

South Coast Aquaculture Development Zone

Development of viable and sustainable shellfish growing areas on the south coast of WA

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Shellfish aquaculture (primarily edible oysters and mussels) is an existing industry on the South Coast. It has long been recognised that there is great potential to increase environmentally sustainable shellfish production in the region, leading to increased investment and job creation.

Historically, large scale aquaculture industry development in Western Australia (WA) has been constrained by a lack of strategic planning to identify suitable coastal waters and terrestrial sites. In addition to this, the required regulatory approval processes (environmental social and economic) have also been considered to be overly onerous and an additional barrier to development of the industry.

In recognition of this, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), encompassing the previous Department of Fisheries and Department of Regional Development, through the Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) and the Goldfields Esperance Development Commission (GEDC) collaborated to formulate a comprehensive business case for creation of an aquaculture development zone on the south coast of WA. Support was also provided by the Aquaculture Council of WA (ACWA) and funding for the project was approved with funds granted through Government's 'Royalties for Regions' scheme with additional 'in kind' contributions from the DPIRD.

In a similar approach, Development Commissions (GSDC and GEDC) and key industry support entities such as ACWA called on government to put in place the required 'foundation' infrastructure of a multi-species shellfish hatchery. As a result, DPIRD has now completed a state of the art facility situated within the existing Albany Aquaculture Park and this facility was commissioned in December 2017 and is already undertaking extensive work orders for aquaculture operators state-wide.

DPIRD has recently completed a series of investigations designed to identify additional areas suitable for creation of aquaculture development zones on the South Coast. As a result of these investigations, a number of suitable locations for sustainable low-impact commercial shellfish aquaculture within the Albany and Esperance near shore waters have been identified as being of high interest. The main benefit of DPIRD progressing the initial necessary approvals is that these zones can be considered to be 'investment ready' for future aquaculture operators and any significant issues given early consideration.

Future use of these aquaculture development zones would require investment directly from the commercial aquaculture industry and investment in the sector has already been boosted by commissioning of the Albany Shellfish Hatchery.

South Coast Natural Resource Management is working with DPIRD through coordinating community consultation to gather views on the project before the approval process begins. The community can contribute their views through community workshops, direct conversations or an online survey. For further information contact natalier@southcoastnrm.com.au or 98458537



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