

COMPLIANCE

Regional Compliance and Community Education Overview

The Regional Services Branch of the Department provides a range of at-sea and land-based compliance services within the west coast bioregion. Fisheries Officers provide these services from offices in Denham, Geraldton, Dongara, Jurien, Lancelin, Fremantle, Mandurah, Bunbury and Busselton and the Serious Offences Unit, as well as aboard the large ocean-going patrol vessels *Baudin*, *McLaughlin* and *Walcott*.

Services provided by land-based officers include processing inspections, landing and gear inspections, licensing checks, wholesale/retail checks and inshore sea-based patrols utilising vessels ranging in size from 5 to 12 m. They also provide support to seagoing personnel and provide a wide variety of education and extension services through formal and informal media to commercial fishers, fishing organisations, other resource management agencies and departments and general community members.

The ocean-going patrol vessels are used to ensure that fishers adhere to zone and closed water requirements, particularly in the West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery, gear specification and limits, and seasonal closures.

Activities during 2002/03

During 2002/03, Fisheries Officers delivered 61,102 hours of compliance work in commercial fisheries (West Coast Compliance Table 1), of which around half was focused on the West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery. While compliance in the fishery was generally good, 348 infringement warnings and 79 infringement notices were issued and 28 prosecutions were initiated or completed. This was a small increase over the previous year in the number of infringement warnings (up from 328), a large increase in the number of infringements (up from 47) and a decrease in prosecutions (down from 35). The increased number of warnings and infringements related to a campaign on licensing.

Throughout the fishing season, patrol vessel operations continued to target areas of non-compliance, these being mainly zone boundary offences, gear interference and over-potting. The three patrol vessels delivered a total of 328 sea days, with two prosecution briefs being submitted for excess gear and nine for closed waters offences.

The run of rock lobsters in the Capes area (Cape Leeuwin to Cape Naturaliste) continued, as did the annual migration of vessels from northern ports to capitalise on the good catches. This again led to a number of joint operations and increased focus on the interaction between recreational and commercial rock lobster fishers and other users of the marine environment in the near-shore coastal areas between the Capes.

The strong compliance partnership with industry continued, with the third rock lobster compliance risk assessment workshop being held prior to the season opening. Industry members and Departmental management, research and

operational staff attended the workshop. Major risks identified included illegal sale into the restaurant trade, interference with commercial fishing gear, over-potting and failing to release rock lobsters within the specified times.

The Rock Lobster Compliance Coordinator continued the industry liaison and education program through attendance at association meetings, educating fishers in regard to rule changes and providing information and feedback on local compliance issues which could then be incorporated into the compliance planning process. Fourteen rock lobster fishermen's association meetings were organised, and four targeted rock lobster compliance operations involving multi-regional staff resources were coordinated.

In the West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery the entire fleet was checked at least once, with an average of six inspections per vessel being achieved. An average of nearly 19 baskets per vessel over the year was also achieved, representing an inspection rate of 2.4–2.5 % of the entire landed catch (West Coast Compliance Table 2). The compliance program also focused on illegal movements of rock lobsters from commercial vessels, with positive results. The Rock Lobster Mobile Patrol detected an increase in the consignment of totally protected rock lobsters and initiated a number of prosecution actions.

In addition to the West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery, Fisheries Officers focused considerable activity on maintaining high levels of compliance in the other commercial fisheries. These include the commercial fisheries for abalone, crabs, scallops, sharks, pilchards, demersal scalefish, inshore and estuarine species, and the wetline fishery. There were no major compliance issues encountered throughout the year.

The protection of totally protected fish is a critical component of fisheries management arrangements and the emphasis on ensuring they are not caught and consigned for sale continued in 2002/03. Additional effort was targeted at commercial wetline fishing operations in the Abrolhos Islands owing to the designation of baldchin groper as a totally protected species in this area.

In respect to recreational fisheries, Fisheries Officers made over 29,000 field contacts with fishers. The major fisheries focused on were abalone, rock lobster, net fishing, marine finfish, crabs and marron. The possession of under-size rock lobster and crabs was an issue across the region.

