

COMMERCIAL FARMING OF MARRON

The Fisheries Research Branch of the Department has obtained funds (\$22,719 in 1973-74) from the Commonwealth Fishing Industry Research Trust Account for further research to encourage the development of commercial farming of marron.

An extensive experiment is proposed in the Kojonup area of the south-west over the next three years using existing farm dams, so as to avoid the usual major initial cost of fish farming necessitated by the construction of ponds.

Specially selected dams will be stocked with different numbers of young marron bred in expanded facilities, newly built with State funds at the Pemberton Fish Hatchery. The progress of these stocked marron will be followed for up to two years by monthly sampling to determine growth and survival of the marron and important environmental factors in the dams. Departmental staff will closely liaise with farmers in managing the environments of the selected dams, so as to favour high growth rates and survivals, and hence maximal crops of saleable marron. Cropping of edible sized marron and market testing will complete the field project. Results of the project will then be made available to all interested persons.

The environmental factors influencing the success of marron in farm dams near Kojonup have been determined by the Fisheries Department during the past four years. The information obtained will soon be available in a Departmental publication—Morrissy, N. M. (1973) "The ecology of marron, *Cherax tenuimanus* (Smith), introduced into some farm dams near Boscable in the Great Southern area of the Wheatbelt Region of Western Australia" Fisheries Bulletin No. 12—obtainable from the Publicity and Extension Officer, Department of Fisheries and Fauna, 108 Adelaide Terrace, Perth, W.A. 6000 (from 1st December, 1973).

Farmers within a 20 mile radius of Kojonup who are interested in commercial marron farming, and who would co-operate with the Department by allowing the use of a dam on their property for the new experiment, should write to—"Farm Dam Marron Officer", W.A.M.R.L., P.O. Box 20, North Beach, W.A. 6020, enclosing a map and directions as to the farm location.

Selection of nominated dams will be carried out during the forthcoming summer. The catchments of such a dam should be clover pastured and the size of the dam should be approximately "2,000 cubic yards". The Dam should be located on a hill slope, well uphill from valley creeks and be excavated into white clay. Management of a dam for marron may necessitate control of sheep numbers in the paddock, but their presence is usually a favourable factor. Banking of the ground, just uphill from the dam will be required during summer, to prevent debris-laden run-off from heavy downpours entering the dam at that season. Preference will be given to newer dams or those recently renovated by draglining. Dams proposed should not contain existing populations of marron or other fish.