



5th Western Australian State

COASTAL CONFERENCE 2009

*Whose Coast Is It?
adapting for the future*

5C:

Planning Marine
Environments for
the Future:
4.30—5.00pm
Thursday 8th
October 2009
Pleiades Room

Developing and Implementing Research in WA's Marine Parks and Reserves.

PRESENTER:

Dr Alan Kendrick

Marine Science Program, Department of Environment and Conservation

CONTACT DETAILS:

Phone: +61 0427 387 606

Email: alan.kendrick@dec.wa.gov.au

Postal Address: Locked Bag 104, Bentley Delivery Centre, WA 6983

CO-AUTHOR:

Dr Shaun Wilson

Marine Science Program, Department of Environment and Conservation

Abstract

Marine parks and reserves are managed by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and are an integral part of WA's marine biodiversity conservation strategy. Managed marine protected areas (MPAs) enable the concentration of management resources on areas of biodiversity conservation significance, and are widely recognised as a significant component of the EBM 'toolbox'. Management plans for WA's MPAs are implemented collaboratively by several central and regionally-based DEC branches, including the Marine Science Program (MSP), which was formed in 2006 to oversee the implementation of research and monitoring in marine parks and reserves.

The development of new knowledge by research is integral to coastal management, and the MSP has established temperate and tropical research groups to conduct or facilitate research in WA's marine parks and reserves. The role of MSP's research groups is to increase understanding of the structure and function of ecosystems and human interactions with the environment to assist the management of existing marine reserves and to assist in identification and planning for additional reserves. DEC's MPA research effort is primarily directed towards:

- i) inventory and baseline biological studies;
- ii) increasing knowledge of key ecological processes; and
- iii) informing the design of monitoring programs to assess management effectiveness.

Research priorities are derived from the relative 'value' of ecosystem attributes, the pressures acting on them and the adequacy of existing knowledge. Research is conducted internally by the MSP and DEC's Regional marine reserve staff, as DEC/external collaborations, or as external contracts.

In this presentation we outline a systematic plan for developing, prioritizing and implementing marine conservation research across WA's marine parks and reserves. We also highlight how research contributes to DEC's marine monitoring program, and present examples to demonstrate how DEC's reserve estate provides an important focus for research effort at local and regional scales.