing review of the current management system and investigation and assessment of the benefits of alternative management models (i.e. input controls vs. quotas). This review will provide detailed information to industry on how best to address the long-term socio-economic issues concerning the future management of the rock lobster resource within an ecological sustainable development framework. It is expected that the review papers will be available in late 2005.

### **Shark Bay Prawn Fishery**

In total 27 vessels operated in the Shark Bay Prawn Fishery in 2004, catching about \$22 million of product.

In the past year the boundaries of the recognised tiger prawn spawning areas have been further refined in consultation with industry as an additional sustainability measure. A minimum catch rate threshold for tiger prawns has also been established to assist the implementation of closures to protect spawning stock.

The formal requirement for Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs or grids) to be installed in all nets continued during the 2004 fishing season. In addition, Fish Exclusion Devices (FEDs) were installed into about half of the nets being towed by each vessel in order to assess the effectiveness of these devices.

### **Exmouth Gulf Prawn Fishery**

The Exmouth Prawn Managed fishery consists of 16 licences held by two licensees. Only 12 vessels are active in the fishery. This low number is a result of a gear amalgamation arrangement that is currently operating under Ministerial Exemption. The total catch in the 2004 season was 1,347 tonnes, valued at about \$12 million.

The formal requirement for BRDs to be installed in all nets continued during the 2004 fishing season. In addition, Fish Exclusion Devices (FEDs) were installed into half of the nets being towed by each vessel in order to assess the effectiveness of these devices.

As with the other WA trawl fisheries, there are strict limits on the gear that can be used within this fishery. However, for the past six seasons the fishery has been trialling the use of quad trawl gear, instead of the standard twin gear. The aim of the trials is to examine the potential for improved operating efficiencies by redistributing the available gear allowance over a smaller number of boats.

In June 2004 the fishery was accredited as being compliant with US Turtle Exclusion Device laws, permitting prawns harvested in the fishery to be exported to the United States.

### **Shark Bay Scallop Fishery**

The 2004 season scallop catch was around 1,617 tonnes (whole weight). The estimated annual value of the fishery was \$2.6 million.

The 2004 scallop catch was taken by a fleet of 41 vessels that is made up of 14 vessels with A-class licences (only licensed to trawl for scallops with 100 mm mesh nets), and 27 vessels with B-class licences (licensed to trawl for prawns and scallops using nets with a mesh of 60 mm or less).

The formal requirement for BRDs for this fishery continued during the 2004 fishing season. Due to the large mesh size of nets used by vessels operating under an A-class licence, FEDs are not required for this group.

### **Abalone Fishery**

The Abalone Fishery operates off the west and south coasts of the State. The fishery takes three species of abalone – Roes abalone (south and west coasts) and greenlip and brownlip abalone (south coast). It has an annual gross value of production of \$13 – \$15 million.

The fishery is divided into eight management areas, and a separate annual Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) is determined for each species taken in each area. The TACC is determined by the Executive Director following consideration of research advice and industry feedback from the Abalone Management Advisory Committee.

## Other Fisheries

An Interim Management Plan was introduced for the commercial mackerel fishery in August 2004. This fishery operates between the WA/NT border and Cape Leeuwin and targets primarily Spanish mackerel. Under the Interim Management Plan, the fishery is divided into three management areas (Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne-West Coast). There is a limit on the number of permits issued for each area, and designated fishing seasons. The Interim Management Plan is currently being amended to enable the implementation of Individual Transferable Quotas from 1 January 2006.

Consultation on new management arrangements for the South West Beach Seine fishery was finalised and an implementation process developed.

## Voluntary Fisheries Adjustment Scheme

Voluntary Fisheries Adjustment Scheme Committees of Management continue for the South West Coast Salmon, West Coast Estuarine and the South Coast Herring Fisheries. A further committee has been established to consider establishing a scheme for the South Coast Salmon Fishery.

Voluntary Fisheries Adjustment Schemes were established for the South West Salmon and West Coast Estuarine Fisheries in 2004/05 and will continue in 2005/06. Three rounds of offers were considered for the South West Coast Salmon Fishery that resulted in the surrender of a fishing unit. Further offers will be considered in 2005/06. Offers continue to be considered for the surrender of authorisations in the West Coast Estuarine Fishery.

