

Dear Licence holder / stakeholder

RESOLUTION OF THE CAPE TO CAPE ROCK LOBSTER AREA CLOSURES

I write to inform you that the Minister for Fisheries has approved several amendments to the section 43 order '*Prohibition on Fishing for Rock Lobster (Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leewuin) Amendment Order 2005*', prohibiting rock lobster pot fishing in key surfing areas.

Over the past few seasons, the Capes region experienced the presence of an unusually high number of commercial rock lobster vessels due to an abundance of rock lobsters in southern waters. This led to concerns that safety had been compromised due to an inappropriate mix of recreational users and fishing vessels setting rock lobster pots in high use surfing areas.

Due to this concern, and after consultation with the rock lobster industry and community groups in the Capes region over many months, a number of key surfing area closures were implemented under Section 43 of the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994*. These closures prohibited vessels over eight metres in length from rock lobster fishing in a number of locations.

In making this decision, a number of issues were identified requiring further consideration:

- the possible expansion of the existing closures around surfing areas known as *Lefthanders*, *Three Bears*, and *Gnarabup – Margaret River*; and
- the possible expansion of the closures to include the setting of recreational rock lobster gear in the closed areas.

After further consultation with key stakeholder groups, and having duly considered the various points of view's raised, on 21 October 2005, the Minister announced several amendments to the existing section 43 order concerning the Capes rock lobster fishing closure areas. These amendments include:

- expanding the closure areas at two areas known as *Lefthanders* and *Three Bears*;
- amalgamating two existing closure areas known as *Gallows* and *Guillotines* to form one closure area known as *Gallows/Guillotines*; and
- extending the prohibition on setting rock lobster pots to include recreational fishers in all but three of the areas - allowing for continued recreational access in *Hamelin Bay*, *Gnarabup – Margaret River* and *Cowaramup Bay*.

It is important to note that none of the closure areas apply to recreational fishers diving for rock lobsters.

These amendments were gazetted on 29 November 2005. Please find enclosed information concerning the amended descriptions of the areas closed to rock lobster pot fishing and relevant maps. Information concerning the closure areas can be obtained from the Department of Fisheries website www.fish.wa.gov.au, or by contacting any Fisheries office.

Yours sincerely

P P Rogers
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

30 November 2005