



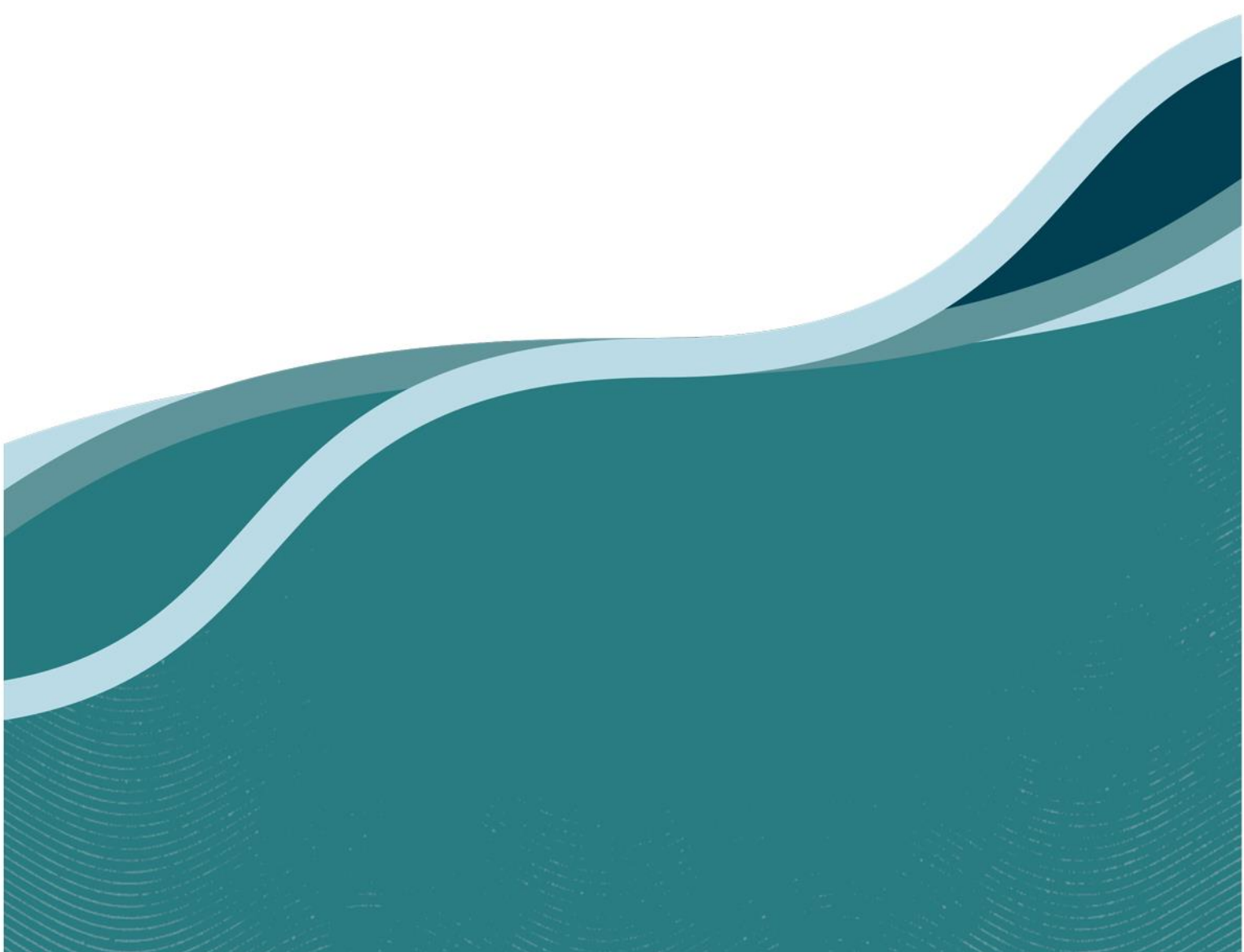
Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

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Frequently Asked Questions

Formalising Rock Lobster Charter Arrangements

November 2024



Purpose

To provide an overview of the upcoming changes to allow fishing for rock lobsters by a holder of a Fishing Tour Operator Licence(s) (FTOL holders) in the West Coast Region. The following information is reflective of what will be introduced from 1 December 2024 as approved by the Minister for Fisheries.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What was the Rock Lobster Charter Trial?

In 2019 the trial arrangement was implemented through an Instrument of Exemption allowing limited FTOL holders to fish for additional rock lobster in the West Coast Region with the aim to:

- provide alternative regional tourism opportunities;
- increase the availability of rock lobster to the WA public; and
- enhance marine tourism experiences for local, interstate, and international visitors.