Geographe Bay was closed to commercial crab fishing by a Section 43 Order in January 2005. Act of Grace payments were offered to fishers affected by this closure.

## MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2004/05

- developed resource sustainability management packages for the West Coast Rock Lobster Fishery;
- completed scientific certification systems audit for Marine Stewardship Council certification for the West Coast Rock Lobster Fishery;
- reassessment of the Exmouth Gulf Prawn Fishery as being compliant with US Turtle Exclusion Device laws and continuation of the fishery's accreditation permitting prawns to be exported to the US;
- commencement of a three-year review of the West Coast Rock Lobster Fishery management systems, assessing the relative benefits of alternative management models against the current system;
- release of the *Fisheries Management Paper 180* discussing options for improved management of the two temperate shark fisheries and provided advice to the Minister on future management; and
- progress towards the management of the State's open access wetline fisheries through the release for public comment of proposals for future management from the West Coast and Gascoyne Management Planning and Commercial Access Panels.

## MAJOR INITIATIVES 2005/06

- undertake a strategic review of management systems for the West Coast Rock Lobster Fishery, specifically quota versus input;
- implement resource sustainability management packages for the West Coast Rock Lobster Fishery;
- develop Ministerial Policy Guidelines for the ecologically sustainable management of the Shark Bay snapper, rock lobster, Shark Bay prawn and scallop and Exmouth gulf prawn, abalone and pearl oyster fisheries;
- progress toward management arrangements for the State's wetline fisheries;
- complete a new management plan for Marine Aquarium Managed Fishery;
- introduce revised management arrangements for the northern shark fisheries; and
- implement a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) into the Shark Bay Snapper Managed Fishery.

# RECREATIONAL Fisheries

The Recreational Fisheries Program is responsible for a range of fisheries management, compliance, community education and research projects to manage the recreational and fishing tour components of the State's fisheries and ensure the sustainability of fish stocks.

Recreational fishing is not only a favorite pastime for nearly 540,000 Western Australians every year (about one third of the population), it also generates about \$570 million per year and creates about 7,000 full-time jobs.

Increasing pressure on WA's fisheries by the recreational sector can be attributed to population and tourism growth, coastal development, improved fishing technology and easier access to many remote areas.

Along with these changes comes a need to consider the broader marine environment and the delicate linkages between healthy fish populations and the environment on which they depend. This has meant a shift in focus from the sustainability of particular fish stocks to incorporate the wider demands across the aquatic environment.



To address these growing pressures on fish stocks the Department has developed fisheries management strategies, which seek to ensure not only the biological sustainability of fish stocks and the maintenance of high-quality recreational fishing experiences, but also recognises the impact human activity has on the supporting aquatic ecosystem.

The development of a regional approach will also assist with integrating the management of recreational and charter fishing with commercial fishing, customary fishing and other uses in each region, such as conservation, eco-tourism and aquaculture.

In addition to completing the implementation of regionalised management strategies for recreational fishing particular emphasis has been placed on ensuring the continued recovery of pink snapper stocks in the inner gulfs of Shark Bay, providing adequate protection of pink snapper stocks in Cockburn Sound and developing a long term management strategy for the recreational marron fishery over the last year.

In Western Australia recreational fishers need a licence to fish for rock lobster, abalone and marron and to participate in freshwater angling and netting. All revenue from recreational fishing licences is used to protect and conserve the State's vulnerable fish stocks and help ensure the future of recreational fishing throughout Western Australia. In 2004 more than 61,000 recreational licences were issued.

## MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2004/05

- finalised recommendations for the management of recreational fishing in the Pilbara/Kimberley and South Coast bioregions. Outcomes will be released in mid to late 2005;
- finalised strategies to manage the interactions between the commercial prawn trawl fishery and pink snapper populations in Denham Sound;
- reviewed the managed arrangements for Shark Bay inner gulf fish stocks;
- reviewed the management arrangements for metropolitan pink snapper stocks including Cockburn Sound;
- commenced a review of the recreational marron fishery;
- developed a recreational fishing strategy for the Cocos (Keeling) Islands;
- continued surveys of catch and effort in key recreational fisheries including West Coast finfish, abalone, rock lobster, marron and freshwater finfish fisheries;
- continued research projects on Shark Bay snapper, release mortality of demersal finfish on the West Coast, the status of West Coast demersal scalefish, status of estuarine species and impact of fish kills, Waroona Dam restocking, King George Whiting and key coastal nursery habitats and the status and future needs of the marron fishery; and
- refined management arrangements for the aquatic tour industry.

## MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2005/06

- implement new regulations and community education and compliance strategies for the management of recreational fishing in the South Coast and Pilbara/Kimberley regions;
- implement regulations and community education and compliance strategies for the management of recreational fishing on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands;
- implement new management arrangements for Shark Bay inner gulf fish stocks;
- implement new management arrangements for metropolitan pink snapper stocks including Cockburn Sound;
- review and amend Ministerial Policy Guidelines for entry into the Aquatic Tour Sector;
- assist the Aquatic Tour Industry to develop a representative consultative body;
- publish the first research report on the Aquatic Tour Industry;
- review of the management and arrangements for recreational freshwater fisheries including trout and other fish species;
- finalise new management arrangements for the recreational marron fishery;
- continue surveys of catch and effort in key recreational fisheries including West Coast finfish, abalone, rock lobster, marron and freshwater finfish and aquatic tour operator (charter) fisheries;
- continue research projects on Shark Bay pink snapper, the status of West Coast demersal scalefish, the status of estuarine species and impact of fish kills and the status and future needs of the marron fishery; and
- develop a recreational fishing strategy for Christmas Island.

# AQUACULTURE and Pearling

The Pearling and Aquaculture Program of the Department of Fisheries undertakes to manage and regulate the development of a diverse, valuable and sustainable pearling and aquaculture industry in Western Australia, through partnership with stakeholders.

## Pearling

The Pearling sub-program is responsible for the management and regulation of the wild capture fishery for the South Sea pearl oyster (*Pinctada maxima*) and the subsequent culture of pearls from that shell. The sub-program is also responsible for the management and regulation of the more recently developed hatchery production element of the industry in which South Sea pearl oyster shells are bred and produced in a hatchery environment as an alternative and/or additional means of generating shell to be seeded for pearl culture.

The management of the production of pearls from species other than *Pinctada maxima* is dealt with by the Aquaculture sub-program.

The sub-program projects relate to the management of the wild capture oyster stock and hatchery sector, development of policies and legislation to support this management, research on the wild pearl oyster stocks and monitoring of fishing effort; disease management, compliance and education; and lease and licence assessment and administration.

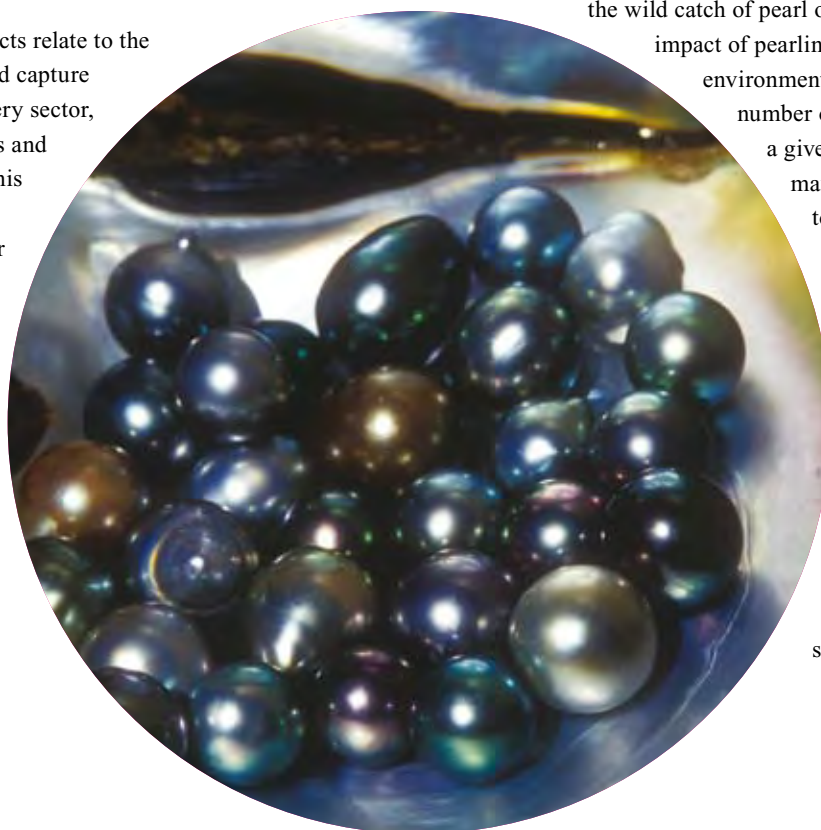
The sub-program is also responsible for ensuring the ongoing environmental management of the Western Australian pearling industry, which has achieved Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage accreditation as being environmentally sustainable under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Production of the Western Australian pearl industry was valued at \$128 million in 2004. There are 16 pearling licensees, collectively holding 572 units in the wild stock fishery and 350 hatchery units. The value of the wildstock units, in terms of the number of shells permitted per unit, is reviewed annually based on recruitment and stock assessment data collected through the research program.

