

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The management of natural resources within the Rangelands coastal and marine environment is the responsibility of various state government agencies and local governments. The residents of, and visitors to, the area also have a major role in ensuring the sustainable management of the environment. Across the region, there are a range of formal and informal management initiatives either underway or planned. Many of these initiatives have been discussed in Chapters Two to Six and references for further reading have been provided in the reference list and bibliography (Appendix C). Appendix D provides a list of coastal and marine resource management activities in the Rangelands Region funded through the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust and Caring For Our Country programmes.

The Rangelands coast is diverse and extensive, and the resources available for management are limited. Therefore, there are some limitations in existing management efforts. This study focused on identifying users' and managers' priority concerns about the use and management of the coastal and marine environment in the Rangelands area.

This chapter outlines a series of recommendations about how the Rangelands NRM could have a role, in partnership with other agencies and organisations, in addressing some of these priority concerns. These recommendations were developed from the interviews with stakeholders and follow-up interviews with managers and management experts. The recommendations outlined within this chapter are in addition to those outlined in the executive summary, which were identified through community workshops and focus groups.

7.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations relate to policy, infrastructure development and research and monitoring. Table 7.1 provides a summary of the recommendations, and the following paragraphs provide a précis of each recommendation.

Table 7.1 Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation	Location	Potential Partners
Meaningfully involve local recreational fishers in designing fisheries management approaches/ guidelines	Carnarvon to Port Hedland	Department of Fisheries; Department of Environment and Conservation; Various recreational fishers advisory and representative groups; Various commercial fishers representative groups
Investigate how current fisheries management approaches, specifically species bans and limitations for fishers, influence fishers' behaviour	Carnarvon to Exmouth	Department of Fisheries; Various recreational fishers advisory and representative groups; Various commercial fishers representative groups
Develop educational signage to encourage users to follow Department of Fisheries and Department of Environment and Conservation regulations	Carnarvon to Port Hedland	Department of Fisheries; Department of Environment and Conservation; Department of Planning and Infrastructure; Traditional Owners; Pastoral station owners; Representatives of various community 'user' groups
Investigate how the Wildlife Conservation Act (1950) influences formal and informal management efforts	Carnarvon to Port Hedland	Department of Environment and Conservation; Traditional Owners; Lease Holders; Local Governments
Advise local Carnarvon residents about the progress of plans for new boat launching facilities and investigate the environmental impact of over use of the current boat ramps in Carnarvon	Carnarvon	Shire of Carnarvon; Department of Planning and Infrastructure; Department of Environment and Conservation
Rationalise beach pathways and rehabilitate native vegetation at Coral Bay	Coral Bay	Ningaloo Sustainable Development Office; Shire of Carnarvon; Department of Environment and Conservation; Volunteers Australia, Local community environmental protection/ coastcare groups
Develop fish cleaning facilities at popular boat launching areas	Carnarvon to Port Hedland	Local Government; Department of Planning and Infrastructure
Establish environmentally sensitive toilets at priority informal coastal camping locations	Popular informal camping locations	Local Government; Local surfing and windsurfing representative groups; Local recreational fishing groups; Traditional Owners; Lease Holders
Implement development works to protect Indigenous rock art sites on the Burrup Peninsula	Burrup Peninsula	Traditional Owners; Shire of Roebourne; Department of Environment and Conservation
Conduct research into the environmental impacts of human activities at priority 'contested' locations	Blowholes, Quobba, Gnoraloo, Redbluff	Recreational user groups; Local Government; Department of Environment and Conservation; Western Australian Planning Commission
Review the sustainability of rotating closure zones as an alternative to current and proposed marine park approaches in the Rangelands Region	Near and in established and proposed marine park areas	Department of Fisheries; Local recreational fishers; Department of Environment and Conservation

Investigate the nature of Fly-In-Fly-Out workers recreational activities in the coastal environment and probable infrastructure requirements and environmental impacts	Karratha, Dampier and Port Hedland	Mining Companies; Local Government; Department of Fisheries; Department of Environment and Conservation
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Recommendation 1

Meaningfully Involve Local Recreational Fishers in Designing Fisheries Management Approaches/ Guidelines

Description: It was frequently reported that current regulations for recreational fishing, which restrict fishing activities across large spatial areas, did not protect the most vulnerable localities. The approach of restricting activities in large areas was regarded as inappropriate for a region as it did not result in the protection of those areas that were most vulnerable and did not protect sensitive areas such as fish nurseries and known unique habitats.

Associated with the concern about the appropriateness of recreational fishing regulations was concern that local users' knowledge about the environment and trends in participation had not been meaningfully used to inform regulations.

Interview participants commented that current regulations should be further refined by drawing on local users' knowledge about the environment and trends in participation.

