



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

MODIFIED RECREATIONAL FISHING ARRANGEMENTS

Background

In September 2009, the Minister for Fisheries announced modified arrangements for recreational fishing management in Western Australia.

The main elements of the new arrangements are as follows:

- A mixed bag limit of two “high risk” demersal scalefish species, of which only one may be a dhufish, will apply in the West Coast Bioregion (Kalbarri to Augusta);
- A boat limit of two dhufish will apply in the West Coast Bioregion (six for charter boats);
- No West Coast Demersal Scalefish Licence will be introduced;
- A “release weight” will be required when fishing from a boat in the West Coast Bioregion;
- A two-month seasonal closure (for boat *and* shore fishing) on the take of “high risk” demersal scalefish by recreational fishers in the West Coast Bioregion (between Kalbarri and Augusta) will apply from 15 October to 15 December inclusive;
- Fish in the current “high risk” group will be divided into two new categories: **demersal scalefish** and **pelagic species**. Some species, such as Australian salmon and freshwater trout, will be moved to the “medium risk” category at their current bag limits. A full list of the medium and lower risk species will be available on the Department’s website;
- A mixed bag limit of two “high risk” pelagic species will apply in the West Coast Bioregion. This bag limit will be in addition to the bag limit for “high risk” demersal species;
- The boat limits introduced earlier this year for “high risk” species will be replaced by the bag limits for “high risk” demersal scalefish and pelagic species (that is, a licensed fisher may take two demersal scalefish (of which only **one** may be a dhufish) and two pelagic species per day);
- Reduced bag limits will apply for “lower risk” species (from 40 to 30) and “medium risk” species (from 16 to 12) on the west coast. “Lower risk” species include herring, sand whiting and garfish. “Medium risk” species include tailor, skippy and King George whiting;
- A state-wide Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence (RFBL) will be introduced with an annual fee of \$30;
- The Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence will only be required for fishing conducted from a registered boat. Fishing from kayaks or other boats that are not required to be registered under the *WA Marine Act 1982*, will *not* need a licence;
- Any fisher not holding a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence will be allowed to fish from a boat in the company of a licensed boat fisher within the licensed fisher’s bag limit;
- Charter boat passengers not holding a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence will be required to pay a fee of \$15 per trip for a Charter Boat Fishing Licence;

- The recreational ‘umbrella’ licence will be replaced with individual licences to allow more comprehensive monitoring of recreational fishing activities and fisheries in WA;
- Fees for existing recreational fishing licences will be made uniform at \$40 with a 10 per cent discount when more than one licence is purchased at the same time;
- A 50 per cent discount will be offered for seniors, pensioners and children under 16 years of age;
- All funds raised from the sale of recreational fishing licences will be placed in the Recreational Fishing Trust Account and spent on the management of recreational fishing;
- A voluntary logbook system will be introduced to provide additional information on recreational catch and participation; and
- Another \$2 million in new funding will be provided annually for an additional 13 Fisheries and Marine Officers to support education and compliance of the new recreational fishing arrangements.

FAQs

When will the changes take effect?

The two-month closure to the take of “high risk” demersal scalefish and the reduced bag limits for “lower” and “medium” risk fish on the west coast will start on **15 October 2009**.

Changes to the groupings of “high risk” fish and new bag limits for “high risk” demersal and pelagic fish will begin on 16 December (after the closure ends). The new boat limits for dhufish and the shift of some species to the “medium” risk category will also begin on 16 December.

A full list of the medium and lower risk species will be available on the Department’s website and at fishforthefuture.com.au.

The introduction of the Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence and other licensing changes will commence in early **March 2010**. The current licences and fee structure will remain in place until that time.

General licensing issues

What happens to any Recreational Fishing Licences that I bought or renewed prior to the licensing changes taking effect?

Existing licences will continue to be valid until the expiry date on the licence.

What are the costs of the various licences?

All licences, except the new Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence, will cost \$40 a year. A Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence will cost \$30 a year. A 10 per cent discount will apply when more than one licence is purchased at the same time. The current 50 per cent discount concession for seniors, pensioners and children under 16 will continue to apply.

What if I want to go on a charter fishing trip and I don't have a boat fishing licence?

For fishing tours, a trip-based Charter Boat Fishing Licence applies to any person not holding a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence. The cost of the Charter Boat Fishing Licence is \$15 per trip.

Who is eligible to receive the 50 per cent discount in licence fees?

The 50 per cent discount concession on all licence fees will apply for pensioners, Seniors Card holders and children under 16.

What is the difference in licence fees from March 2010?

The new fee structure for each licensed recreational fishing category will come into effect in March 2010 and is listed in the table below.

Licence Activity	Current fee (until March 2010)		NEW fee (from March 2010)	
	Standard	Concession	Standard	Concession
Rock Lobster	\$38	\$19	\$40	\$20
Abalone	\$44	\$22	\$40	\$20
Marron	\$26	\$13	\$40	\$20
SW Freshwater	\$26	\$13	\$40	\$20
Net Fishing	\$31	\$15.50	\$40	\$20
Recreational Boat Fishing	N/A	N/A	\$30	\$15
Charter Boat Fishing (Not required if fisher already holds a current RBFL)	N/A	N/A	\$15	\$15

Multiple licences purchased at the same time will attract a 10 per cent discount.