A key element in the management of the pearling industry is a quota management system, which limits the total amount of wild shell that can be harvested and also the total amount of hatchery shell that can be seeded. The quota management system provides for ecologically sustainable management of the wild catch of pearl oysters and minimal impact of pearling on the marine

environment. It also limits the total number of pearls cultured over a given time period thereby maximising returns to the State through maintaining optimum pearl prices and market confidence.

The fishery is divided into geographical zones which allow efficient and effective management of localised pearl oyster stocks.

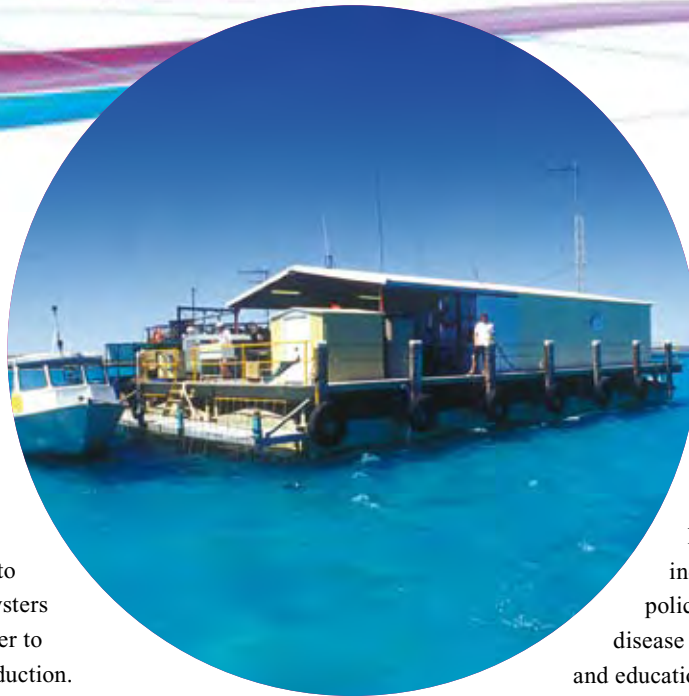


The research data shows that wild pearl oyster stocks in Zone 1 continue to recover from past cyclone events; therefore the total allowable catch from Zone 1 for the 2004 season was maintained at 55,000 shells to assist in the recovery of the fishery within this area. Zone 1 licensees are permitted to substitute hatchery-produced oysters for wild captured oysters in order to maintain their annual pearl production.

As a result of an increase in recruitment within the fishery the value of units within Zones 2 and 3 of the fishery was increased by 10 per cent, to a value of 1,100 oysters per unit.

The Pearling sub-program provides executive support to the Pearling Industry Advisory Committee, a statutory Management Advisory Committee established under the *Pearling Act 1990*, and its sub-committees. The sub-program also maintains strong linkages with the peak industry representative body, the Pearl Producers Association.

During 2004/05, key activities continued to focus on the review of the *Pearling Act 1990*, review of the Pearl Oyster Hatchery Policy, review of the Fees and Charges and development of a strategic plan for future activities and management of the Pearl Oyster Industry.



## Aquaculture

The Aquaculture sub-program is responsible for the management and regulation of Western Australia's growing and diverse aquaculture industry. The sub-program's key functions include industry management, policy development, research, disease management, compliance and education, and licence and exemption assessment and administration.

Major species currently under commercial aquaculture production in Western Australia include mussels, barramundi, abalone, western rock oysters, silver perch, trout, pearl oysters producing black pearls, marron and yabbies. Algae are also grown for the production of *beta carotene*.

