

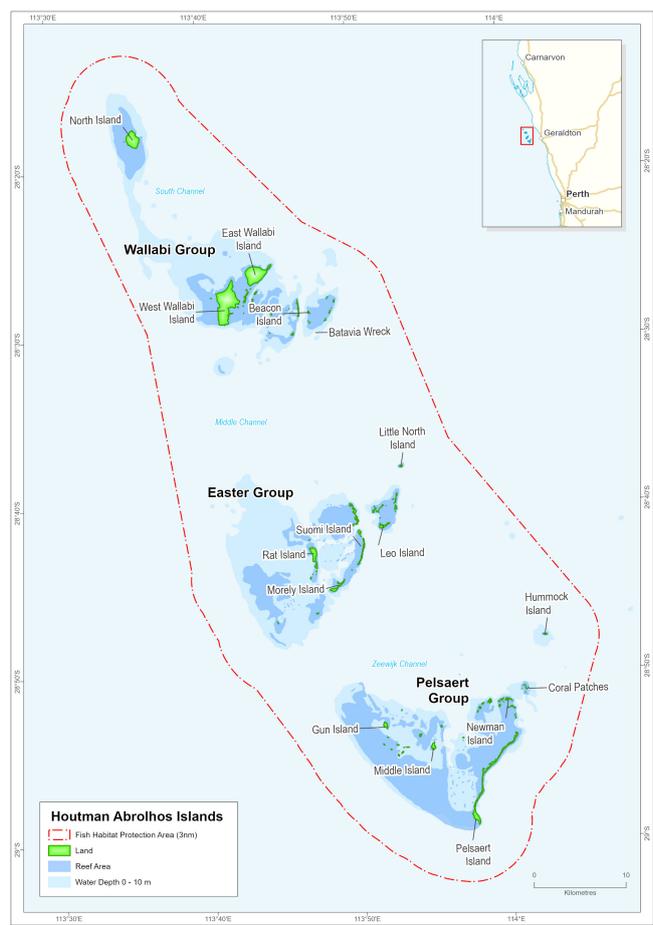
Recreational finfish boat, bag and possession limits at the Abrolhos Islands explained

New rules for recreational fishing for demersal scalefish at the Abrolhos Islands were introduced on 1 February 2023.

These rules are designed to provide greater protection of vulnerable demersal scalefish stocks in the West Coast bioregion.

The following guide explains how the new boat, bag, and possession limits work in combination at the Abrolhos Islands. The guide outlines the responsibilities when fishing, or being in possession of, fish in all waters and land within the Abrolhos Islands Fish Habitat Protection Area (AIFHPA).

Please note that all visitors are required to notify the department before entering the AIFHPA.



Abrolhos Islands Fish Habitat Protection Area

Demersal scalefish boat limit - 4

A boat limit of **4** demersal scalefish now applies throughout the entire West Coast bioregion including the waters of the AIFHPA. The boat limit is the maximum quantity of demersal scalefish that may be on or attached to a boat at any one time regardless of when, or where the fish were caught, or who the fish belong to.

Once the boat limit has been reached you must **NOT** catch and retain further demersal fish. If you're on a boat that's reached the demersal scalefish boat limit, it's time to 'switch your catch' to pelagic or nearshore species, or enjoy some of the other unique marine-based activities on offer at the Abrolhos Islands.

The master of a boat is responsible for ensuring that the total amount of demersal scalefish on the boat does not exceed the boat limit.

Finfish bag limit

The daily bag limit is the maximum quantity of fish that a person may take in any 24-hour period commencing at midnight. You must hold a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence (RFBL) to fish or to transport your catch or fishing gear to or from a land-based fishing location using a powered boat. You don't need an RFBL if you are fishing with a person who holds an RFBL, provided the total catch of everyone on board the boat stays within the bag limit(s) of the one or more fishers who hold an RFBL.

The following grouped species bag limit categories apply to all persons fishing for a recreational purpose in the AIFHPA:

- 1 demersal scalefish* (unless the boat limit has been reached); and
- 3 large pelagic finfish; and
- 16 nearshore/estuarine finfish; and
- 30 other species (e.g., herring and whiting); and
- 15 squid, cuttlefish and octopus (combined*); and
- 8 rock lobster* (recreational rock lobster licence required).

*Boat limits apply.

Please note that individual species limits apply within each category. A full list of species within each bag limit category can be found in the statewide recreational fishing guide.

Finfish possession limit

The finfish possession limit is the maximum quantity of finfish that a person may have in their control/ownership at any one time.

