



Charter lobster announcement | Q&As

What are the new charter arrangements?

A three-year trial has been developed jointly between the WA Government, Recfishwest and the charter industry. The trial will provide for:

1. Increase in the boat limit from 24 to either 40 or 80 rock lobster, depending on maximum number of passengers allowed.
 - increased boat limit of rock lobster - from 24 to 40 lobsters, for charter boats licenced for six to 10 passengers.
 - increased boat limit of rock lobster– from 24 to 80 lobsters, for charter boats licenced for more than 10 passengers.
 - Maintain the current boat limit of 24 rock lobster for charter operators with a maximum of 5 passengers.
2. Increase in the maximum number of pots allowed to be fished from 6 to 12 pots per trip.
3. Permit rock lobster to be stored on board the charter boat within their associated boat limit.
4. Charter operators will also be permitted to pull, move, set and bait rock lobster pots outside a fishing tour being conducted in order to provide a better “lobster” experience for patrons.

Note - the individual fisher bag limit of 8 lobsters (maximum) per passenger will be maintained.

Who will be able to participate in the trial?

All charter boats who hold a Fishing Tour Operators Licences (FTOL) authorised to fish in the West Coast Zone that have conducted a rock lobster tour using pots between January 2017 and May 2019.

Note: operators do not qualify if they hold a Restricted FTOL or have only conducted dive based rock lobster tours.

The trial will also be made available to two FTOL holders operating in the West Coast Zone that have been accredited with the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program (ATAP) since 2017, as these operators have access to additional marketing opportunities and other services that will enhance the likelihood of the trial succeeding.

The existing rock lobster charter arrangements (six pots and boat limit of 24) will remain in place for charter operators not involved in the trial.

How many charter operators will be able to take advantage of the new trial arrangements?

52 operators (50 FTOL operators with pot tour history and 2 FTOL operators with ATAP accreditation).

How long will the trial go for?

The trial will be in place for three years, but may be modified during that time to ensure the arrangements are delivering the desired outcomes.

How will the Government monitor the success of the trial?

The overall effectiveness of the trial will be based on feedback from stakeholders, coupled with data relating to changes in the number of rock lobster tours and participants, rather than being focussed on a large increase in rock lobster catch.

The longer-term arrangements for the sector will be considered following the trial period and its review outcomes.

How many lobsters will be taken under the trial?

Under the new trial arrangements, it is expected that the lobster take by the charter sector will increase from about five tonnes to twenty tonnes per annum.

How will this impact on recreational fishers?

The charter trial should not impact on recreational rock lobster fishers, however the Government understands that Recfishwest and the charter industry will be working proactively to ensure that the new charter arrangements do not result in conflict between the sectors around high use areas such as Rottnest Island and inshore reef areas.

The charter catch will be accounted for as part of the recreational catch allocation for the fishery.

How will the Government ensure that the charter operators will follow the rules?

Charter operators participating in the trial will be required to provide daily trip-based information electronically in addition to paper returns, and will be required to advise the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development of trip information prior to, and at the conclusion of, a rock lobster fishing charter.

Does this trial have the support of stakeholders?

The Department has undertaken consultation on the changes in management to the charter sector with Recfishwest and the charter industry through Marine Tourism WA. Both sectors support the changes in the fishing rules. The new trial arrangements are supported by Tourism Council WA.

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