

## A uniquely Western Australian initiative

Integrated Fisheries Management (IFM) is a new initiative aimed at preserving Western Australia's fisheries for future generations.

It is a uniquely Western Australian fisheries management initiative, aimed at addressing the issue of how fish resources can be best shared between competing users within the broad context of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD).

While the concept of IFM may seem complex, it is essentially based on scientists specifying how much of a fish stock can be taken sustainably, and then determining how that should be divided between all the users.

The formal IFM process involves:

- setting the total sustainable harvest level of each resource that allows for an ecologically sustainable level of fishing;
- allocation of explicit catch shares for use by commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishers;
- continual monitoring of each sector's harvested catch;
- managing each sector within its allocated catch share; and
- developing mechanisms to enable the reallocation of catch shares between sectors.

As the community's use of fish resources changes, "reallocation mechanisms" will be introduced to enable changes in catch allocation to take place over time.

## Western Rock Lobster Draft Allocation Paper released

The Western Rock Lobster Draft Allocation Paper – the first of its kind under the IFM process – is hot off the press.

It was released in October for a four-month public comment period. All user groups, including Indigenous, recreational (including charter boats) and commercial fishers are encouraged to have their say by making a submission before the end of February 2006.

The Integrated Fisheries Allocation Advisory Committee (IFAAC) developed the draft allocation report.

The draft report contains the IFAAC's recommendations on how the western rock lobster resource should be shared among the key user groups.

The recommendations were developed following industry submissions and release of the Department of Fisheries' Integrated Fisheries Management Western Rock Lobster Resource Report. This report provided information about sustainable harvest levels, current management practices within the fishery and other relevant data, such as regional employment, economic and social/lifestyle issues.

The IFAAC recommended an overall allocation of 4.9 per cent to the recreational sector and 95.1 per cent to the commercial sector, which should be divided between two regions (southern and northern).

The southern region includes the area of water between Augusta and Leeman (Zone C of the commercial fishery) and the northern region, which includes the area of water between Leeman and North West Cape (Zones A and B of the commercial fishery).

The IFAAC recommended that the allocation for the southern region should be 7.5 per cent for recreational fishers and 92.5 per cent for commercial fishers, and for the northern region 0.9 per cent for recreational fishers and 99.1 per cent for commercial fishers.

An allocation of one tonne has been recommended for customary fishers.

Once public submissions are received, the IFAAC will make its final recommendations to the Minister on how the western rock lobster resource should be allocated between the sectors. The Minister will then consider the recommendations and determine the final allocations.

The paper is available on the Department's website at [www.fish.wa.gov.au/sec/man/ifm](http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/sec/man/ifm). Copies are also available from the Department of Fisheries by contacting (08) 9482 7333 or via email [ifaac@fish.wa.gov.au](mailto:ifaac@fish.wa.gov.au).

## Where to from here?...key dates

IFAAC will be busy until the close of the submission period gathering public comment on the draft allocation paper for western rock lobster and investigating allocations for abalone. The Minister is expected to make a determination on allocations for these resources in 2006.



## Next: IFM for abalone

The formal IFM process for abalone has begun with the release of the IFM Resource Report for Abalone (Fisheries Management Paper No. 204).

Abalone is a highly valued species among recreational and commercial fishers. It is important that a sustainable harvest level is set so the community can enjoy social and economic benefits of the resource well into the future.

The report states that the sustainable harvest level for Roes abalone in the metropolitan area is between 73 and 83 tonnes.

The Minister has determined that the IFAAC should focus on providing him with advice on proportional allocations for abalone in the Perth Metropolitan area.

IFAAC will now meet with industry groups to gather information on which they will base their draft Abalone Allocation Paper. The allocation paper is planned to be released for three months public comment early 2006.

The abalone sector will follow the same process as western rock lobster.

## West Coast Demersal Scalefish Fishery

After western rock lobster and abalone, the west coast demersal scalefish will be the next fish resource to be brought into the IFM framework. Information-gathering is underway to assist in the preparation of a draft IFM resource report for this fishery.

Major 12-month recreational boat-based creel surveys began in July 2005, run by the Statistical and Data Analysis group at the Western Australian Fisheries and Marine Research Laboratories.

Over 500 interviews have already been conducted by 13 interviewers at boat ramps between Kalbarri and Augusta and a telephone survey of boat licence holders is underway. The owners of 500 boats have been sent diaries to record their fishing effort and catch on the west coast, and experienced interviewers will call the diary holders each month for a year to collect their information.

The surveys will be combined with other data on West Coast Demersal Scalefish and from sources such as commercial log books from the wetline fleet and the Demersal Gillnet and Longline fishery, the current dhufish research project and charter boat log books.

From the combined data, researchers can establish the size of the recreational catch of important west coast demersal fish such as dhufish, pink snapper, baldchin groper, breaksea cod and several inshore species.

The boat ramp survey replicates a survey carried out in 1997. A comparison of data from the two surveys will show trends useful in determining sustainable catches.

Data from the surveys will allow estimates of the recreational catch of the major species for the entire West Coast Bioregion and the Perth metropolitan zone.

The IFM resource report for the West Coast Demersal Scalefish fishery will be completed by the end of 2006 following the completion of recreational creel surveys. This fishery incorporates species such as dhufish, pink snapper and baldchin groper.

## More information

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