



Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

ATTACHMENT 4:

GUIDANCE STATEMENT

In-water Cleaning of Vessels in WA

Version 1.0, July 2017

Prepared by Aquatic Biosecurity Section, Fisheries,


Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, WA

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Version Control

AMENDMENT		DETAILS	AMENDED BY
NO.	DATE		NAME
	May 2017	Guidance Statement: In-water treatment of vessels in Western Australian waters	Withdrawn – M Massam
0.1	June 2017	Policy Position: In-water cleaning of vessels in WA	Internal consultation – M Massam, B Tilley, J McDonald & V Aitken
0.2	July 2017	Second version for approval, that streamlines Department process and focusses policy on biosecurity aspects only.	M Massam & V Aitken
1.0	26/07/17	Approved by Deputy Director General, Heather Brayford	

This policy supersedes Fisheries' Guidance Statement: In-water treatment of vessels in Western Australian waters (2014).

Issue Description:

In-water cleaning of vessels^{1,2} can manage biofouling to optimise the performance of vessels and other movable structures and to minimise biosecurity risks. However, in-water cleaning can physically damage some antifouling coatings, shorten coating service life and release a pulse of biocide into the environment. In-water cleaning can also facilitate release of invasive marine species (IMS) into the surrounding environment. Therefore, this treatment should only be undertaken when removal of biofouling presents an acceptable biosecurity risk, does not harm the antifouling coating on the vessel, and the risk of contaminant release from the surface is determined as acceptable by the relevant authority.

Although this policy recommends the use of in-water cleaning in some circumstances, vessels should be removed from the water for cleaning and maintenance in preference to in-water operations, where this is operationally practicable. In-water cleaning should not be considered a replacement for coating maintenance and renewal at shore-based maintenance facilities.

Policy Position:

Fisheries is the lead for aquatic biosecurity in Western Australia and recommends that cleaning companies considering undertaking in-water cleaning of vessels, take the steps detailed in this document. This will reduce the likelihood of transferring live non-endemic or noxious fish (including IMS) into or within WA, which would be contrary to the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994* (FRMA)³.

For all proposed in-water cleaning of vessels:

1. **Meet national guidelines** - Assess whether cleaning is supported under the Australian Government's Anti-fouling and in-water cleaning guidelines, including use of the decision support tool (Figure 1) - <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/avm/vessels/biofouling/anti-fouling-and-inwater-cleaning-guidelines>
2. **Address contaminant release risks** - In addition to biosecurity considerations, ensure that requirements in relation to the possible release of contaminants during the cleaning process have been dealt with by the relevant authority. This may include, but is not limited to, the Industry Regulation Section of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, WA.

¹ The definition of vessel includes immersible equipment.

² This policy does not include the cleaning of aquaculture stock and equipment – refer to other Fisheries instruments (licences etc) and the National Biofouling Management Guidelines for the Aquaculture Industry - http://www.marinepests.gov.au/marine_pests/publications/Documents/Aquaculture_guidelines.pdf

³ i.e. under the noxious fish section, FRMA s103, and translocation of non-endemic fish regulations, FRMR r176 onwards.

3. **Cleaning location** - Ensure that the relevant authority with jurisdiction over the water in which the cleaning is proposed to take place has been consulted and has given any required approvals and/or recommendations. This may include, but is not limited to a port authority, the Marine Safety Section of the Department of Transport, or the Rivers and Estuaries Division of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

Microfouling

4. Microfouling, regardless of origin, may be removed without the need for full containment of biofouling waste to prevent viable biological material re-entering the water column. It presents a lower biosecurity risk than macrofouling which may contain a diverse range of organisms and which is more difficult to effectively remove and contain. However, effects on the AFC coating and contaminant risks need to be considered by the relevant authority.

Vessels with regional biofouling only:

5. Regional biofouling⁴ is usually considered at LOW risk of releasing IMS into the environment, but exceptions may be applied (see below).
6. Information concerning such proposed in-water cleans should be submitted to Fisheries at biosecurity@fish.wa.gov.au at least 10 working days in advance of any cleaning, to allow time for checks to be made if needed.

Vessels with domestic or international biofouling:

7. Vessels with domestic or international biofouling should have their level of risk of carrying IMS assessed, in the first instance, by the use of Fisheries' online vessel risk assessment tool Vessel Check - <http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Sustainability-and-Environment/Aquatic-Biosecurity/Vessels-And-Ports/Pages/Vessel-Check.aspx>
8. Vessels assessed as presenting a LOW / ACCEPTABLE risk will generally be considered to present an acceptable level of risk*.
9. Vessels assessed as presenting an UNCERTAIN or HIGH risk generally DO NOT present an acceptable level of risk*.
10. Vessels considered to pose an UNACCEPTABLE risk should be inspected for IMS by a suitably qualified invasive marine pest expert (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development 2017), at least 75 days after departure from an overseas or interstate location, and the final inspection report⁵ should conclude that no IMS were detected.
11. Information concerning these proposed in-water cleans, including a Vessel Check report for an actual vessel movement, should be submitted to Fisheries at biosecurity@fish.wa.gov.au at least 10 working days in advance of any cleaning, to allow time for checks to be made.

