

**POLICY STATEMENT NO. 20**

**A MARINE AND ESTUARINE RESERVES  
SYSTEM IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

NOVEMBER 1990

**1. BACKGROUND**

Habitats, ecosystems and flora and fauna of marine and estuarine waters of the State may be subject to degradation for certain uses and activities such that they are no longer of full benefit to present and future generations. Many marine and estuarine species occupy distinct habitats at different stages of their life history, so that marked changes in numbers of a species or disruption of one of these habitats may have far reaching effects. Many marine and estuarine ecosystems are connected by oceanic currents so that the processes operative in one may critically influence the processes of another. Therefore there is a need for a State system of marine and estuarine protected areas (referred to in Commonwealth documents as "MEPA's") comparable in scope and purpose to the State's terrestrial parks and reserves system, and managed within the context of an overall coastal zone management programme.

In Western Australia, marine conservation and recreation reserves are declared under Section 13 of the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984 and vested in the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority. Aquatic reserves may also be declared under the provisions of the Fisheries Act 1905 for the purposes of fisheries protection and management.

**2. OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES**

To establish and manage a system of marine and estuarine reserves for the conservation of flora and fauna, ecosystems and habitats, environmental research and reference, and such public recreation and commercial use as may be consistent with maintenance of the natural environment (Appendix I).

**3. POLICIES**

The Department will:

- 3.1 Select, establish and manage viable representative sections of Western Australia coastal and estuarine waters as marine reserves, using the CONCOM selection criteria (Appendix ii) as a basis.
- 3.2 Designate priority for use within reserves according to the level of protection to be provided and the degree and nature of use.
- 3.3 In keeping with these and levels of protection, declare marine and estuarine protected areas under the following categories.
  - (i) Nature Reserve: for the conservation of :

- a) aquatic or terrestrial flora and fauna generally and their habitats;
- b) marine, estuarine and freshwater flora and fauna generally; or
- c) any specified marine, estuarine or freshwater;
  - i) animal; or
  - ii) plant life; or class thereof, or a combination of any of those purposes.

Such reserves may serve as protection areas, special viewing or study areas, baselines for monitoring environmental change, or any combination of these purposes.

- (ii) Marine Park : for the purposes of fulfilling so much of the demand for recreation by members of the public as is consistent with the proper conservation and restoration of the natural environment, the protection of indigenous flora and fauna and the preservation of any feature of archaeological, historic or scientific interest. Recreational and Commercial fishing will be provided under the Fisheries Act 1905, consistent with sustained yield principles, protection of the environment and public equity of use. Marine parks may be zoned to give priority to particular uses and activities in selected management areas.

- 3.4 Undertake, encourage, support and publish scientific, economic and social research relevant to marine and estuarine management.
- 3.5 Liaise with other marine resource management and research agencies to enhance the study and conservation of marine and estuarine biota and environment generally.
- 3.6 Maintain an effective working relationship with other government agencies with responsibilities for aspects of marine and estuarine management.
- 3.7 Undertake, co-ordinate and encourage the use of marine and estuarine reserves for educational programmes aimed at increasing public awareness, appreciation and understanding of ecosystems.
- 3.8 Publicise the need for conservation of marine and estuarine biota and habitats.
- 3.9 Encourage public participation in the management of marine and estuarine reserves and the conservation of the aquatic environment generally.

#### **4. STRATEGIES**

To implement objectives and policies, the Department will:

- 4.1 In collaboration with other marine management, research agencies and academic institutions, constantly review the adequacy of the marine and estuarine reserve system.
- 4.2 Follow the procedures required in the CALM Act for the declaration of marine and estuarine reserves and the preparation of management plans, involving public participation and consultation with other Government agencies especially the Fisheries Department.
- 4.3 Through the management planning process, designate management zones in marine and estuarine reserves in the following categories:

