ACWA

AQUACULTURE COUNCIL
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

KIMBERLEY SCIENCE & CONSERVATION STRATEGY

ACWA SUBMISSION

7 AUGUST 2009

ABOUT ACWA

The Aquaculture Council of Western Australia (ACWA) is the State's peak aquaculture industry body.

ACWA's membership represents over 80% of both the current and future gross value of production of Western Australian aquaculture industry, and consists of Institutions, Corporations, Aquaculture Sector Associations and individual members. Most members are private businesses, all of which undertake their business in all regions of Western Australia.

Introduction

The Aquaculture Council of Western Australia would like to thank the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) for the opportunity to comment on Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy. The WA aquaculture industry is keen to participate, and contribute, to the increase of scientific knowledge of the Kimberley Region. It is on this basis, the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy an important initiative that will ensure that the science is available to guide appropriate management decisions for the region.

ACWA's submission is presented without prejudice.

The main strategic issues for the aquaculture industry are that:

1. the *Kimberley science and conservation strategy* is committed to the principle of ecological sustainable development;
2. The *Kimberley science and conservation strategy* is used to inform, rather than delay government decision making process; and
3. Western Australia needs a State Marine Planning Policy framework.

ACWA's submission is divided into the following sections:

1. Core Environmental Values
2. Regional Marine Planning Policy
3. Research Projects of interest to the Kimberley Science & Conservation Strategy
4. Cost effective Environmental Monitoring

Core Environmental Values

The DEC policy documents identify aquaculture's core environmental quality values as one that needs protection. This recognises the industry's role as an environmental sentinel and key partner in protecting the water and environmental quality of the Western Australian coast.

Aquaculture is non extractive, regenerative industry committed to the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

The enterprises within this sector have four objectives:

1. Maximise Growth
2. Maximise Survival
3. Maximise Profit Margins

4. Minimise Environmental Impact

All of which cannot be achieved without maintaining high water and environmental quality. As a direct consequence of the innate connection aquaculture has with the environment, the industries have evolved a deep commitment to environmentally-sustainable and -responsible development.

The commitment is evidenced by the environmental track record of the industry, the establishment of environmental codes of practice, implementation of Environmental Management Systems through the sector's businesses, and their compliance with all environmental licenses that ensure operations pose a low environmental risk.

Regional Marine Planning Policy

The lack of planning has acted as disincentive to investment in marine based activities. There is, therefore, a case to provide a State policy basis for marine planning.

For Kimberley Marine Planning to work, the State will need to develop a Regional Marine Planning policy to provide a framework for the consistent and appropriate zoning of marine areas. The purpose of the zones will be to protect identified biodiversity and/or socio-economic values as well as to give effect to the allocation of marine resources between users.

Zoning will need to involve an assessment of risk to identified values in the area of interest. After Regional Marine Plans have been developed they shall be given statutory effect and will bind the Crown.

Regional marine planning should ideally be underpinned by targeted strategic science.

Research Projects of interest to the Kimberley Science & Conservation Strategy

Site Identification Study

Given the high prospective nature of the Kimberley coast for aquaculture the Aquaculture Development Council commissioned a study to identify suitable aquaculture sites. The Aquaculture Council of Western Australia suggests that DEC contact Michelle Hanlon, Department of Fisheries, tel 9482 7333 for details.

Carrying Capacity

Department of Fisheries is currently conducting a strategic research project on Carrying Capacity, with reference to aquaculture projects.

The scope and objectives of the project, which are to:

- determine the extent of environmental impact from aquaculture using existing sites
- clarify aquaculture impacts on key ecological receptors
- understand the pressure-response relationships for key ecological receptors
- develop an agreed EMMP incorporating parameters for key ecological receptors
- define the discharge characteristics of key aquaculture species

- provide clarity to environmental regulators for EIA of future aquaculture proposals
- provide clarity to licensees in obtaining and maintaining environmental approvals
- provide a tool for environmental regulators to utilize as part of the EIA process
- provide a tool for proponents to utilize as part of the application process

This study will include farms located in the Kimberley Region.

The Aquaculture Council of Western Australia suggests that DEC contact Fiona Vom Berg, Department of Fisheries, tel 9482 7333 for further details.

Cost effective Environmental Monitoring

Control sites, for scientific research, are important as they provide established data with which to evaluate the baseline/background condition of environmental attributes of interest such as benthic habitats and water and sediment quality.

In high use/medium to high risk areas, the State should allocate scientific research control sites that all resource users can assess their use against. Such strategic sites could to provide opportunities for cost sharing and cost savings, in assessing environmental impacts.