⁴ See definitions section.

⁵ The report must be considered by Fisheries to be of an acceptable standard.

12. Fisheries will then recommend which vessels should be cleaned in-water.

*Applicants are advised to check with Fisheries to ensure that Vessel Check has been completed in the most accurate manner possible and for consideration of any other issues.

Exceptions

- **Please note that, irrespective of the level of fouling, vessels with suspected or confirmed IMS will be carefully managed under the direction of Fisheries.**
- In-water cleaning may not be recommended when proposed vessels have been in the vicinity of detected IMS or where high value asset areas⁶ exist.

In-water cleaning systems

- Based on trials conducted over the past few years, Fisheries recommends that vessels should only be cleaned in-water using systems for which there is high-quality evidence based on independent testing that that they are effective in removing, capturing and containing biofouling under the biosecurity 'conditions' below. (These were previously detailed in Fisheries' Guidance Statement: In-water treatment of vessels in Western Australian waters.) i.e.:
 - a) The Integrity of the antifouling coating remains unaffected by the cleaning system (refer to Fisheries for further information on how this should be determined).
 - b) All cleaned surfaces are free from any visible macro-fouling or the fouling has been rendered unviable. i.e. low biosecurity risk.
 - c) All material greater than 50 micrometres in diameter, released from wet areas during the cleaning process, is contained, collected and treated.
 - d) There is no 'escape' of material (in-water, or after removal) during and after the cleaning process out to a radius of at least 15 cm from the treatment device.
 - e) Collected material is only released back into the marine environment if the system includes a mechanism that effectively renders the collected debris non-viable.

Compliance

Fisheries' Biosecurity Compliance Team conducts inspections of vessels to assess biofouling risk and management. These inspections confirm biofouling origin as part of investigating what management steps have been taken. In order to show that only vessels presenting an acceptable level of risk are being cleaned, it is recommended that all relevant documentation is available on board in case of inspection. Documentation required includes copies of the vessel's operational history since the last dry-dock or clear IMS

⁶ For example, marine parks, marine protected areas, world heritage areas, Barrow Island, marine management areas, areas covered by aquaculture licences or leases including pearling, A class reserves and adjacent waters.

inspection, antifouling coating certificate or receipts, dry-dock report or survey/IMS reports, Vessel Check reports etc.

Definitions

- **Domestic biofouling:** biofouling acquired from outside Western Australia but within Australian waters.
- **International biofouling:** biofouling acquired from outside Australian waters.
- **Macrofouling:** large, distinct multicellular organisms visible to the human eye, such as barnacles, tubeworms, mussels, fronds of algae and other large attached or mobile organisms.
- **Microfouling:** a layer of microscopic organisms including bacteria and diatoms and the slimy substances they produce. It is often referred to as a 'slime layer' and can be easily removed by gently passing a finger over the surface.
- **Regional biofouling:** biofouling acquired in Western Australia. This will only be present on vessels that:
 - are new builds that have never been immersed prior to use in the State, and have never left State waters; or
 - have not left State waters since a dry-docking in WA for complete replacement of the antifouling coating, or
 - have not left State waters since completing a follow-up dry-dock or in-water inspection for marine pests performed at least 75 days after departure from an overseas or interstate location, that was conducted in WA by a suitably qualified invasive marine pest expert, and the final inspection report⁷ concluding that no IMS were detected

NOTE: that vessels that do not meeting the definition of regional biofouling, will be considered to either have domestic or international biofouling.

Identifying and reporting IMS

Fisheries strongly recommends that all personnel associated with in-water cleaning are familiar with IMS, and that they carry and refer to IMS identification materials to recognise any organisms of concern. Familiarisation could be achieved via a hands-on short course or by using brochures such as the following -

http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/biosecurity/marine_pest_identification_guide_western_australia.pdf

It is recommended that suspected and confirmed IMS are reported to Fisheries within 24 hours by contacting the 24 hour FISHWATCH hotline on 1800 815 507, or through the free WA PestWatch app, available from the App Store and Google play store.

NOTE: If samples are collected, this should be reported to FISHWATCH immediately.

⁷ The report must be considered by Fisheries to be of an acceptable standard.

Review period

This policy will be reviewed within three years of the date listed below unless needed sooner.

Date: 21 July 2017

References

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development 2017. Guidance Statement – Criteria for Suitably Qualified Invasive Marine Pest Experts, document dated July 2017.