

Species targeted include black bream, flatfish and blue swimmer crabs in estuaries, and herring, whiting (including King George whiting), tailor, mulloway and abalone from beaches. Boat-based fishing targets herring, whiting, rock lobsters, pink snapper, dhufish, baldchin groper and a number of larger pelagic and game species.

The principal aquaculture development activities in the west coast bioregion are the production of blue mussels (*Mytilus edulis*) and 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 WA coastline under the influence of the Leeuwin Current, areas outside embayments (where nutrient levels are enhanced) are unsuitable for bivalve aquaculture.

## ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

### Regional Overview

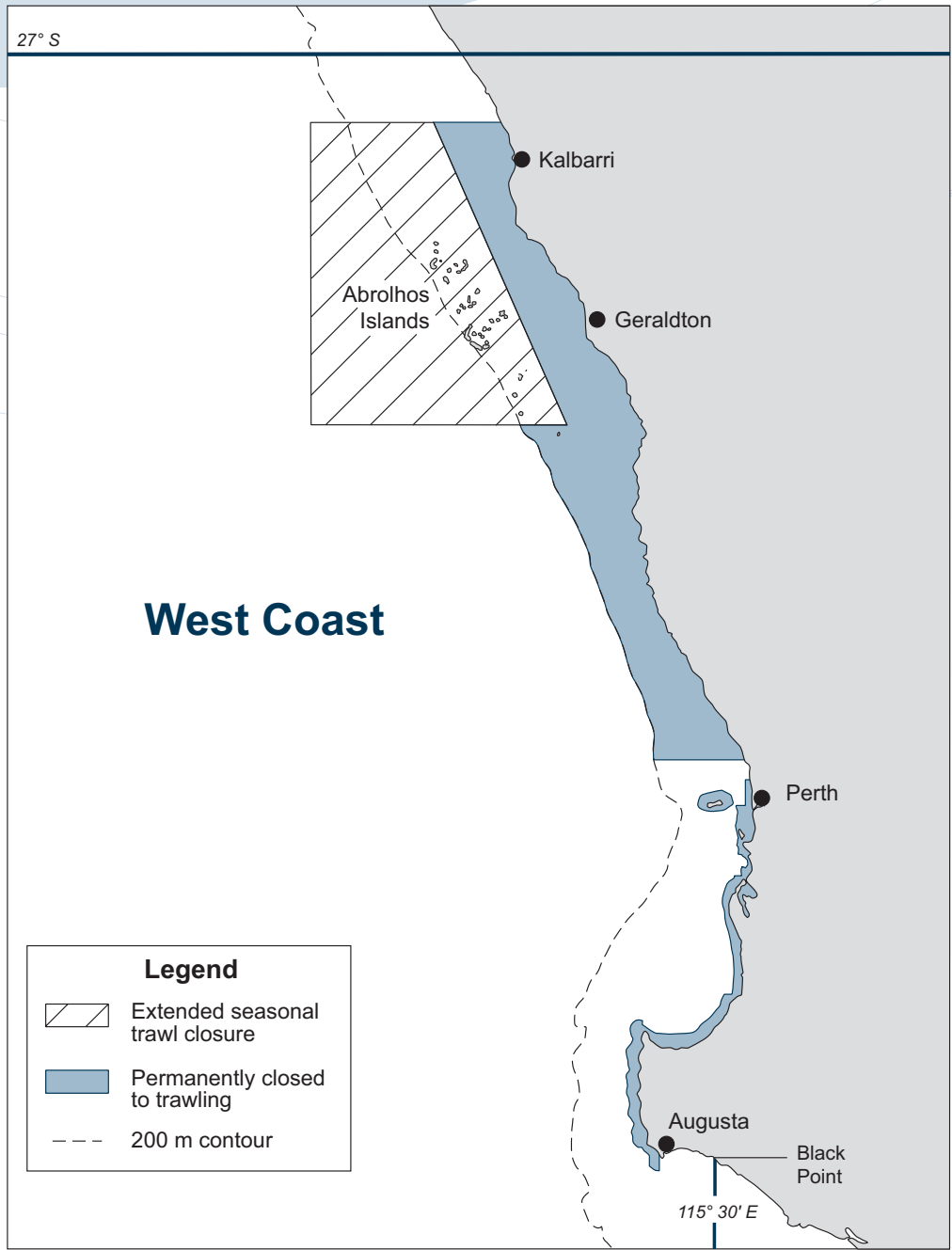
On the west coast, marine habitats are largely protected from any physical impact of commercial fishing by extensive closures to trawling, the only permitted fishing method which can significantly affect marine habitats. These closures, introduced in the 1970s and 1980s, protect essentially all seagrass and reef habitats, with trawling limited to sand areas inhabited by target species such as scallops (West Coast Habitat Protection Figure 1). In addition, habitat and biodiversity protection is provided by specific Fish Habitat Protection Areas, Reef Protected Areas and marine parks in sensitive areas (West Coast Habitat Protection Figure 2). These protective management measures ensure that the marine habitat and biodiversity have remained in good condition. The exception to this, and the major threat to biodiversity and fish habitats in the west coast bioregion, is from coastal development and environmental degradation from terrestrial runoff impacting estuaries and some protected near-shore waters.