For example: Rock Lobster Licence + Abalone Licence + Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence = \$40 + \$40 + \$30 = \$110 – 10% = \$99

How can I obtain a licence?

All licences will be available for purchase online on the Department of Fisheries' website (www.fish.wa.gov.au) or from Department of Fisheries' offices and from Australia Post outlets. Renewing or applying for a new fishing licence online will assist in reducing management costs which will benefit the recreational fishing community.

The Department is also proposing arrangements for charter boats, tackle shops and other retail outlets to be able to issue licences.

Can I give my recreational fishing licence to somebody else to use?

Recreational fishing licences are not transferable. Only the person issued with a recreational fishing licence is authorised to participate in the activities listed on that licence. However, if you hold a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence you may allow an accompanying unlicensed fisher to undertake boat fishing activities (see below) within your bag limit.

Do children and pensioners need a recreational fishing licence?

Anyone engaged in a recreational fishing activity for which a licence is required must hold the relevant licence. The fee for children under 16, seniors and pensioners is discounted to 50 per cent of the usual fee.

A person holding a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence may allow accompanying unlicensed fishers of any age to undertake boat fishing activities within the licensed fisher's bag limit.

Fishing by Aboriginal people

Under the *Fish Resource Management Act 1994*, Aboriginal people are not required to hold a recreational fishing licence provided they are fishing in accordance with continuing Aboriginal tradition. The 'customary' take of fish by Aboriginal people is not regarded as recreational fishing.

How will the revenue from recreational licences be used?

The money will be held in a trust account for the specific use of recreational fishing management. The new licensing system is estimated to generate an additional \$1.9m to bring the total estimated annual licensing revenue to \$4.9 million. Combined, the estimated annual recreational licence revenue of \$4.9 million along with the additional Government funding contribution of \$2 million per year, will be allocated to additional fisheries compliance and community education (\$2.8m), research (\$3 million), management (\$0.6 million) and licensing (\$0.5 million).

Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence

What activities does a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence apply to?

A Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence will be required for any fishing activity conducted with the use of a boat. This will include:

- Line fishing (handline, rod and line, squid jigging)
- Catching crabs

- Spearfishing
- Octopus trapping
- Dip-netting for prawns
- Any activity where fish, crabs or shellfish are taken where a boat is used to reach the fishing location.

NOTE: A Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence will NOT be required where an existing licensed fishing activity (such as rock lobster or abalone fishing) is carried out with the aid of a boat, providing that the only type of fishing undertaken on that trip is within the scope of the licence.

EXAMPLE: A recreational rock lobster fisher setting or pulling rock lobster pots would not require a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence if that is the only activity undertaken. If the rock lobster fisher also fishes by line on the same trip, a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence would be required to cover the line fishing activity.

Can I fish off any boat if I hold a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence?

Yes. A Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence entitles the holder to fish off any recreational or charter boat.

Do all passengers on board a boat on a fishing trip require a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence (RFBL)?

No. Providing the take of fish by all persons on that boat does not exceed the total bag limits of the number of fishers holding a RFBL – and the boat limit for dhufish is not exceeded – not everyone fishing on board requires the RFBL.

Will I need a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence to fish from a kayak?

No. A Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence is only needed when fishing from a vessel required to be registered under the *WA Marine Act 1982*. Anyone fishing from a kayak or a dinghy without a motor will not require a RFBL.

Is a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence required to fish from a boat in rivers, estuaries and lakes?

Yes. A Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence will be required to fish from a registered vessel in all waters including rivers, estuaries and lakes - unless you are fishing exclusively under an existing recreational fishing licence such as a South West Freshwater Angling Licence.

Do I require a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence to fish from the shore of an island, such as Rottnest Island for example?

You do *not* require a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence to fish from the shore of an island. However, you will require a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence if you use a registered vessel to support your fishing activity (if you transport recreationally-caught fish off an island by boat, for example). Passengers travelling on commercial ferry services or barges on normal public transit routes will not be required to hold a Recreational Fishing Boat Licence.

West Coast Demersal Scalefish recreational closure

When does the seasonal closure for the take of recreational demersal scalefish apply?

Commencing in 2009, the season closure will apply to the West Coast Bioregion (between Kalbarri and Augusta), from 15 October to 15 December, inclusive.

How will the closure be enforced?

During the two-month closure, it will be an offence to take, land or be in possession of demersal scalefish taken from the waters of the West Coast Bioregion. It will not be an offence to store on land demersal scalefish taken outside of the closed period (for example: frozen dhufish or pink snapper).

What area does the West Coast Bioregion cover?

The region extends approximately from Kalbarri to Augusta. Further details are available at fishforthefuture.com.au.

What if I catch a demersal scalefish (see the list below) anywhere in the West Coast Bioregion during the demersal scalefish recreational closure?