Management arrangements ensure that the aquaculture industry in Western Australia is developing in an environmentally sustainable manner. *The Fish Resources Management Act 1994* requires that before an aquaculture licence is granted, the Executive Director must be satisfied that "the activities to be conducted under the licence are unlikely to adversely affect other fish or the aquatic environment; and that the activities to be conducted under the licence have been approved by other relevant authorities" (including the Department of Environment). The Department of Fisheries will not approve aquaculture licence applications where all relevant environmental authorities have not been established.

# and Pearling

The development of the State's aquaculture industry will be a significant contributor to regional growth as most activities are suited to particular regional areas, and with them will attract secondary support industries. Examples include the development of abalone aquaculture along the State's south coast and the development of a black pearl industry in the Abrolhos Islands, with some additional activity around these species also at Shark Bay. The need for appropriate infrastructure to support these industries during their infancy stages will be a challenge for Government.

In 2004 the Aquaculture Development Strategy for Western Australia was finalised. The Strategy recommended that developmental activities, which were previously the responsibility of the Department of Fisheries, become the responsibility of restructured Aquaculture Development Council appointed by the Minister for Fisheries, which is now focussed on the key impediments of investment attraction, businesses facilitation and infrastructure support. Copies of the Strategy are available by contacting the Department's Aquaculture sub-program.

Under its new focus, the Aquaculture Development Council is determining realistic and achievable targets for aquaculture development in Western Australia and progressing to determine and implement key initiatives to facilitate the achievement of these targets.



### MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2004/05

- completion of the restructure and refocussing of the Aquaculture Development Council, in accordance with the recommendations of the Aquaculture Development Strategy for Western Australia;
- restructuring of the Aquaculture sub-program in accordance with recommendations of Aquaculture Development Strategy for Western Australia;
- progression of negotiations with Fremantle Ports in relation to the issuing of a head lease to the Minister for Fisheries for the Cockburn mussel farm locations;
- progression of drafting instructions for a new *Pearling Management Bill* prepared and considered by the Minister and Pearling Industry Advisory Committee;
- Commencement of the implementation of the review of aquaculture development and legislation in Western Australia;
- Completion of the draft policy for Broodstock Access and Hatchery Production of Endemic and Non-species for Aquaculture Purposes; and
- Commencement of the development of the revised Pearl Oyster Hatchery Policy.

### MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2005/06

- finalise drafting instructions for the new *Pearling Management Bill*;
- finalise the review of pearl oyster hatchery policy;
- finalise the pearling industry strategy policy;
- finalise the pearling industry fees and charges review;
- implement a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministers for Fisheries in Western Australia and the Northern Territory for the management of the Australian pearling industry;
- implement a satellite-based VMS within the Western Australian pearling industry; and
- commence implementation of the findings of the Aquaculture Legislative Review.

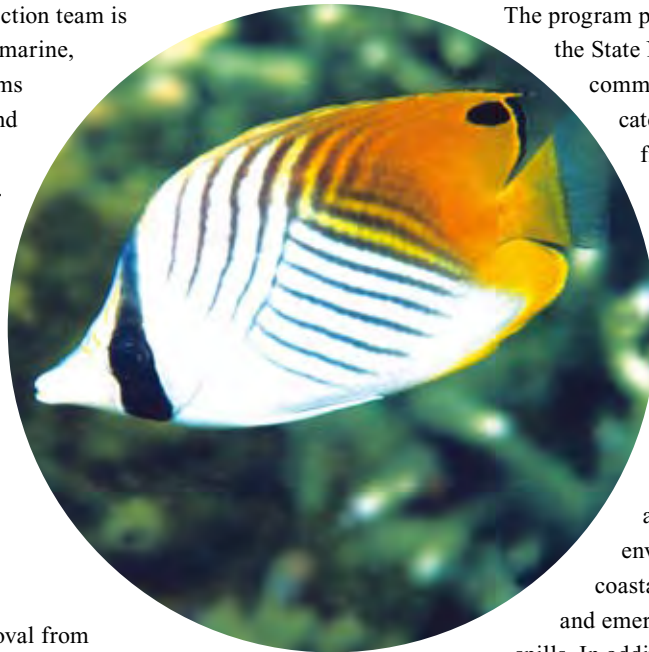
# FISH AND FISH HABITAT Protection

The Fish and Fish Habitat Protection team is involved in the management of marine, estuarine and riverine ecosystems through the protection of fish and fish habitats on behalf of the Western Australian community.