Location: Carnarvon to Port Hedland

Proposed Action: Investigate local fishers' knowledge regarding priority locations for conservation and protection. Investigate procedures for involving local knowledge into fisheries management and planning in a meaningful way.

Potential Partners: Department of Fisheries, Department of Environment and Conservation, Various Regional Recreational Fishers Advisory Councils and Representatives Groups, Various Commercial Fishers Representative Groups.

Recommendation 2

Investigate How Current Fisheries Management Approaches, Specifically Species Bans and Limitations for Recreational Fishers, Influence Fishers Behaviour

Description: Interview participants, particularly those involved in recreational fishing, reported observing an increase in the proportion of recreational fishers' effort being targeted at species classified by the Department of Fisheries as 'category one - highest risk'. Participants reported that this classification had perpetuated a perception that 'category one' fish were more valuable and desirable than category two and category three species. On the other hand, species classified as category three had been undervalued and were increasingly regarded as undesirable, often being used as bait or discarded. Recreational fishers suggested that the categorisation of species had resulted in undesired impacts and was not a suitable approach to fisheries management in the area.

Location: Carnarvon to Exmouth

Proposed Action: Investigate the impact of Department of Fisheries' classifications on fishers' perceptions of various fish species. Investigate how perceptions of fish species influences fishing effort. Investigate alternative approaches for fisheries

management in the Rangelands.

Potential Partners: Department of Fisheries, Various Regional Recreational Fishers Advisory Councils and Representatives Groups, Various Commercial Fishers Representative Groups.

Recommendation 3

Develop Educational Signage to Encourage Users to Follow Department of Fisheries and Department of Environment and Conservation Regulations Regarding Activities in the Marine and Coastal Environment

Description: Recreational users of the marine and coastal environment were concerned that limited resources had been made available to enforce various Department of Fisheries and Department of Environment and Conservation regulations related to the use of the marine and coastal environment.

Interview participants generally recognised that it was unlikely that there would be any substantial increase in the resources available to management agencies for enforcement. Therefore, to address issues of compliance, interview participants suggested that efforts be directed to 'passive' education strategies. Strategically designed and located educational signage describing the core features of regulations, the rationale behind regulations and penalties for non-compliance was suggested as a method for ensuring incidences of non-compliance were minimised.

Location: Carnarvon to Port Hedland

Proposed Action: Develop a regional approach to education signage. Stakeholders should be contacted to identify strategic locations and priority needs for signage. A regional signage approach should include the rationalisation of signs at some popular recreational locations (particularly Coral Bay) and the placement of visually sensitive signs at priority activity locations.

Potential Partners: Department of Fisheries, Department of Environment and Conservation, Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Indigenous land owners, pastoral station owners, representatives of various community 'user' groups.

Recommendation 4

Investigate How the Wildlife Conservation Act (1950) Influences Formal and Informal Management Efforts

Description: The *Wildlife and Conservation Act (1950)* affords persons 'of Aboriginal descent' the right to take fauna and flora from 'Crown land or upon any other land, not being a nature reserve or wildlife sanctuary, but where occupied, with the consent of the occupier of that land, sufficient only for food for himself or his family, but not for sale' (Section 23). Generally, interview participants recognised that the provisions of the *Wildlife and Conservation Act (1950)* were important in providing Indigenous people the opportunity to engage in traditional cultural practices.

Uncertainty with respect to the *Wildlife and Conservation Act (1950)* concerned the extent of the rights of 'non-local' Indigenous people to take flora and fauna. The *Wildlife and Conservation Act (1950)* does not discriminate between different nations of Aboriginal people. In effect, the Act gives Aboriginal people from across Australia the right to take flora and fauna from land traditionally

owned by any other nation. This has limited the capacity of traditional owners to manage their resources. It also creates difficulties for managers seeking to ensure hunting and gathering practices are sustainable.

- Location: Carnarvon to Port Hedland
- Proposed Action: In partnership with traditional owners investigate how the provisions of the *Wildlife and Conservation Act (1950)*, which pertain to Aboriginal rights to take fauna and flora, influence the capacity of traditional owners and relevant government agencies to manage the environment. This investigation should result in a series of recommendations about how to improve the current situation of uncertainty.
- Potential Partners: Department of Environment and Conservation, Representatives of Traditional Indigenous Owners, Lease Holders, Local Governments.

Recommendation 5

Advise Local Carnarvon Residents About the Progress of Plans for New Boat Launching Facilities and Investigate the Environmental Impact of Overuse of the Current Boat Ramps in Carnarvon

Description: The Carnarvon Small Boat Harbour (CSBH) boat ramp and the Pelican Point boat ramp do not have the facilities to adequately cater to current use pressures. The CSBH is a deep water single lane boat ramp which is frequently overcrowded. The shallow Pelican Point boat ramp is also frequently overcrowded. The need to upgrade Carnarvon's public boat ramp facilities has been recognised by the local government and also the Government of Western Australia. In 2005, the Government of Western Australia made \$350,000 available to partly fund the construction of a new boat launching facility. In 2006, the Government of Western Australia provided support for the establishment of a steering committee for the project.

