

STATEWIDE

ECOSYSTEM BASED FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Identification of Statewide Ecological Assets using the EBFM framework

While the bioregional scale of management has been adopted by the Department through the implementation of an Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) framework (see How to Use section for more details), due to their life histories or broader impacts, a small number of ecological assets cannot realistically be managed at a single bioregional level but need to be considered at either a statewide or at a multiple bioregional level.

Risk Assessment of Statewide Ecological Assets and External Drivers

The EBFM process identifies the ecological assets in a hierarchical manner such that the assets outlined Figure 5 are often made up of individual components at species or stock level. The risks to each of the individual stock or lower level components are mostly detailed in the individual fishery reports presented in this document. The following table (Statewide Ecosystem Management Table 1) provides an overview and cumulative assessment of the current risks to those ecological assets that function at a statewide level and provides a mechanism for reporting on their status and the fisheries management arrangements that are being applied. These level risks are now used by the Department as a key input into the Department's Risk Register which, combined with an assessment of the economic and social values and

risks associated with these assets, is integral for use in the annual planning cycle for assigning priorities for activities across all Divisions for Statewide Issues.

Summary of Monitoring and Assessment of Statewide Assets

The Department is working closely with the Commonwealth Government and other jurisdictions to develop and implement the National System for the Prevention and Management of Marine Pest Incursions that will minimise the biosecurity risks associated with increased shipping in all parts of the State. Within WA, this will be achieved through the Fish Resources Management Act 1994 and the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007. Associated regulations and subsidiary legislation are currently being developed. Work has also been undertaken to develop monitoring designs for introduced marine species for most of the key Ports in WA. The design has been developed in conjunction with the Invasive Marine Pests Program within DAFF (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry). This work is expected to contribute to introduced aquatic organism incursion and fish kill incident response programs already in place.

The Department of Fisheries' Research Division's Biodiversity and Biosecurity Branch recognises that the vast and remote coastline of the region dictates that remote sensing (satellite imagery and aerial photography) will be the primary tool for resource condition monitoring. The development of new Marine Parks across the State has brought an increased requirement for ecosystem resource condition monitoring in order to underpin effective management of these protected areas. Future directions of research will therefore concentrate on developing remote sensing as a monitoring tool, and developing a suite of resource condition indicators that accurately portray the health of the numerous marine and coastal environments.

STATEWIDE ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT TABLE 1 - RISK LEVELS FOR EACH ASSET.

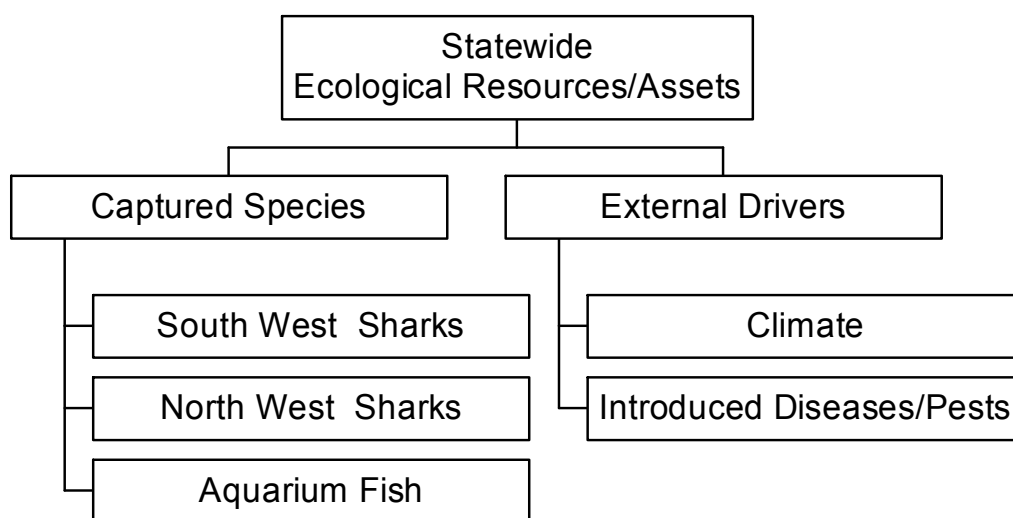
Low and Medium values are both considered to be acceptable levels of risk. High and Significant risks indicate that the asset is no longer in a condition that is considered appropriate and additional management actions are required.

