

North Coast Bioregion

production are obtained from the fishing grounds primarily off the Eighty Mile Beach, with smaller catches being taken around the Lacepede Islands north of Broome, near Port Hedland, and off Onslow and Exmouth Gulf. Wild stocks are supplemented by hatchery-produced oysters, with major hatcheries operating at Broome and King Sound. Pearl farm sites are located mainly along the Kimberley coast, particularly in the Buccaneer Archipelago, in Roebuck Bay and at the Montebello Islands.

Other developing marine aquaculture initiatives include growing trochus and black tiger prawns. A focus of aquaculture development in the region is provided by the Department's Broome Tropical Aquaculture Park, which houses a commercial pearl oyster hatchery, an Aboriginal-owned multi-species hatchery and the Kimberley TAFE aquaculture training facility.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Regional Overview

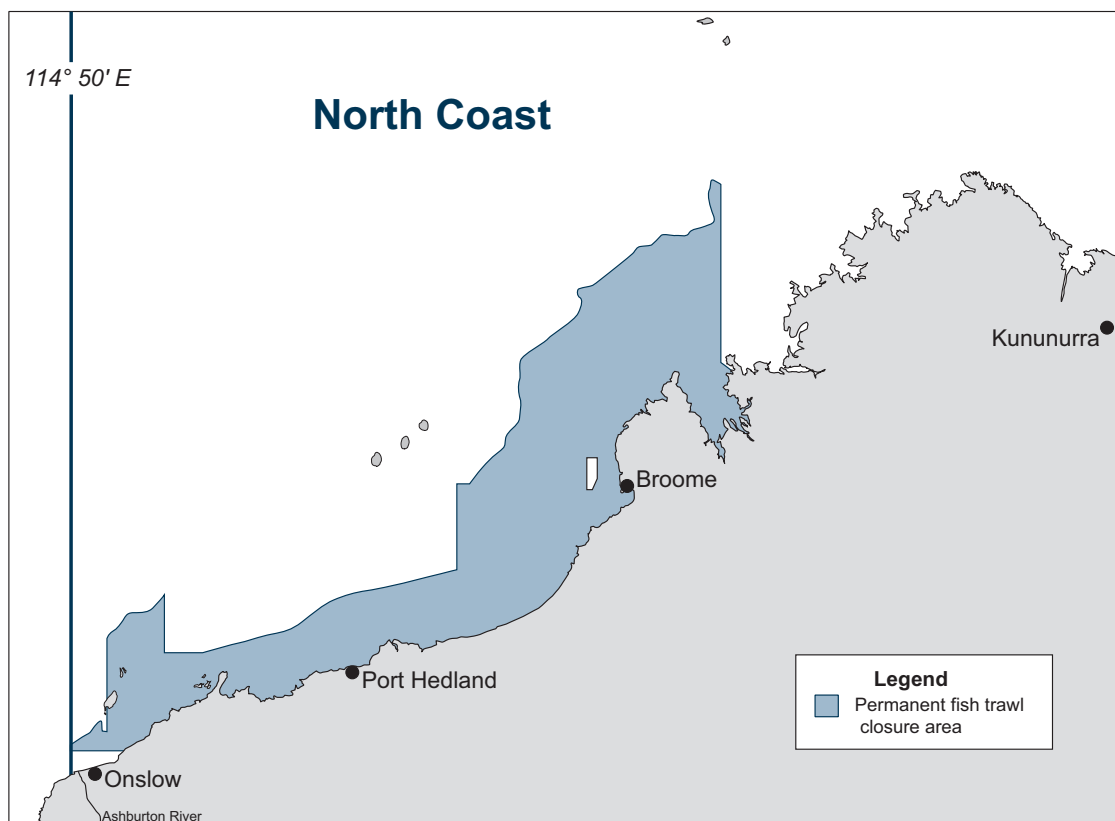
On the north coast, marine habitats have been locally affected by port developments, oil and gas exploration and extraction, and some fishing activities across the continental shelf. The offshore Pilbara area in particular was heavily trawled by international vessels in the 1960s and 1970s, however this activity was completely phased out by the Australian

Government in the early 1980s. Since that time, extensive fisheries closures over coastal and most offshore waters have been introduced to manage finfish trawling by Australian vessels (North Coast Habitat Protection Figure 1). Trawling for prawns is permitted at a number of locations and occurs on a series of small grounds associated with inshore nursery areas (see specific commercial trawl fishery reports). In each of these fisheries, trawling occurs over a small proportion of the habitat, and is managed to ensure that impacts are acceptable and localised to areas of high target species abundance.

In addition to the extensive fisheries closures protecting marine habitats, the bioregion has a number of reef protected areas under Fisheries legislation and marine parks and reserves around offshore islands and reefs (North Coast Habitat Protection Figure 2).

During 2003/04 the Department of Fisheries has provided scientific and management advice and made submissions to Government in relation to the planning for, and in some cases legislative changes arising in relation to:

- the proposed Dampier Archipelago Marine Park and Cape Preston Marine Management Area;
- changes to the boundary and zoning scheme of the Rowley Shoals Marine Park; and
- the proposed Montebello marine conservation reserves (consisting of the Montebello Marine Park, the Barrow Island Marine Park, and the Montebello Marine Management Area).



NORTH COAST HABITAT PROTECTION FIGURE 1

Map showing areas permanently closed to trawling for finfish in the north coast bioregion.