Interview participants reported they were not aware of any progress on the project since that time. Recreational boaters expressed frustration that the need for a new boat ramp had been recognised and some funding had been provided for a new boat launching facility yet little progress had been made on developing the new facility.

Resource managers suggested the overcrowding at the existing boat ramps could be causing environmental damage, which they had few facilities to monitor.

- Location: Carnarvon
- Proposed Action: Investigate the reason why little progress has been made on developing the new boat launching facilities and communicate the results to the residents of Carnarvon through the local newspaper.
- Examine the environmental impacts of overuse of the CSBH boat ramp and Pelican Point boat ramp and identify strategies to minimise environmental damage which can be implemented in the short term.
- Potential Partners: Shire of Carnarvon, Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Department of Environment and Conservation.

Recommendation 6

Rationalise Beach Pathways and Rehabilitate Native Vegetation at Coral Bay

Description: Coral Bay has experienced a considerable increase in use over recent years. The area is a popular destination for local residents and visitors from adjacent regions, Perth, interstate and overseas. The increase in use has resulted in an increase in the number of informal beach pathways being created through the dune systems. This has caused native vegetation to be trampled and weed species and litter to be introduced to the area.

Interview participants also noted there had been some efforts to rationalise beach pathways, eradicate introduced weeds and stabilise the vegetation in the dune systems. However, interview participants perceived that these efforts had not been extensive enough to adequately address the problem.

Location: Coral Bay

Proposed Action: Erect environmentally sensitive fencing to restrict access to dune systems. Develop clear pathways that provide access from parking spaces to the beach area. Remove introduced vegetation species from the dune systems and adjacent areas. Plant native vegetation to stabilise the dune systems.

Potential Partners: Ningaloo Sustainable Development Office, Shire of Carnarvon, Department of Environment and Conservation, Volunteers Australia, Local community environmental protection/ coastcare groups.

Recommendation 7

Develop Fish Cleaning Facilities at Popular Boat Launching Areas

Description: Most boat ramps do not have facilities for fish cleaning or disposing of fish waste. Interview participants reported that in a number of areas recent changes to Department of Fisheries regulations meant recreational fishers had to return to shore with their whole fish. Prior to these regulations, many fishers cleaned and filleted their catch while at sea and, therefore, did not require fish cleaning facilities at boat ramps.

Due to the lack of fish cleaning facilities, many local recreational fishers clean their catch at their home and dispose of the remains in their household rubbish. Visitors to the area have limited options for cleaning their catch. Most tourist accommodation localities, including caravan parks, do not have fish cleaning facilities.

Location: Carnarvon to Port Hedland

Proposed Action: Review the requirements of local and visiting recreational fishers for fish cleaning facilities. Work with local governments and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure to provide fishing cleaning facilities at popular boat ramps and other identified priority locations.

Potential Partners: Local Governments, Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

Recommendation 8

Establish Environmentally Sensitive Toilets at Priority Informal Coastal Camping Locations

Description:	<p>At many informal coastal camping locations toilet facilities are not provided. In some locations where 'bush-toilets' are provided, these are frequently in a very untidy state. The limited resources for ongoing maintenance and the prevailing weather conditions make 'bush-toilets' unsuitable for many coastal camping locations. Many campers use chemical toilets. However, with few facilities provided for the 'dumping' of waste, some campers avoid using their chemical toilets. Reportedly, some campers 'dump' waste from their chemical toilets in bushland surrounding camping sites.</p> <p>Interview participants suggested that environmentally sensitive toilets should be constructed at some camping locations along the Rangelands coast. Specifically, popular surfing and windsurfing locations that attract international tourists should be targeted.</p>
Location:	Popular 'informal' coastal camping locations
Proposed Action:	Establish environmentally friendly toilet facilities at priority informal coastal camping locations. Priority locations include popular surfing and windsurfing destinations, which attract national and international visitors.
Potential Partners:	Local Governments, Local surfing and windsurfing representative groups.