Approximately 2,500 fishers were contacted during the short six-day metropolitan abalone season. There was an increase in the number of serious offences detected, however overall the number of offences was similar to previous years. The taking of excess bag limit was again the major offence detected.

The successful Volunteer Fisheries Liaison Officer beachfront education programs continued, focusing on correct fishing techniques, ethics and bag and size limits. VFLOs attended major boat shows and other festivals, conducted school and community group fishing workshops, and distributed educational material to tackle shops. VFLOs also assisted in a number of research activities.

West Coast Bioregion

The 'Fishers with Disabilities' program was a finalist in the 8th Annual Community Services Industry Awards in the category of 'Developing and Supporting the Community Services Industry'. A highly successful tour of the program was conducted in the south-west with workshops being held in Mandurah, Port Bouvard, Bunbury, Busselton, Augusta and Albany.

An additional education program entitled 'Get Hooked on Fishing' was established. This program involves fishing workshops for families to promote correct fishing techniques, ethics and bag and size limits. Fifteen 'Learning Circles' were facilitated locally and at Newdegate, Wickepin and Yealering.

Initiatives in 2003/04

Regional Services staff continue to refine compliance techniques aimed at targeted and intelligence-driven outcomes.

A significant initiative commenced in 2003/04 has been the integration of the 'At Sea Marine Safety Compliance' program into the recreational and commercial fisheries compliance programs.

In the southern area of the bioregion, compliance activity has increased, with the aim of assisting industry and other user groups to continue to share the marine environment in a positive manner in line with the agreed industry operating Code of Conduct for the area between Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin.

The Get Hooked on Fishing program has expanded in the metropolitan area and the Learning Circles program is being expanded into the north-eastern and eastern Wheatbelt region. The Fishers with Disabilities program has been established as an incorporated association.

WEST COAST COMPLIANCE TABLE 1

Summary of compliance and educative contacts and infringement types within the west coast bioregion during the 2002/03 financial year.

CONTACT WITH THE COMMERCIAL ROCK LOBSTER FISHERY	NUMBER
Hours delivered in bioregion to rock lobster fishery	30,182
Fisher field contacts by Fisheries Officers – rock lobster	6,651
District Office contacts by Fisheries Officers – rock lobster	2,233
CONTACT WITH OTHER COMMERCIAL FISHERIES	
Hours delivered in bioregion to other commercial fisheries	30,920
Fisher field contacts by Fisheries Officers – other fisheries	3,765
District Office contacts by Fisheries Officers – other fisheries	5,919
Fishwatch reports *	437
COMMERCIAL OFFENCES DETECTED	
Infringement warnings	348
Infringement notices	79
Prosecutions	28
CONTACT WITH THE RECREATIONAL FISHING COMMUNITY	
Hours delivered in bioregion	20,206
Fisher field contacts by Fisheries Officers	29,027
District Office contacts by Fisheries Officers	18,112
RECREATIONAL OFFENCES DETECTED	
Infringement warnings	480
Infringement notices	244
Prosecutions	88

* This represents the total number of Fishwatch reports, both commercial and recreational, since the service provider reporting mechanism cannot differentiate between sectors.

WEST COAST ROCK COMPLIANCE TABLE 2

Summary statistics of factory inspections of commercially captured western rock lobster in the 2002/03 fishing season.

STATISTIC	VALUE
Number of unique vessels checked	Entire fleet at least once
Average number of inspections per vessel	6
Average number of baskets checked per vessel *	19
Proportion of total commercial catch inspected	2.4–2.5%
Non-compliance rate (per-animal basis)**	0.0015–0.0022
Total consigned commercial catch ('000 kg)	11,387
Estimated total illegal catch consigned ('000 kg)	17.1–25.1

* Calculated as the total baskets checked per vessel divided by total inspections per vessel.

** A rate of 0.001 indicates 1 illegal animal detected in every 1,000 animals checked.