- (i) Sanctuary: complete protection of the ecosystems (i.e. equivalent to a nature reserve). Removal of biota will not be permitted. Compatible recreational activities and commercial concessions may occur in the zone.
  - (ii) Recreation: designation of areas and levels of use for recreational and educational activities, while maintaining habitats and living communities in as undisturbed a state as possible. Recreational fishing (but not commercial fishing) will be permitted.
  - (iii) General Use: designation of areas and levels and types of use for recreational and educational activities and commercial uses including exploitation of natural resources, but managed to sustain production while maintaining habitats and living communities in as undisturbed a state as possible.
  - (iv) Other: for any specified conservation, recreation or commercial purpose, or any combination of specified purposes.
- 4.4 Arrange with other Government management agencies with authority for enforcement of marine regulations under their legislation where appropriate.
- 4.5 Collaborate with the Fisheries Department in the development and implementation of regulations (under the Fisheries Act) for the management of commercial and recreational fisheries in marine parks, based on the principles of sustainable yield, equity of community use, and environmental protection.
- 4.6 Collaborate with the Department of Marine and Harbours in the development and implementation of regulations (under the Marine and Harbours Act) for management of boating activities in marine parks and marine nature reserves.
- 4.7 Undertake, encourage, support and publish scientific research on the ecology of species and marine and estuarine ecosystems and develop a knowledge-base for effective reserve management.
- 4.8 Ensure the efficient transmission of marine research findings into operational practice.
- 4.9 Undertake, encourage, support and publish economic and social research on the expectations, activities and environmental impacts of visitors using marine and estuarine reserves.
- 4.10 In collaboration with the Fisheries Department, establish long-term monitoring of ecosystems and individual species, with special emphasis on stock-assessment of species subject to recreational and commercial fishing.
- 4.11 Develop and operate educational and interpretive facilities in and relating to marine and estuarine reserves, and to the marine environment generally, serving individuals, private groups, school groups and the needs of the community in general.
- 4.12 Disseminate information designed to increase community understanding of marine and estuarine flora and fauna and the protection of marine and estuarine environments.
- 4.13 Encourage and assist public participation in marine and estuarine reserve management by:
- training staff in the objectives and techniques of public participation;
  - establishment of consultative and advisory committees, and `Friends` groups and

- organisation of volunteer programmes.
- 4.14 Evaluate management of land areas which may have an impact on the environment and biota of marine and estuarine reserves.
- 4.15 Enter into agreements with Commonwealth authorities concerning the sympathetic management of waters adjacent to marine reserves but beyond the limit of State authority.

Syd Shea  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

November 1990

Distribution: Lists A, B, D, E and L

## APPENDIX I

### OBJECTIVES FOR WHICH MARINE PARKS ARE MANAGED

- i) preservation of representatives of each major habitat and ecosystem type;
- ii) protection of sites of special ecological significance, including breeding or nursery areas, rare or endangered species, relict species or communities;
- iii) informing and educating the public on the resources and importance and uses of the marine environment;
- iv) provision of public recreational and commercial activities and uses compatible with sustaining marine and estuarine systems;
- v) protection of underwater landscapes and features of archaeological and historical importance;
- vi) protection of important coastal geological formations and geomorphological processes from unnecessary human interference;
- vii) scientific reference;
- viii) protection of marine living resources for public use on a sustainable basis.

## APPENDIX II

Classification system for selection on marine parks and reserves following criteria of the CONCOM Working Group (Summary Report of the Second Technical Workshop on selection and management of marine and estuarine protected areas, Jervis Bay, February, 1985).

### **Level 1: Coastal Geographic Zones:**

- Zone 1: North Coast (NT border to Cape Leveque)
- 2: NW Shelf (Cape Leveque to North West Cape)
- 3: W Coast (North West Cape to Cape Leeuwin)
- 4: SW Coast (Cape Leeuwin to Israelite Bay)
- 5: Gt Australian Bight (Israelite Bay to SA Border)

### **Level 2: Habitat Types** (substrate/biotic associations):

- Zone 1: Mangal/Saltmarsh
- 2: Macro algae dominated
- 3: Seagrass
- 4: Coral reef
- 5: Estuarine
- 6: Soft bottom communities
- 7: Pelagic biota
- 8: Unique species and communities
- 9: Human heritage
- 10. Physical features
- 11. Fisheries