During 2003/04, the Department of Fisheries has provided extensive scientific and management advice to Government in relation to the planning for the proposed Capes Marine Park between Busselton and Augusta. It has also been working on the preparation of orders under the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994* in order to modify fisheries regulations in accordance with the final Jurien Bay Marine Park Management Plan.

Following the release for public comment of the draft management plan for the proposed Blue Holes Fish Habitat Protection Area at Kalbarri, a final management plan is being prepared for Ministerial approval.

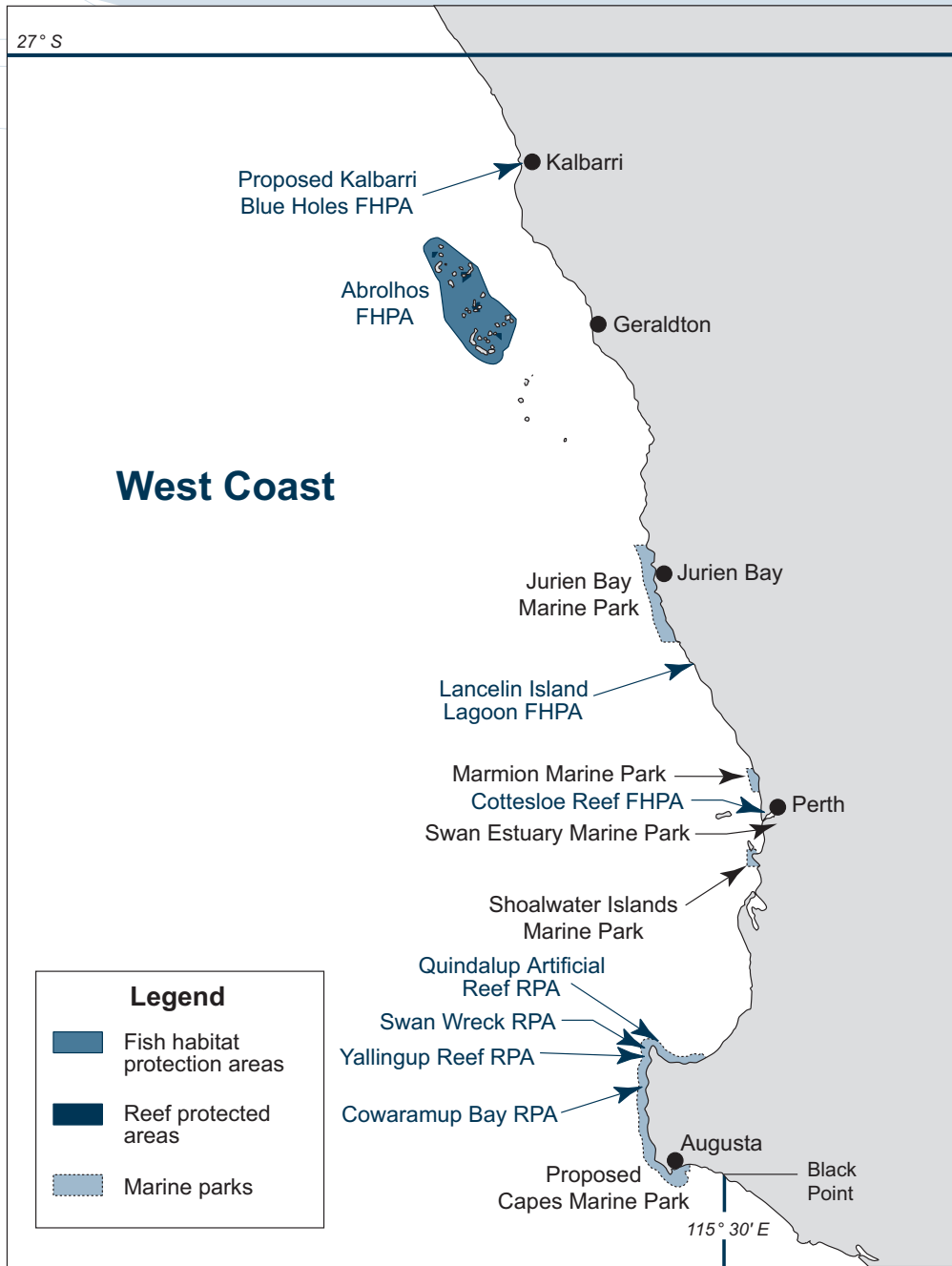
Recommendations for the development of a land-based tourism facility at the Abrolhos Islands, contained within Fisheries Management Paper no. 146 (the sustainable tourism plan for the islands), were implemented during 2003/04. When a preferred respondent has been selected, they will work with a Departmental working group to satisfy state and federal requirements before environmental approvals are granted. A licence to develop the Long Island site in the Wallabi Group will not be approved by the Minister for Fisheries until all environmental and other aspects of the proposed development are assessed as practical and suitable for this unique marine ecosystem.





WEST COAST HABITAT PROTECTION FIGURE 1

Map showing areas of permanent and extended seasonal closures to trawl fishing in the west coast bioregion.



**WEST COAST HABITAT PROTECTION FIGURE 2**

Map showing current and proposed areas of protected fish habitat in the west coast bioregion.