



Next generation fisheries

New legislation for the future

Working with the Western Australian community, we have a long and successful history of sustainably managing the State's fisheries and their habitats.

We were one of the first fishery management agencies in the world to introduce Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management – a holistic risk-based approach that considers the impacts on all ecological resources, as well as on economic and social benefits and values, in deciding how best to manage WA's aquatic resources and fisheries. This includes a diverse array of ecological resources ranging from fish to seagrass and whales to coral reefs.

Western Australia is home to both the world's first commercial (rock lobster) and recreational (blue swimmer crab) fisheries ever to be certified by the Marine Stewardship Council, the global gold standard in third-party sustainability accreditation.

Our State has more than 40 commercially-valuable managed fisheries and marine farming activities ranging from the iconic pearling industry to finfish and prawns. Valued at over \$400 million, our rock lobster fishery is Australia's most valuable single species wild-capture fishery. We also have some of the most exciting and varied recreational fishing opportunities in the world enjoyed by up to 740,000 people annually.

Collectively, these activities contribute around \$1.6 billion a year to the State economy and also provide great benefits to our lifestyle.



A challenging environment

We face increasing challenges to ensure we manage our aquatic resources sustainably. Expanding populations, coastal development, advancing fishing technologies and biosecurity threats can all place additional pressure on our aquatic environment and fisheries.

Additionally, we have seen significant effects from changes in climatic and oceanographic conditions over the past 15 years, especially in WA's west coast region. These changes are believed to have already affected the abundance and distribution of many aquatic species, including western rock lobster, blue swimmer crab, herring and Roe's abalone.

And it has become increasingly recognised by government that we must conserve and use our aquatic biological resources in a more comprehensive and integrated way.

The Aquatic Resources Management Bill

The future of aquatic resource management

Over the past decade, the Department of Fisheries has developed and implemented world-leading policy reforms to safeguard our aquatic resources and enable responsible fishing development in a dynamic environment.

The reforms are based on the establishment of a comprehensive, structured and risk-based approach to managing the State's aquatic resources. Implementing this innovative approach includes the development of clearer management objectives for each resource underpinned by explicit harvest strategies with specific catch allocations for each fishing sector. Unnecessary regulations have also been removed and fisheries laws simplified.

The Aquatic Resources Management Bill has been developed to support the ongoing reform process, and provide a solid foundation for the management of fish and aquatic resources into the future.



The Bill provides a modern, innovative framework that will provide a sound basis for effective, efficient and integrated fisheries and aquatic resource management for decades to come. It is based on the principles of ecologically sustainable development, and will provide the legal framework for improved governance.

The Bill was passed by Parliament in November 2016. We are working with stakeholders on its implementation which is expected to be on 1 January 2019.



Security of fishing access

A key feature of the legislation is that it is based around the aquatic resource – rather than the traditional approach based on a fishery or fishing activity. This enables a structured approach to providing secure fishing access rights for all sectors, but with resource sustainability at its core. Drawing on international rights-based systems, the new framework will ensure that WA continues to be at the forefront of effective fisheries management. Importantly, the Bill allows for existing management arrangements and resource access rights to remain effective for the State's commercial fishing and pearling industries, until each is separately migrated to the new legislative framework.

The Bill also provides for the substantial deregulation of the fish-processing sector, and incorporates new powers that allow the Minister for Fisheries to enter cooperative management arrangements with, or delegate specific responsibilities to, accountable non-government organisations. Once implemented, this framework will allow far greater flexibility in the long term for the use of fishing access rights and for developing effective deregulated arrangements to achieve improved environmental, economic and social outcomes.



Ensuring ecologically sustainable development in WA fisheries

Fisheries management in WA has evolved over the last half century from a focus on managing commercial fishing catch of target species to a comprehensive, fully integrated method for managing resource sustainability and sharing the resource as a whole.

This holistic approach, known as Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM), is based on the principles of ecologically sustainable development, which is accepted as the foundation for best-practice natural resource management in Australia.

WA is one of the first fisheries jurisdictions in the world to fully implement such a comprehensive and practical EBFM framework.

EBFM covers a few broader ecosystem and all users, including customary fishers, commercial and recreational users, and the many other people who enjoy the aquatic environment and want to know ecosystems are in good health and being well managed.

It provides a broad, risk-based framework for the overall management of aquatic resources, factoring in all ecological resources and community values within a bioregion to assess where direct management intervention is required.