The following individual finfish possession limits apply to all persons onboard a boat or on an island within the AIFHPA regardless of where or when the fish were caught:

- 1 day's bag limit of whole fish or fish trunks (see bag limits above); **or**
- 5 kilograms of fillets of any species (with skin attached), plus 5 kg of large pelagic finfish (with skin attached).

Heads, tails, wings, and backbones (frames) are not included as part of the fillet possession limit.

The general statewide finfish possession limit applies once you have left the AIFHPA and labelling requirements also apply in certain circumstances. Refer to the statewide recreational fishing guide for further details.

Finfish in filleted form

For the purpose of determining the number of finfish subject to a bag or boat limit, when the fish are in filleted form, 2 fillets are considered equal to one whole fish (i.e. 8 fillets = 4 finfish).

Multiple limits apply

If multiple limits (bag, boat, or possession) apply to a fishing trip, a person(s) should only fish up to the lowest applicable limit. For example, if there are 6 licensed people on board a boat, the boat limit remains at 4 demersals, despite the daily bag limit of 1 per fisher. See FAQs below for further examples.

Frequently asked questions

Q: Four licenced fishers on a boat catch their bag limit of one demersal scalefish each on the first day of their trip, and fillet the fish. Can they catch their bag limit of demersal scalefish again the next day?

A: No, as the boat limit of 4 demersal scalefish has been reached, no more demersal scalefish can be on the boat.

Visitors are encouraged to enjoy a feed of fresh fish as part of their experience at the Abrolhos Islands, and if a demersal scalefish is consumed, another fish can be taken as long as no more than 4 demersal scalefish are on the boat at any time.

Q: What if I catch a large demersal scalefish that is likely to yield more than the individual finfish possession limit of 5 kg when filleted (i.e., a fish exceeding 15 kg whole weight) while fishing in the AIFHPA?

A: To stay within your individual finfish possession limit, you must keep the fish whole as your possession limit of 1 day's bag limit.

Q. Can I catch fish outside the Abrolhos Islands and bring them into the AIFHPA?

A. Yes, you can bring fish into the AIFHPA, except baldchin groper during the spawning closure (1 October to 31 December, inclusive). Note, all fish in your physical possession count towards your possession limit for the Abrolhos Islands regardless of where or when they were caught.

Q. Two licensed fishers on a boat catch their bag limit of one demersal scalefish each on the first day of their overnight trip to the Abrolhos Island. Are they able to go fishing for demersal scalefish on their second day?

A. Yes, as the bag limit of demersal scalefish within the AIFHPA is 1 demersal scalefish per day, they can catch one more each on the second day, but to do so they need to fillet the first days catch prior to beginning the second days fishing for demersal scalefish. Their possession limit of demersal scalefish fillets can be up to 5 kg each with skin attached or 1 whole demersal fish. Once they catch their second days bag limit, their demersal scalefish boat limit has now been reached, these fish need to be filleted immediately. It's now time to switch their catch to other categories of species such as pelagic or nearshore species if they want to continue fishing.

Q. Two licensed fishers on a day trip at the AIFHPA fish from their boat. They both catch their daily bag limit of 1 demersal scalefish each, keeping both fish whole. They then switch to target pelagic species - one person catches 3 yellowfin tuna, and the other person catches 3 Spanish mackerel. Because they have decided to keep their fish whole, they must continue keeping all their fish whole, as an individual licenced recreational fisher can either have fillets or whole fish. Together, they now have 1 whole demersal scalefish each and 3 whole pelagic species each.

On their way back to Geraldton, are they able to catch more demersal scalefish once outside the boundary of the AIFHPA?

A. Yes, once they have left the boundary of the AIFHPA, they are now under the West Coast bioregion's possession and bag limits. This means they may take up to 2 demersal scalefish per licenced fisher if the boat limit of 4 demersal scalefish (2 or more licenced fishers onboard) has not been exceeded. Currently they have 2 demersal scalefish from the Abrolhos Islands, they may add 1 more demersal scalefish each outside of the AIFHPA boundary.

Q. Can I fillet some fish I catch **and** have some whole fish within the AIFHPA?

A. No, each individual person within the AIFHPA needs to decide whether they want to keep their possession limit of fish whole or filleted. A licenced recreational fisher cannot be in possession of both whole fish and filleted fish. One fisher may decide to keep their catch all as whole fish (i.e. 1 whole demersal and 3 whole pelagic), another fisher onboard the boat can decide to keep their catch in fillet form. Ensuring they remain within the boat limit of 4 demersal fish.

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