Captured fish species

Fish species	Aquatic zone	Risk	Status and Current Activities
Sharks	South and lower west	MODERATE	The stock levels of most sharks in these regions are now either at acceptable levels or are deemed to be recovery at acceptable rates following management intervention.
	Mid West – North	HIGH	The stocks levels of some sharks in these regions are at unacceptable levels or have a high level of uncertainty. Some of these risks are being by fishing that is occurring outside of the direct jurisdiction of WA. The State based fisheries for these assets is currently being reviewed and no catches by these fisheries were recorded during the past season.
Aquarium Fish	Marine	LOW	The level of capture is low and the management restrictions are such that that these species are not at risk.

External Drivers (NON FISHING)

External Drivers	Risk	Status and Current Activities
Introduced Pests and Diseases	HIGH	There is a high risk that some exotic species will be introduced into the state through the increasing levels of international shipping that is occurring at ports around the country. Many of these pest species are capable of invading beyond a single bioregion.
Climate	MODERATE in short term HIGH in Medium term	The predictions for impacts of climate change affecting the Statewide ecosystems and process are moderate in the short term. The risk escalates to a higher level in the medium term.



STATEWIDE ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT FIGURE 1

Component tree showing the Statewide ecological assets and external drivers identified and separately assessed.

FISHERIES

Marine Aquarium Fish Managed Fishery Report: Statistics Only

S.J. Newman, C. Bruce, C. Syers and H. Zilles

Fishery Description

Commercial

The Marine Aquarium Fish Managed Fishery (MAF) has the capacity to target more than 250 species of finfish under the management plan. However, the number of species targeted and/or landed by the fishery varies from year to year (e.g. in the period from 2005 to 2011 the number of species landed ranged from 183 to 288). By way of a Section 43 Order and Ministerial Exemption, fishermen also take coral, live rock, algae, seagrass and invertebrates. It is primarily a dive-based fishery that uses hand-held nets to capture the desired target species that operates from boats up to 8 m in length. While the MAF operates throughout all Western Australian waters, catches are relatively low in volume due to the special handling requirements of live fish. Fishing operations are also heavily weather-dependent due to the small vessels used and the potentially hazardous conditions (e.g. waves, swell) encountered. In addition, human constraints (i.e. physiological effects of decompression) limit the amount of effort exerted in the fishery, the depth of water and the offshore extent where collections can occur.

Recreational

There is no documented recreational fishery. If members of the public wish to collect specimens for their own private aquariums they are permitted to do so, but are restricted to normal recreational bag limits and, for some species, size limits. There is a complete ban on the recreational take of coral, live rock and protected fish such as leafy and weedy seadragons.

Boundaries

The MAF operates in Western Australia's state waters spanning the coastline from the Northern Territory border in the north to the South Australian border in the south. The effort is spread over a total gazetted area of 20,781 km². During the past three years the fishery has been active in waters from Esperance to Broome with popular areas being around the Capes region, Perth, Geraldton, Exmouth and Dampier.

Management arrangements

This fishery is managed primarily through input controls in the form of limited entry to the fishery and permanent closed areas. There are 12 licences in the fishery following the cancellation of 1 licence in 2009 in response to the expansion of the Ningaloo marine reserve. In 2011, 10 licences operated in the fishery.

Licencees are not permitted to operate within any waters closed to fishing (e.g. Rowley Shoals, Reef Protected Areas, sanctuary zones). The fishery is permitted to operate in general-purpose zones of marine parks for the collection of fish and some invertebrates (usually excluding coral and live rock). Fishing is also prohibited on Cleaverville Reef in order to exclude the take of coral and associated organisms.

Fish caught in this fishery may not be used for food purposes, and operators are not permitted to take species covered by other specific commercial management arrangements or management plans.

The MAF is permitted to take most species from the Syngnathid family (seahorses and pipefish), which are listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. However, there is a total ban on the take of leafy seadragons (*Phycodurus eques*). If the current ESD trigger value of 2,000 individual syngnathids is reached, a review will be initiated, and the results used to determine whether further management action is required.

Landings and Effort

Data for assessing the status of the MAF are derived from the catch and effort returns provided by industry. These data are compiled annually and used as the basis for this assessment. In 2011, only 96% of the catch returns were available for the MAF (4% of returns were outstanding) and as such, this report is based only on these submitted returns.

A total of over 19,776 fish were landed in 2011. Collectors in this ornamental fishery can earn a high return from the capture of very small quantities of individuals. Therefore, the catches are small in comparison to the more common, food-fish fisheries. Fishers report the level of catch as either - kg, numbers or litres depending upon the species or species group involved (Marine Aquarium Fish Table 1). The reported landings of aquarium fish for 2011 were higher than those reported in 2009, but lower than those reported in 2010. The syngnathid catch was low and stable between 2009 and 2010 (i.e. 340 and 338 respectively). However, the syngnathid catches in 2011 have increased to catch levels similar to those reported in 2008 (i.e. 1,218 (2008) and 1,138 (2011)).

