

STATE COUNTER-DISASTER PLAN
POLLUTION OF THE SEA AND INLAND WATERS

Authority

1. This plan has been produced under the authority of the State Committee for Combating Marine Oil Pollution.

Threat

2. Within the State, seas, inland waters, ports, harbours, beaches and foreshores are all subject to pollution caused by the spillage of noxious substances.

Aim

3. To detail arrangements to combat marine pollution within Western Australia.

Introduction

4. The State Plan is based on combating marine pollution utilising State Government Departmental resources and stockpiled Commonwealth Government resources.

5. Additional resources under contingency plans for ports, harbours, Local Governments, the oil industry and offshore petroleum companies if not committed are to be made available to the State Plan organisation.

Related Counter-Disaster Planning

6. Each port, harbour, Local Authority, River Management Authority and offshore petroleum exploration and production company threatened by pollution is obligated to the production of its own contingency plan. During operations these plans are supported by the State Plan.

Western Australia's Marine Environment

7. The W.A. Coastline is varied in climate, hydrological and physical characteristics and consequently in biological habitats and species. For ease of identification it has been divided into 22 areas which are shown at Annex A.

8. Because of the marine resources present or human activities which occur, some parts of the coastline deserve considerable protection from noxious substances, whilst others are of lesser importance. The term marine resources is applied predominantly to commercial, ecological, conservation, scientific, educational and recreational criteria and so covers certain biota, reserves, particular habitats such as fish nursery areas, areas of scientific research or educational importance, stromatolites, physical features such as sandy beaches and reefs, and man-made structures, such as marinas and offshore pipelines. Human activities associated with the marine environment include, for example, fishing, swimming and sailing.

9. In a publication of the W.A. Environmental Protection Authority (see paragraph 12c) which was directed principally at protection of the marine environment from oil spills originating from offshore oil exploration, important marine resources were identified and 67 environmentally significant areas nominated and designated environmentally sensitive localities (ESL) or special protective localities (SPL). Each area was allocated two categories of buffer zone, an inner 8 km wide immediate protection zone (IPZ) and an outer 42 km wide special conditions zone (SCZ).

10. Where these localities or buffer zones are present in any of the 22 areas shown in Annex A they are included in the information on each area given in Annex B.

11. It should be stressed, however, that the localities and buffer zones were designated to facilitate a concerted approach by the Environmental Protection Authority, the Fisheries Department, the Department of Mines and the Oil Companies to environmental aspects of offshore oil exploration. Their absence does not necessarily mean that an area is environmentally unimportant. This is evident from the clean-up procedures outlined in paragraph 34.