Recommendation 9

Implement Development Works to Protect Indigenous Rock Art Sites on the Burrup Peninsula

Description:	<p>Across the Burrup Peninsula, there are a large number of Indigenous rock art sites and sites of cultural significance to the traditional owners of the area. The Department of Environment and Conservation (2005) reported that there were no accurate records showing the number and location of rock art and other sites of cultural significance in the Burrup Peninsula area. Interview participants, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous were concerned that there was limited protection offered to these sites. Concern centred on people accessing sites in a manner which was culturally insensitive to the traditional owners, or that damaged the sites.</p> <p>The Department of Environment and Conservation (2005) developed a series of strategies to address the threat human activities posed to rock art sites within the proposed Burrup Peninsula Conservation Reserve.</p> <p>Interview participants reported frustration that despite research by the Department of Conservation and Environment no development works had been undertaken to protect rock art and other culturally significant sites.</p>
Location:	Burrup Peninsula
Proposed Action:	Work with the traditional owners of the Proposed Burrup Peninsula Conservation Reserve to refine the strategies for the preservation and promotion of rock art and archaeological values proposed by the Department of Environment and Conservation (2005). Facilitate the traditional owners and/or the Department of Environment and Conservation to complete the necessary works.
Potential Partners:	Traditional Owners, Shire of Roebourne, Department of Environment and Conservation

Recommendation 10

Conduct Research into the Environmental Impacts of Human Activities at Priority 'Contested' Locations

Description: A major concern of interview participants, from all user groups, was that the management arrangements being implemented in the area, or proposed for the area, had not been adequately researched and could increase environmental damage and the loss of core social traditions. For example, residents and visitors who visited the area between Carnarvon and Yardi Creek were concerned that the approach of creating formal activity nodes would concentrate activity in some localities, which could, in turn, generate unintended environmental problems.

Interview participants felt that the evidence supporting management decisions, particularly those that considerably influence traditional use patterns, had not been made available to them. Concern centred on the perceived limited transparency about how decisions were made.

Interview participants strongly suggested that there was an urgent need to review changes proposed by the Western Australian Planning Commission in the *Ningaloo Coast Regional Strategy Carnarvon to Exmouth* (2004) for the locations of Blowholes, Quobba, Gnoraloo and Redbluff. Interview participants recommended that a review should focus on establishing what impact changed uses would have on the number and type of visitors entering the area, and what impact this use change would, in turn, have on the environment.

Location: Blowholes, Quobba, Gnoraloo, Red Bluff

Proposed Action: Hold workshops for interested stakeholders where the detailed models supporting the Western Australian Planning Commission's proposed changes to activities at Blowholes Quobba, Gnoraloo and Red Bluff are made available.

Potential Partners: Recreational User Groups, Local Governments, Department of Environment and Conservation, Western Australian Planning Commission.

Recommendation 11

Review the Suitability of 'Rotating Closure Zones' as an Alternative to Current and Proposed Marine Park Approaches in the Rangelands Region

Description: Interview participants, particularly those with interests in recreational fishing, suggested that current management arrangements which resulted in large areas being closed to recreational fishing activity had caused an increase in fishing effort in areas adjacent to the closed areas. Interview participants commented that this intensified effort had caused damage to areas around the closure zones, and could have a negative impact on the 'protected' location.

Interview participants suggested that current marine park schemes should be reviewed to determine if an alternative approach, involving small areas being closed to fishing for a period of three to 10 years, would lessen the environmental damage caused by the concentration of fishing effort on the margins of closure zones without negating the environmental benefit gained from large area closures.

Location: Nearby, and in, established and proposed marine park areas

Proposed Action: Investigate the incidence and impact of concentrated recreational fishing effort on the margins of established marine parks. Work with local recreational and

commercial fishers to identify specific locations under pressure, or unique habitats that would likely benefit from fishing closures. Develop a framework outlining how a management approach based on the concept of rotating closure zones would influence the nature of uses and the condition of the natural environment.

Potential Partners: Department of Fisheries, Local Recreational Fishers, Department of Environment and Conservation

Recommendation 12

Investigate the Nature of Fly-In-Fly-Out Workers Recreational Activities in the Marine and Coastal Environment and Probable Infrastructure Requirements and Environmental Impacts

Description: Interview participants identified that coastal locations around Karratha, Dampier and Port Hedland had experienced a considerable increase in the number of recreational fishers. Interview participants suggested that much of this increase was driven by fly-in-fly-out workers opting to spend their leave time recreating in the region. Interview participants were concerned that the increase in the number of people participating in recreational fishing was not being adequately assessed or, thereby, managed.

Interview participants suggested that there was a need to better understand the activities of fly-in-fly-out workers who participate in recreational fishing and boating, and identify implications for infrastructure and the management of the natural environment.

Location: Karratha, Dampier and Port Hedland

Proposed Action: Investigate the frequency, location and type of activities fly-in-fly-out workers participate in during leave periods spent in the marine and coastal environment. Identify implications of fly-in-fly-out workers' actions for natural resource management and infrastructure development.

Potential Partners: Mining Companies, Local Governments, Department of Fisheries, Department of Environment and Conservation.

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Marine Park Reservation Data: sourced from the Department for Environment and Conservation

National Park Data: sourced from Geoscience Australia

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