Effort in the fishery has decreased from 981 (2007) and 932 (2008) fishing days to 639 fishing days in 2009, 533 fishing days in 2010 and 502 fishing days in 2011, with 10 licences reporting some level of activity (Note: the 2011 effort data is complete). Effort in the fishery is concentrated in a number of discrete areas adjacent to the limited number of boat landing sites along the Western Australian coastline.

The level of effort in the MAF includes the effort of both MAF licencees and also those fishers that hold an exemption authorisation to collect land hermit crabs, *Coenobita variabilis*. In 2011, of the 5 land hermit crab exemption holders, 4 collectors reported some level of activity.

Given that the specimens are collected for a live market, licences are restricted in terms of the quantities that they can safely handle and transport (for example, by boat to shore, by vehicle to the holding facility and then on to the retailer) without impacting on the quality of the product. The size of the holding facility and access to regular freight and

infrastructure services (such as airports, particularly in the remote northern locations of WA) restricts the levels of effort that can be expended in the fishery at any given time.

The performance measures for the fishery relate to the catch of the syngnathids. The MAF is permitted to take species from the syngnathid family (seahorses and pipefish), which are listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, from state waters only (within 3nm). In 2011, the catch of syngnathids was 1138. The catch level of syngnathids has significantly increased from 2009 and 2010 levels (340 and 338, respectively). The catches of syngnathids have returned to catch levels similar to those reported in 2008 (1,218). (Note, that there is a prohibition on the take of leafy seadragons (Phycodurus eques) in the MAF.

Fishery Governance

Target commercial catch range:

2000 Syngnathids

Current Fishing (or Effort) Level: Acceptable

The current effort level in the fishery is relatively constant from year to year and the operating extent of the fishery is very low relative to the widespread distribution of the numerous species targeted. No other fisheries exploit these species and therefore there is extremely limited potential for any impact on breeding stocks. Therefore the current level of fishing activity is considered acceptable.

New management initiatives (2011/12)

In August 2011 an application for reassessment of the MAF as ecologically sustainable under the provisions of the EPBC Act 1999 was submitted to SEWPaC. This application was unsuccessful and the Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) for the MAF expired on 24 October 2011, meaning any species taken in the fishery after this date is no longer able to be exported. The application for reassessment was unsuccessful due to the increased assessment and reporting requirements for the take of species listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The Department of Fisheries will be working with MAF licence holders and SEWPaC on requirements to gain a new WTO approval for the fishery in 2012-13.

MARINE AQUARIUM FISH TABLE 1

Summary of the reported catch landed from the Marine Aquarium Managed Fishery and associated endorsements in 2011.

Common Name	Quantity (numbers)	Weight (kg)	Litres (l)
Fish	19,776		
Syngnathidae (not included in Fish)	1,138		
Hermit crabs (land hermit crabs only - <i>Coenobita variabilis</i>) ¹	75,667		
Invertebrates	24,455		
Algae			147
Hard coral		4,082.55	
Soft coral ²		4,247.60	
Living rock		13,559	
Sponges	2,444		

¹ This total includes both MAF licensees and also those fishers that hold an exemption authorisation to collect land hermit crabs - *Coenobita variabilis*.

² The soft coral category includes 3,945kg of coral like anemone groups such as corallimorphs and zooanthids in the Class Anthozoa. These are harvested under an invertebrate Ministerial Exemption and are not part of the annual coral TAC.

Specimen Shell Managed Fishery Status Report

A. Hart, C. Bruce, C. Syers and H. Zilles

Main Features			
Status		Current Landings	
Stock level	Adequate	Specimen Shell Catch Total	
Fishing level	Acceptable	Shell numbers	14,874 shells

Fishery Description

The Specimen Shell Managed Fishery (SSF) is based on the collection of individual shells for the purposes of display, collection, cataloguing, classification and sale.

More than 200 different shellfish species are collected by using a variety of methods. The main methods are by hand by a small group of divers operating from small boats in shallow coastal waters or by wading along coastal beaches below the high water mark. A new Exemption method being employed by the fishery is using a remote controlled underwater vehicle at depths between 60 and 300 m. While the fishery covers the entire Western Australian coastline, there is some concentration of effort in areas adjacent to population centres such as Broome, Karratha, Exmouth, Carnarvon, metropolitan Perth, Mandurah, the Capes area and Albany.