2. What consultation did DPIRD undertake?

Given the success of the trial, DPIRD consulted with Recfishwest and Marine Tourism WA resulting in the Minister for Fisheries announcing that arrangements will be expanded to provide the opportunity for all FTOL holders in the West Coast Region to provide enhanced tourism opportunities.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development has progressed an exemption to allow all FTOL holders to participate in these new arrangements from **1 December 2024**. DPIRD will consider outcomes from the statewide charter review and broader legislation reform before formally implementing the long-term arrangements in the *Fish Resource Management Regulations 1995*.

3. What does this exemption allow me to do?

From **1 December 2024**, the following arrangements apply to **ALL** FTOL holders in the West Coast Region:

- Fish with or carry up to 12 rock lobster pots;
- boat limit of 80 rock lobster at any time;
- bag limit of 8 rock lobster per person on a rock lobster fishing tour;
- ability to undertake operational trips (without tour participants onboard) to:
 - operate pots (including pulling, moving, re-baiting, soaking, carrying and setting pots); and
 - to take, store and hold rock lobster caught for the purposes of facilitating a future rock lobster fishing tour.
- prohibit fishing for rock lobster by diving in the waters of the Rottneest Island Reserve if there are 24 or more rock lobster on or attached to the authorised boat operating under and FTOL.

4. Why are there restrictions around Rottneest Island?

To protect the current social and recreational values for recreational fishing at Rottneest Island, fishing for rock lobster by diving from an FTOL is restricted in the waters of the Rottneest Island Reserve. FTOL holders must ensure that, if there are 24 or more rock lobsters on or attached to the authorised boat in the waters of the Rottneest Island Reserve, they must not cause or permit persons diving from the boat to:

- a. take rock lobster; or
- b. bring rock lobster on, or attach rock lobster, to the authorised boat; or
- c. enter the water in possession of fishing equipment capable of taking rock lobster.

5. Is this open to all charter operators?

All FTOL holders permitted to operate in the West Coast Region are permitted under the Exemption to provide these enhanced marine tourism experiences.

6. What do I need to do to participate?

FTOL holders in the West Coast Region operating under these arrangements must:

- carry a copy of the exemption on board the authorised boat; and
- adhere to the conditions of the exemption; and
- report all rock lobster catches from trips undertaken under the exemption in your *Tour Operator Return Book*.

7. Can I store rock lobsters on my boat?

Yes, you can catch rock lobsters on operational trips and store them on your boat prior to a tour to facilitate the experience. You must adhere to the daily boat limit of 80 rock lobster at any time and ensure any rock lobsters taken on an operational trip, are not landed or removed from the boat until the completion of the next rock lobster fishing trip.

FTOL operators must complete a *Tour Operator Return Book – Daily Trip Return Sheet* for each operational trip and each fishing trip undertaken, including recording in the comments field, the total number of rock lobster:

- a. stored on board the authorised boat at the beginning of the trip; and
- b. retained on board the authorised boat at the end of the trip;

8. How do I report my catch

FTOL holders must complete a *Tour Operator Return Book – Daily Trip Return Sheet* for each operational trip and each fishing trip undertaken, including recording in the comments field, the total number of rock lobster:

- a. stored on board the authorised boat at the beginning of the trip; and
- b. retained on board the authorised boat at the end of the trip;

FTOL holders must submit the returns to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development in accordance with the instructions in the *Tour Operator Return Book* not later than the 15th day of the following month.

9. Are dive-based rock lobster tours eligible to participate?

Yes, all FTOL holders (pot-based or dive-based) in the West Coast region are eligible to participate under the new arrangements. Please note the limits in place for diving for rock lobster in the waters of the Rottnest Island Reserve (see 4).

10. When can I participate in these arrangements?

All FTOL holders in the West Coast region can participate in these arrangements from **1 December 2024**.

11. Am I still required to make a nomination before a trip?

No, you do not need to make a pre-fishing or post-fishing nomination.

12. Can I keep using the same logbook?

You can no longer use the 'Rock Lobster Charter Fishing Trial (2019 - 2022) Daily Nomination Capture Logbook' or the Rock Lobster Charter Online Nomination System. You must record your catch and trip information in the *Tour Operator Return Book – Daily Trip Return Sheet*. All unused trial logbooks are to be returned to DPIRD (PO Box 20 NORTH BEACH WA 6920).

13. I was not part of the trial. Can I participate now?

Yes. Following the success of the trial, all FTOL operators in the West Coast Bioregion can now participate in the arrangements.

Contacts

Depending on the nature of your question, please refer to the Department contact list below relevant to your query..

Type of query	Contact
Policy matters	Aidan Walsh aidan.walsh@dpird.wa.gov.au 6551 4401
Licensing questions	DPIRD Hillarys Office Phone: 1300 374 731 Licensing@dpird.wa.gov.au

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