

NEW ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR TWO WA FISHERIES

Two new Environmental Management Systems (EMS) will benefit Professional fishermen working in South Coast Estuarine Fishery and Marine Aquarium Fishery and the communities in which they operate.

The EMS projects are initiative of the WA Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC) supported by funding from the Australian Government Fisheries Research Development Corporation (FRDC).

WAFIC Chief Executive, Graham Short said that while almost all commercial fisheries operate under a detailed Department of Fisheries management plan, the development of an EMS for a fishery involves input from the community and other stakeholder groups and is designed to enhance environmental performance and demonstrate the fishing industry's commitment to maintaining long-term sustainability.

The Pearling Industry has already developed an EMS template, which as part of this project, will now be made available for use cross the whole of the pearling industry.

"Demonstrating your environmental credentials in today's accountable atmosphere is critical to an industry's public acceptance", said Mr McCallum, "The pearling industry EMS will form a significant part of the dossier we develop to show the community the pearling industry is sustainably managed across all aspects of the environment".

The South Coast Estuarine Fishery has 25 licence holders that are licensed to commercially fish thirteen estuaries and inlets between Cape Beaufort and the WA/SA Border (Albany to Esperance).

The Marine Aquarium Fishery has 14 licence holders that are licensed to collect a range of species primarily around Dampier, Exmouth and the South West Coast, for the Australian and overseas aquarium market.

The first stage in creating an EMS is to conduct a risk assessment.

EMS Officer Damien Trinder said this would be achieved by conducting a series of workshops, which brought together professional fishermen, concerned members of the community, environmental groups, natural resource management groups, recreational fishermen, tourist operators and representatives from the Department of Fisheries, including scientific researchers.

"One of the most important aspects is that we create a forum for an exchange of ideas, information and perceptions on how the fishery is working. The input could range from thoughts on the health of the estuarine systems and identifying environmental risks through to common

sense ideas about reducing the impact of litter or conflict during peak tourism seasons.

“So often, important improvements can be achieved just by listening to another point of view. At the end of the workshops we analysis the input and come up with a template which the fishermen commit to implementing.

“The most important objective is the sustainability of the fishery and that everyone can work in harmony to benefit from the resource. The process gives all stakeholders a better appreciation of the fishery”, said Mr Trinder.

Locations and times for the workshops have not yet been confirmed, but interested parties can register their interest by contacting Damien Trinder on 0410 455 358 or damien@pelagicus.com.au

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