Governing legislation/fishing authority

Specimen Shell Management Plan 1995

Specimen Shell Managed Fishery Licence

Commonwealth Government *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Export Exemption)

Consultation process

The Department undertakes consultation directly with licensees on operational issues. Industry Annual General Meetings are convened by the West Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), who are also responsible for statutory management plan consultation under a Service Level Agreement with the Department.

Boundaries

The fishing area includes all Western Australian waters between the high water mark and the 200 m isobath.

Management arrangements

This fishery is managed through input controls in the form of limited entry, gear restrictions and permanent closed areas. The primary controls in the fishery are operational limitations – depth, time and tide.

This is a limited entry fishery with 32 licences in the fishery, with 19 of the licences being active. Furthermore, a maximum of 2 divers are allowed in the water per license at any one time and specimens may only be collected by hand.

There are a number of closed areas where the SSF is not permitted to operate. This includes within various marine parks and aquatic reserves and other closed waters such as Reef Observation Areas and Fish Habitat Protection Areas. Much of the west side of North-West Cape and the Ningaloo Marine Park are prohibited areas for the fishery. The exclusion of Marmion Marine Park in the Perth metropolitan area is also important because of its populations of 2 rare cowrie species.

The SSF is not permitted to take any mollusc species for which separate management arrangements exist – such as abalone, mussels, scallops and pearl oysters.

A comprehensive Ecologically Sustainable Development assessment of this fishery has been undertaken to identify any potential sustainability risks requiring direct management. The only issue identified through this process related to the breeding stock levels of specimen shell species. Boxed text in this status report provides the annual assessment of performance for this issue.

Some minor-scale collection of dead shells is also undertaken above the high water mark by collectors operating under the authority of a commercial fishing licence, mainly for sale into the souvenir, pet supply and hobby craft markets. However, this activity does not form part of the Specimen Shell Managed Fishery.

Research summary

Current fishery-dependent data collection systems monitor the catch (species-specific), effort and catch rates for the fishery. Fishers within the SSF provide monthly returns under the statutory catch and effort system (CAES). These returns contain information on catch (species, numbers and spatial area), and days and hours fished by month and year.

In August 2004, fishers commenced reporting using 10 x 10 nautical mile (nm) grids rather than 60 x 60 nm grids, providing a finer spatial scale to the data collected. At the same time, they began collecting additional information on sightings of the 8 mollusc species identified as potentially 'vulnerable.' These data are used as the basis to provide research advice for fisheries management.

Retained Species

Commercial landings (season 2011):

14,874 shells

Recreational catch estimate (season 2011):**Unknown****Commercial Landings**

In 2011, the total number of specimen shells collected was 14,874 distributed over a wide range of species. This is based on 98% of submitted catch returns. In the past 5 years, more than 496 separate species of molluscs have been collected, with an average of more than 200 species per year – the majority in low numbers.

There is some focus of effort on mollusc families most popular with shell collectors, such as cowries, cones, murexes and volutes. For example, *Cypraea venusta*, *C. marginata* and *C. friendii* (including identified sub-species) make up approximately 18% of those collected in 2008, 31% of those collected in 2009, 16% of those collected in both 2010 and 2011. Cypraeidae or cowries are noted for their localised variations in both shape and colour, making them attractive to collectors.

Fishing effort/access level

Although there are 32 licences in the fishery, only about 11 of these are regularly active. Effort has been stable over the past 5 years, at an average of around 1,012 days fished. In 2011, 932 days were fished (Note: the 2011 effort data is incomplete).

Recreational component:**Not assessed**

Shell collecting is a popular recreational pastime, and members of the public are permitted to collect shells for their private collections. The recreational catch, while unknown, is considered to be declining, as evidenced by declining membership in shell collecting associations.

Stock Assessment**Assessment complete:****Yes****Breeding stock levels:****Adequate**

During the 2010 season the catch rate was approximately 16 shells per day.

Ponder and Grayson (1998) examined the specimen shell industry on a nationwide basis, rating vulnerability to over-exploitation on the basis of species biology, accessibility to collection, and rarity. Species collected in Western Australia which were identified by Ponder and Grayson as potentially vulnerable comprised of 6 cowries (*Cypraea* (*Austrocypraea*) *reevei*, *Cypraea* (*Zoila*) *friendii* *vercoi*, *Cypraea* (*Zoila*) *marginata* (*albanyensis*), *Cypraea* (*Zoila*) *marginata* (*consueta*), *Cypraea* (*Zoila*) *rosselli* and *Cypraea* (*Zoila*) *venusta*) and 2 volutes (*Amoria* *damoni* (*keatsiana*) and *Amoria* *damoni* (*reevei*)).

