

COMPLIANCE

Regional Compliance and Community Education Overview

Compliance activities and education in relation to commercial and recreational fishery regulations in the Gascoyne coast bioregion are undertaken by Fisheries Officers working out of three District Offices located at Denham, Carnarvon and Exmouth. A total of 8 Fisheries Officers operate throughout the bioregion. These officers were supplemented by the seasonal deployment of a two-officer Mobile Recreational Fisheries Patrol. Collectively, the officers deal with a wide range of fisheries within the region, encompassing activities such as boat and shore fishing, diving and netting, as well as creek fishing and aquaculture.

Officers at Denham make extensive use of a 10 m patrol vessel (PV *John Brockman*) to conduct at-sea inspections throughout Shark Bay, while those at Exmouth use an 8 m vessel (PV *Gnulli*) to conduct at-sea operations and inspections within Exmouth Gulf and along the western side of the North West Cape, particularly within the Ningaloo Marine Park. Officers at Exmouth also make use of fixed-wing aircraft for surveillance and monitoring activities. Additionally, several smaller boats are used to monitor protected waters and creek fishing activities. Carnarvon staff utilise small dinghies for inshore coastal and creek patrols, and a quad-bike is used to access mangrove creeks and beaches to detect possible illegal netting. The larger (20+ m) ocean-going patrol vessels *Walcott* and *McLaughlan* are utilised to make at-sea inspections of commercial vessels during the Shark Bay prawn and scallop fishing seasons, especially in the Shark Bay World Heritage Area.

Both commercial and recreational fishery compliance activities involve inspections of catches for compliance with bag, size, quota and possession limits; of gear and fishing methods used; and both the areas and times fishers undertake their fishing. Additionally, extensive liaison is conducted with all fishers to promote better awareness and understanding of the fisheries rules and regulations.

While high-profile patrol activities aimed at maximising personal contacts with fishers are a regular feature of this work, covert observation also plays an important role in ensuring high levels of compliance. The vast majority of commercial and recreational fishers are aware of and comply with the rules. However, some non-compliant fishers are very careful to hide their illegal activities. Officers often covertly observe fishing activity, particularly in response to information provided to them through the toll-free Fishwatch service, and sometimes this is the only way to determine what the level of compliance with the fishing rules actually is.

Activities during 2002/03

In terms of commercial fisheries, Fisheries Officers delivered 9,716 hours of compliance activities, mostly through catch inspection and monitoring, and at-sea inspections of vessels

operating in the trawl fisheries. Of particular concern was the emerging intelligence regarding the possible taking of shark fin for private sale by crews. This matter is subject to ongoing investigation. Overall, the inspection activities provided a positive picture of the commercial industry in terms of complying with the rules relating to their fisheries.

During this period, compliance risk assessments were carried out in respect of the commercial Exmouth Gulf Prawn Managed Fishery and the Commercial Marine Safety program (all commercial fisheries).

Fisheries Officers delivered 8,620 hours of compliance work to recreational fisheries, concentrating mainly on the activities of shore-based and boat-based anglers. A total of 11,181 compliance 'field' contacts were made and as a result of these activities, 90 infringement warnings and 70 infringement notices were issued, while 11 prosecutions were initiated for more serious offences. Overall, this represented a very low field contact to prosecution rate of 1.5% and, assuming this to be a representative sample, suggests a good level of compliance with the recreational fishing rules.

Outputs from the Volunteer Fisheries Liaison Officer (VFLO) program were down considerably this year due to a significant movement in the volunteer base to other parts of the state, however a rebuilding program is being developed for the 2003/04 year.

During this period, compliance risk assessments were carried out in respect of the Fishing and Aquatic Tour industry (charter boats) and the Recreational Marine Safety program.

Initiatives in 2003/04

Ongoing concerns remain with the status of the Shark Bay snapper stocks. As such, Fisheries Officers at Denham continue to conduct a mix of high-profile at-sea and on-land patrols to remind locals, commercial fishers and visitors of the need to protect local pink snapper stocks in both the western and eastern gulfs of Shark Bay.

Staff from Exmouth continue to promote the unique Ningaloo Marine Park experience, while reminding people of the specific requirements for fishing in the area in relation to possession limits, landing limits, sanctuary zones and bag limits. The management arrangements for this marine park are currently under review (by the Department of Conservation and Land Management).

The program of formal compliance risk assessments has continued, covering the commercial Shark Bay prawn, scallop and snapper fisheries and the Gascoyne bioregion recreational fishery during 2003/04.

Marine Safety became a new role for Fisheries Officers during the year, further enhancing their ability to protect both fish stocks and fishers by limiting the level of unsafe commercial and recreational fishing vessel activity in Western Australian waters.

GASCOYNE COMPLIANCE TABLE I

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

<i>CONTACT WITH THE COMMERCIAL FISHING COMMUNITY</i>		<i>NUMBER</i>
Hours delivered in bioregion		9,716
Fisher field contacts by Fisheries Officers		1,759
District Office contacts by Fisheries Officers		4,553
Fishwatch reports *		5
<i>COMMERCIAL OFFENCES DETECTED</i>		
Infringement warnings		52
Infringement notices		32
Prosecutions		9
<i>CONTACT WITH THE RECREATIONAL FISHING COMMUNITY</i>		<i>NUMBER</i>
Hours delivered in bioregion		8,620
Fisher field contacts by Fisheries Officers		11,181
District Office contacts by Fisheries Officers		4,852
<i>RECREATIONAL OFFENCES DETECTED</i>		
Infringement warnings		90
Infringement notices		70
Prosecutions		11

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



WEST COAST
BIOREGION

GASCOYNE COAST
BIOREGION

NORTH COAST
BIOREGION

SOUTH COAST
BIOREGION

NORTHERN INLAND
BIOREGION

SOUTHERN INLAND
BIOREGION