



West Coast Demersal Scalefish Ministerial Advisory Committee – meeting #2

20 April 2026

The West Coast Demersal Ministerial Advisory Committee convened on 25 March 2026 to progress its work in supporting the sustainable recovery of key demersal species across Western Australia's West Coast Bioregion.

The Chair, Mr Matt Gillett, opened the meeting and advised members of a vacancy following the resignation of Ms Emma George. The Minister for Fisheries will determine whether the position is to be filled.

Building a Shared Understanding of Management Tools

The Committee discussed the fisheries management frameworks that guide the recovery of demersal scalefish in Western Australia. Members received a detailed presentation on the application of harvest strategies, including the indicator species approach, performance indicators, reference levels, and the role of recovery plans. Members noted the need to prioritise a review of the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource (WCDSR) harvest strategy, given increasing data limitations and the transition of the resource to predominantly recreational use.

DPIRD advised that work is underway to review catch limits and develop total removal limits to inform future management recommendations.

Recreational Management Measures

The Committee received a presentation on primary and secondary recreational management tools, including seasonal closures, tags, and effort-based measures. Members expressed interest in better understanding the capabilities and limitations of effort closures and the potential role of mandatory catch reporting alongside existing recreational fishing surveys. DPIRD will arrange a presentation on these matters at the next meeting.

Spawning Protection Objectives

Members considered biological information on spawning seasons for key species and noted strong community interest in spawning protection measures, particularly for WA dhufish, as reflected in recent public submissions.

The Committee discussed and proposed a set of objectives to guide the development of spawning protection measures, including:

- enabling demersal scalefish to spawn without disturbance;

- focusing protection on species at highest sustainability risk;
- maximising egg production and recruitment potential;
- ensuring measures are simple, justifiable, and aligned with community stewardship expectations; and
- considering social and economic impacts on recreational and charter sectors.

DPIRD will prepare a summary of public submissions relating to spawning protection and provide additional data, including charter catch and effort information, at the next meeting.

Demersal Recovery Zones

The Committee discussed the potential role of spatial closures in supporting stock recovery and proposed objectives for demersal recovery zones. These included:

- safeguarding older, larger breeding fish;
- ensuring zones are monitored and periodically reviewed;
- aligning the extent of closures with the level of depletion in each management area;
- minimising unnecessary impacts on recreational access; and
- using recovery zones alongside primary management measures as an additional safeguard.

DPIRD will prepare spatial information on spawning locations and fish age structures to support further consideration of recovery zones.

Additional Management Considerations

Members discussed proposed statewide bag and size limit changes and noted several points for the Minister's awareness, including potential impacts on post-release mortality and localised fishing pressure on key species.

The Committee also discussed depth-oriented management approaches and the need for improved understanding of offshore demersal species, including potential risks associated with effort shifts and compliance considerations.

The Committee agreed to consider targeted protection for western blue groper at a future meeting.

Next Steps

DPIRD and the Chair will consolidate the proposed objectives for spawning protection and recovery zones for member feedback. The Committee will continue to develop advice for the Minister on management options that support the long-term sustainability of demersal scalefish while maintaining recreational fishing amenity.

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, 28 April 2026**.

Matt Gillett

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