



COVID-19 Relief Measures for commercial fishing in WA

9 April 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant economic impacts on the commercial fishing and aquaculture industry in Western Australia (WA). In addition to the comprehensive package developed for the West Coast Rock Lobster fishery (WCRL), there is now additional support for WA's other commercial fisheries and the broader seafood sector.

In consultation with the WA Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), a range of licence fees will be waived and access fee payments deferred to reduce cash flow burdens on the commercial seafood sector. These include licences for commercial fishing, aquaculture, processing, pearling and fishing tour operators.

Fee Waivers/Reductions - Licence Application Fees

- All general licence and application fees for commercial fishing licences (CFLs), fishing boat licences (FBLs), fishing tour operator licences (FTOLs) restricted fishing tour operator licences (RFTOLs), processing and aquaculture licences will each be reduced for the next twelve-month period. Individual licence holders will still need to apply for their renewals but each of the relevant fees would be set at \$1.00.

Access Fee Deferrals and Review

- For WCRL, the next fee instalment payment is due on 15 May, which will need to be met by those fishers paying by this method. The September instalment will, however, be pushed out into the first half of 2021 as part of the agreed arrangements for the extended 18-month season. The date for this instalment is currently under discussion with Western Rock lobster.
- For all non-WCRL commercial fisheries, access fee payments for MFL renewals that fall due before 31 December 2020 will be reduced to \$1.00 with the need for instalment payments during this period removed.
- MFL holders who have already paid in full or by instalments for the 2020 licensing period will be provided with a credit for the next licencing period. No fee refunds will be provided.
- Pearl farm lease fees, pearl fishing access fees and hatchery annual fees have been deferred until the end of December 2020.
- DPIRD will work with WAFIC to develop an overarching strategy for COVID-19 impacts, including developing advice on the appropriate deferral schedules or the potential for waivers of access and water lease fees for 2020/21 if and where appropriate.

Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)

- All MSC certified fisheries have been given an automatic six-month certificate extension.
- DPIRD and WAFIC will continue to work with the MSC over the coming period to ensure WA fisheries maintain their MSC certification having regard for COVID-19 impacts.
- Government will support the funding required for re assessments and audits of the relevant fisheries when they come back on stream.
- DPIRD will work with WAFIC to consider providing funding for other fisheries to be certified to support broader recovery across the commercial fishing sector.



Plan for Our Parks - Suspension of South Coast Marine Park Process

- The current proposal for a south coast marine park has been suspended for 6 months.

Air-freight

- The Federal Government has recently announced a \$110 million International Freight Assistance Mechanism.
- The WA Government is actively engaged with its Federal counterparts and airfreight coordinators to support air freight access for WA's seafood exporters as part of this initiative.
- This will help to ensure business and supply chain continuity and maintain our hard won position in increasingly competitive overseas markets.

Other Commercial Fishery Specific Measures

- Details around a number of other measures to support individual fisheries are still being developed including the potential roll over of quota in the Marine Aquarium, West Coast Deep Sea Crustacean and Abalone Managed Fisheries

COVID-19 Hotline

A **13 COVID** Hotline (**13 26 843**) has been established to help answer questions West Australians have on the current COVID-19 State of Emergency. This hotline provides options for callers including pre-recorded information, direction to appropriate websites and direction to call centres for specific information.