In 2004/05 the State's sixth Fish Habitat Protection Area (FHPA) was established at Point Quobba. The move formally provides protection to the largely unspoilt and highly diverse coral formations, fish and the marine environment of Point Quobba Lagoon.

Significant resources were also targeted at obtaining final approval from the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage for Western Australia's commercial fisheries. The remaining eight are expected to be submitted for approval in 2005.

Another success for the team was the development of a recovery plan for the critically endangered Margaret River ("hairy") marron (*Cherax tenuimanus*). This was done in collaboration with the departments of Environment and Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and local stakeholder groups. Initial recovery actions have focussed on raising public awareness, trial fish outs of invasive smooth marron (*Cherax cainii*) and the establishment of a captive breeding program at Pemberton. External funding for recovery actions has been obtained through Threatened Species Network, and South West Catchments Council Natural Resource Management grants.



The program provided substantial advice to the State Natural Resource Management committees and the six individual catchment councils on marine and freshwater environments in the various areas and management issues associated with the regions.

Advice was also provided to industry, government departments, and authorities such as the Environmental Protection Authority, on the potential impact on fisheries, aquaculture and the marine environment from proposed coastal developments, dredging and emergency incidents such as oil spills. In addition through its membership

of the Cockburn Sound Management Council the Department has been involved in formulating advice in respect of a number of significant development proposals in Cockburn Sound.

The program participated in a survey of the effects of the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami on coral reefs and mangroves in the area of Phuket, Thailand as part of the Department of Fisheries assistance program to aid fisheries in affected areas. The trip was organised by the US National Geographic Society.

## MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2004/05

- achieved Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage Ecologically Sustainable Development accreditation and export approval for a further 12 WA managed fisheries;
- provided advice on fisheries issues relevant to the Government's program for marine conservation reserves, in particular with regard to proposals at Ningaloo, Montebello and Barrow Islands, the Rowley Shoals, Shark Bay, Dampier and the Cape Leeuwin to Naturaliste area;
- completed a study of the viability of establishing a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) on the West Coast between Shark Bay and Cape Leeuwin and the issues have been raised with relevant National authorities;
- prepared management papers on the translocation of trout and Murray Darling fish species;
- established the Point Quobba Fish Habitat Protection Area;
- established a community-based recovery team to assist in the conservation of Margaret River "hairy" marron;
- provided advice on the fisheries, aquaculture, pearling and marine environmental issues associated with petroleum exploration and development including new and significant developments at Cliff Head (within the Western Rock Lobster Fishery) and developments near Exmouth Gulf and on the North West Shelf; and
- provided advice on the fisheries, aquaculture, pearling and marine environmental issues associated with coastal development including the Geraldton Port redevelopment and the proposed solar salt development in Exmouth Gulf.

## MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2005/06

- work towards the provision of cost-effective services in marine conservation reserves by progressing formal engagement with the Department of Conservation and Land Management to develop a collaborative approach to the delivery of government services and aquatic biodiversity and conservation;
- continue liaison with stakeholders and other government agencies in respect to fisheries issues around marine conservation reserves, provide advice and as necessary draft legislation in support of the Government's program for marine conservation areas;
- draft legislation to give effect to changes to the Ningaloo Marine Park, the Muiron Islands Marine Management Area, Montebello/Barrow Islands Marine Conservation Reserves, Rowley Shoals Marine Park, the Jurien Bay Marine Park and others as required;
- work with other government agencies and stakeholders in progressing regional marine planning including engagement with the National Oceans Office to address the South West marine planning process;
- continual role of lead agency within Western Australia in developing policies, legislation and response to introduced marine pests that will reflect the National System to be introduced in 2006/07;
- continue Natural Resource Management (NRM) work with groups to develop marine initiatives as part of the Natural Heritage Trust process;
- active participation in committees and by provision of formal submissions in order to provide advice on the impact of coastal developments and activities on fisheries, aquaculture, pearling and the marine environment; and
- develop further applications to the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage for ESD assessments of Western Australian fisheries, and required reports for fisheries that have already been assessed.