

Mussel Aquaculture

MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Fisheries WA manages mussel farming in Cockburn Sound following an agreement reached between the Minister for Fisheries and the Fremantle Port Authority in 1997/98. Tenure for the existing farming sites at the Kwinana Grain Terminal is due to expire in December 1999. As a result, Fisheries WA in liaison with industry has identified an alternative site at Southern Flats within Cockburn Sound. The suitability of the site has been assessed through a comprehensive consultation process involving a wide range of stakeholders. Subject to final approvals, relocation of mussel farming activities is expected to be completed by the end of 1999.

During 1998/99, the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) approved the export status of three shellfish-growing areas in Western Australia in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Western Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Program.

Industry Status Report

Main Features

Production current season (1997/98):
659 tonnes

Number of producers for year 1997/98:
14

Estimated annual value (to producers) for year 1997/98:
\$1,750,000

Production projection next year (1998/99):
800 tonnes

Production areas

Mussel farms are found in Cockburn Sound, Warnbro Sound, Oyster Harbour, Princess Royal Harbour and King George Sound. Resource-sharing issues are a major constraint to access to lease sites in protected and productive areas. Additional lease area is being negotiated in the Southern Flats area of Cockburn Sound to give the Cockburn Sound mussel farmers more access to productive areas.

Annual Production

Production method(s)

Vertical rope and bag culture on longlines.

Production trends for year 1998/99

Increasing.

General Comments

Production levels for this species are related to dissolved nutrient levels which provide the basis for phytoplankton, the main food of mussels. Productive areas are therefore generally protected waters where nutrients from terrestrial sources raise the food levels above those in coastal waters dominated by the low-nutrient, tropical Leeuwin Current. A study reviewing the data on phytoplankton levels around the WA coastline, completed in 1997/98 by CSIRO and Curtin University in collaboration with Fisheries WA, will facilitate better planning for bivalve culture.

Marron Aquaculture

MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Changes made in 1995 to the regulations governing marron cultivation have resulted in more small farmers contributing to industry production. There have also been improvements in the production reporting system, which has resulted in a more realistic production report. During 1998/99, the marron regulations were further reviewed with the aim of simplifying the licensing framework.

COMPLIANCE AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION OVERVIEW

Aquaculture Development Officers and Fisheries Research Division staff continue to provide technical and development advice to the industry, as well as providing displays and information at field days, country shows and workshops. A number of new industry entrants were given in-field and administrative assistance during the year to obtain commercial licences.

Compliance service level to the industry from a Fisheries perspective was low in this period, however officers were associated with a number of investigations related to stealing of marron from farm dams. These investigations were carried out in conjunction with police.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Fisheries Research Division activities for marron farming during 1998/99 focused on providing expert technical advice to marron farmers on pond construction, pond management, broodstock management procedures and grow-out processes based on previous research findings. There has been a rapid expansion in the number of marron farms in the state and this is likely to continue.

In addition, basic research was completed to compare growth rates of blue and black marron and to assess the effect of replacing a commercial freshwater crayfish