'Shell sighting' is a new abundance category. It is a measure of the population of vulnerable shells that is observed but not taken, and provides evidence for the breeding stock being conserved each year. Of the 8 vulnerable species (including related sub-species), an overall average of approximately 77% in 2008, 61% in 2009, 60% in 2010 and 55% in 2011 of the shells sighted were not harvested. The measure of the number of shells sighted is reported correctly in about 71% of

the cases where one of the vulnerable species is reported. The figures for 'sighted' versus 'taken' of vulnerable shells is continually improving by licensees, which is demonstrated by the increase in the percentage of the number of vulnerable shells sighted from 22% in 2009 to 71% in 2011. It is anticipated that current sightings are an under estimate of the available populations.

The reporting of catch and effort on the finer spatial scale of 10 x 10 nm blocks from August 2004 is also providing more accurate information on the distribution of certain species. Again, the 2011 season has seen a wider adoption by licensees of the smaller spatial resolution grid blocks rather than reporting the 60 x 60 nm blocks.

All species collected in Western Australia, including the 8 prized species, occur over wide geographic ranges (hundreds or thousands of kilometres) and wide depth ranges (up to 200 m) where a substantial portion of the population cannot for logistical and safety reasons be collected. However, with the introduction of the remote controlled underwater vehicles these depth restrictions are starting to be overcome.

Even in shallow waters, many localities cannot be fished because of the lack of access to the beach and the small boats used, and collecting is prohibited in many of the more easily reached areas which are now in marine parks and reserves. Additional protection is afforded by the fact that collectors will ignore any specimens with slight visual imperfections, but their reproductive potential in the population remains undiminished. In summary, it is considered that the fishery has very little likelihood of having an unacceptable impact on breeding stocks.

The performance measures for the fishery relate to the maintenance of breeding stocks, as indicated by catch levels and catch rates. In 2011, the catch level of approximately 14,874 shells and catch rate of 16 shells/day are both within the ranges set, i.e. 10,000 – 25,000 shells and 10 – 40 shells/day.

Non-Retained Species**Bycatch species impact:****Negligible**

There is no bycatch in this fishery owing to the highly selective fishing methods.

Protected species interaction:**Negligible**

The fishery reported no interactions with protected species during 2011. Reports of interactions with protected species are required to be recorded on monthly catch and effort returns.

Ecosystem Effects**Food chain effects:****Negligible****Habitat effects:****Negligible**

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Social Effects

In 2011 there was 32 authorisation holders in this fishery with around 11 licences recording consistent activity, the number of people employed regularly in the fishery (licensees plus crew/ dive buddies) is likely to be around 23. There was also around 10 people (licensees plus crew/dive buddies) that operated occasionally in this fishery. With many of the licences there might be the additional employment of people to prepare the shells for collection, pack and distribute the shells and also, some licensees might have shop fronts, therefore, employing shop assistants. The number employed in this area is unknown.

Economic Effects

Estimated annual value (to fishers) for 2011:

Not assessed

Fishery Governance

Target catch range: 10,000 – 25,000 shells

A preliminary performance measure has been developed of a total annual catch range from 10,000 to 25,000 shells, which encompasses the range of catches taken from 2000 to 2003. This performance measure has been developed to ensure that

any major change in the patterns of fishing is noticed and investigated. If it is triggered, this may not necessarily indicate any problem with the stocks, but rather fluctuations in the natural environment or market dynamics.

New management initiatives (2011/12)

A recent amendment to the Specimen Shell Management Plan strengthened the clause pertaining to the taking and selling of specimen shells to improve the ability of the Department of Fisheries to successfully prosecute cases of black market sale, purchase and dealing of shell.

A Ministerial Exemption was granted on 26 March 2009, which permits the use of up to 2 fishing boats of any size (provided that the boats are not used simultaneously), the use of up to 2 nominated divers who are not nominated on the Managed Fishery Licence (provided no more than 2 people are in the water at any one time), collection of dead shells of non-commercial abalone species and specimen shells of the genus Pecten. This Exemption is in place while management plan amendments are progressed.

An Exemption has been granted for two licensees to trial the use of a remote operated underwater vehicle to collect shells in water depths of 60 to 300 metres.