You are **not** permitted to retain a demersal scalefish caught during the closed season and you must release it immediately. Boat fishers must carry an appropriate *release weight* device on board, which is recommended to reduce the effects of barotrauma and maximize the fish's chance of survival upon release.

What is barotrauma?

Barotrauma refers to the sudden inflation of a fish's swim bladder from expansion of gases in its body as it is pulled to the surface. This decrease in pressure particularly affects demersal, or *bottom-dwelling*, species such as dhufish, pink snapper and baldchin groper, which are susceptible to the effects of barotrauma.

The most obvious symptoms of barotrauma include a bloated stomach, bulging or 'popped' eyes, and the stomach forced out through the mouth or gills. Even if released quickly, fish suffering from barotrauma may not be able to return to the bottom if their swim bladder remains inflated. A release weight is designed to assist their return to the sea bed and increase the survival rate of released fish.

Can I bring demersal scalefish taken in other regions (such as Shark Bay pink snapper) into the West Coast Bioregion during the two-month demersal scalefish closure?

Demersal scalefish taken outside of the West Coast Bioregion may only be transported by **land** or **air** into the West Coast Bioregion during the two-month closure. You cannot transport or be in possession of demersal scalefish in the waters of the West Coast Bioregion during the closure.

Can commercial fishers fish during the recreational closure?

Yes. The commercial sector is already being managed through other restrictions to its catch target. These commercial restrictions include annual limits on the amount of time that boats can fish and a prohibition on fishing for demersal scalefish in the metropolitan area.

Can a person fish for non-demersal scalefish species in the West Coast Bioregion during the closure?

Yes. Fishing for species such as whiting, herring, tailor, skippy and samson fish that are not on the West Coast Demersal Scalefish list will be permitted.

List of demersal scalefish species to which the West Coast Demersal Scalefish closure applies:

SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Coral trout and coronation trout	<i>Plectropomus</i> spp. and <i>Variola louti</i>
Cods	Families Serranidae
Western Australian dhufish	<i>Glaucosoma hebraicum</i>
Emperors (including nor'west snapper)	Family Lethrinidae
Baldchin groper and tuskfish	<i>Choerodon</i> spp.
Western blue groper	<i>Achoerodus gouldii</i>
Hapuku/bass groper/blue-eye trevalla and grey banded rock cod	Family Centrolophidae, <i>Polyprion</i> spp. and <i>Epinephelus octofasciatus</i>
Parrotfish	Family Scaridae
Pink snapper	<i>Pagrus auratus</i>
Blue morwong (queen snapper)	<i>Nemadactylus valenciennesi</i>
Red snapper (redfish) - bight redfish, yelloweye redfish, nannygai and swallowtail, etc.	<i>Centroberyx</i> spp.
Tropical snappers – mangrove jack, red emperor, fingermark, job fish, stripey sea perch, etc.	Family Lutjanidae
Foxfish and Pigfish	<i>Bodianus</i> spp.

Will charter boats be allowed to operate during the closure period?

Charter boats will not be permitted to fish for demersal scalefish during the closure period, but operators *are* permitted to conduct other fishing activities.

Other

What other management changes are due to take place?

Bag limits for many nearshore species on the West Coast will be reduced from 40 to 30 and from 16 to 12 for the “Lower” and “Medium” risk species, respectively from 15 October 2009.

Medium risk species include tailor, skippy and King George whiting. Lower risk species include herring, sand whiting and garfish. The slot limit size for tailor will also be reduced to 50cm from 15 October 2009.

Some species such as Australian salmon and freshwater trout will be moved from the “high risk” category to the “medium risk” category at their current bag limits from 16 December 2009.

Is there going to be a review of the new arrangements?

Yes. A review will be completed 12 months after implementation, which may result in further changes. The Department’s monitoring of all WA fisheries is ongoing.

From what year is the ‘benchmark’ taken for the 50 per cent catch reduction target for demersal scalefish in the West Coast Bioregion?

Research indicates that the total catch of demersal scalefish in the West Coast Bioregion needs to be reduced by at least 50 per cent from 2005/06 levels.

Is the commercial catch of demersal scalefish in the West Coast Bioregion also being reduced by 50 per cent?

Yes. New management arrangements have already resulted in a 50 per cent reduction in the commercial take of demersal scalefish in the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Fishery from 2005/06 levels. In addition, commercial fishers targeting West Coast Demersal Scalefish are NOT permitted to operate in the waters covering over 200 km of coastline between Lancelin and south of Mandurah.

What proportion of demersal scalefish taken by commercial fishers in the West Coast Bioregion is exported?

Demersal scalefish taken by licensed commercial fishers in the West Coast Bioregion are almost exclusively sold on the local domestic market.

Can the holder of a Commercial Fishing Licence (CFL) take out a Recreational Fishing Licence?

A CFL holder is currently only permitted to take out a Recreational Marron Fishing Licence or a South West Freshwater Angling Licence. However, the Department of Fisheries is looking into expanding the Recreational Fishing Licence categories that CFL holders may carry. CFL holders will be notified of changes as they occur.

For further enquiries, contact the Department of Fisheries on 1800 726 586 or visit fishforthefuture.com.au.



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