EBFM requires the Department to examine all fishing-related activities within each of the State's bioregions along with the impacts of external factors (such as climate) to determine the status of all WA's aquatic resources. These assessments not only cover the status of captured species but the status of the broader aquatic environment, including habitats, ecosystems and aquatic pests.

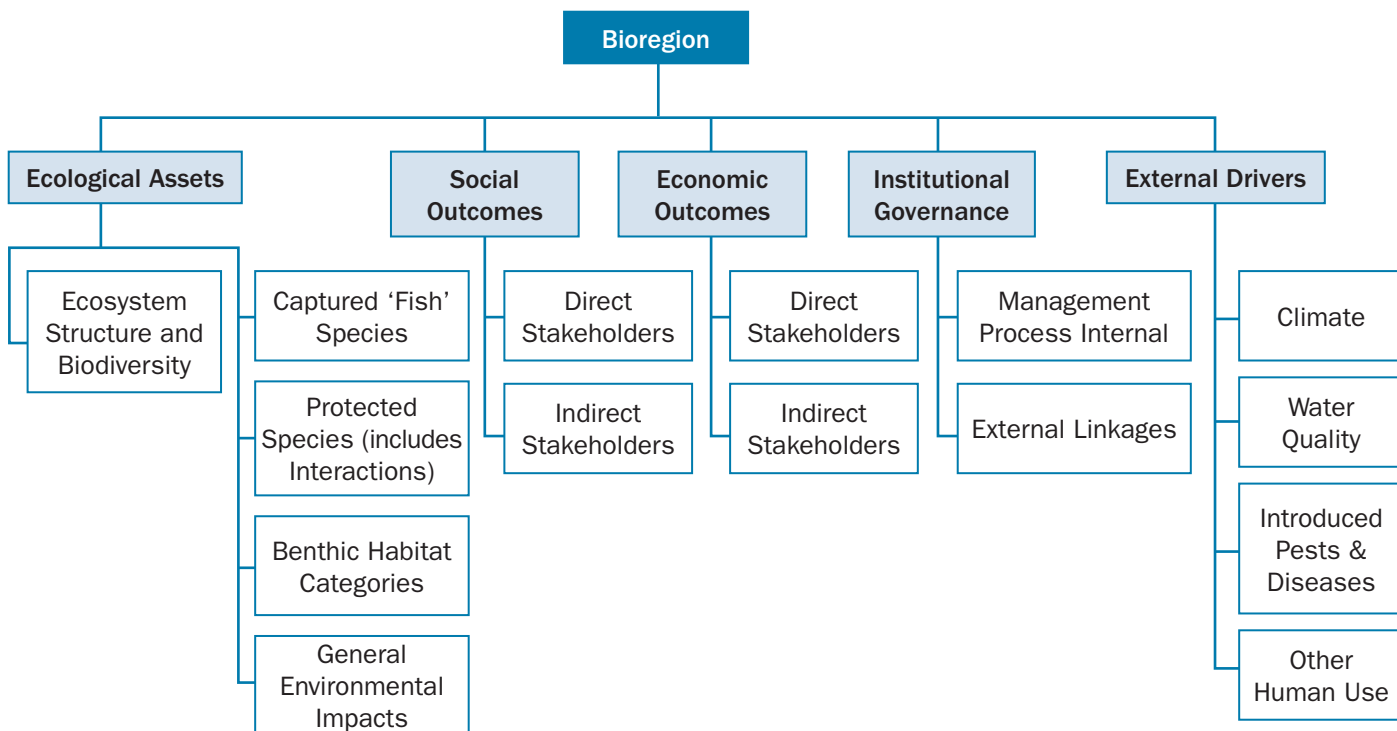
And, as the risks are collectively examined, they provide a strong basis for all future Departmental prioritisation and planning decisions.

Factors in
ecological
resources and
community
values



The EBFM framework

Each of Western Australia's bioregions has a tailored EBFM 'component-tree' in which the ecological components have been subdivided into the set of ecological resources/assets relevant to that bioregion. These ecological components are balanced against community values to help deliver better community outcomes.



Key references

Department of Fisheries (2010) A sea change for aquatic sustainability – Framework for a New Act of Parliament to replace the Fish Resources Management Act 1994. Fisheries Occasional Publication No. 79. 32pp

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