



Western
**ROCK
LOBSTER**

World leading sustainable fishery

West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery Code of Practice for Reducing Whale Entanglements

Introduction

The Western Rock Lobster Council (WRLC) developed a Whale Entanglement Code of Practice (CoP) in 2007 in association with Government and non-government agencies to reduce interactions with whales in Western Australian waters. Through a consultation process involving a range of stakeholders it was recognised that a CoP was necessary. This CoP is specifically aimed at minimising entanglement of whales in rock lobster pot lines, although the strategies proposed will also minimise entanglements with other marine wildlife.

The CoP helps the industry to make progress against the following Government and management considerations:

- Fishing activities in which fishing gear is set, using trailing ropes or tethered buoys, is identified as a potentially threatening process, particularly for migrating Southern Right and Humpback whales which are protected under the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and the *Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*;
- Whale entanglements are recognised as a management issue for the West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery by both the WA and Commonwealth Governments;

Benefits of the Code of Practice

1. As a conservation measure to assist in protecting whales from entanglement.
2. The profile of the rock lobster industry can be improved by:
 - their direct involvement in the reduction of whale entanglements by acknowledging best fishing practices at industry level; and their involvement in the disentanglement program.
3. Avoiding loss of gear and catch from lobster pots.
4. Safe working practice for boat crews to avoid injuries.
5. Safe working disentanglement network. The need exists for fast reporting of incidents so the disentanglement process can begin.

Please see overleaf for mandatory gear configurations
Contact Jason How on 9203 0247 for any queries on
Whale Sightings
Contact WRL Management on 9482 7333 for any
queries on gear modification requirements

To notify of an entanglement call:

08 9219 9840

or

Wildcare Helpline on 08 9474 9055

What to do if encountering a whale entanglement

- **Report entanglements as soon as possible**

Rapid reporting ensures entanglement response teams have the best possible chance of successfully disentangling whales. Fishers should monitor entanglement situations, with due regard for the safety of the vessel and the whale, until assistance teams arrive.

- **Stand-by the entangled whale**

When possible this enables the disentanglement team to find the whale quicker and gain all the necessary information from the fisher prior to attempting disentanglement.

- **DO NOT attempt to cut the whale free**

The attached line allows a safe working line for the disentanglement team.

- **Be co-operative when responding to entanglements**

Fishers can voluntarily participate in Department of Parks and Wildlife training programs for involvement in disentanglement operations. This training will ensure that fishers are aware of procedures and are familiar with disentanglement team personnel.

Fishers should not attempt disentanglement of whales without the assistance of the WA Government's Whale Disentanglement Team

Practices that reduce the risk of whale entanglements

Rock Lobster fishermen should:

- **Be aware of whales between May and November**
- **Adhere to the mandatory gear modifications**

(see overleaf) during the period 1 May to 31 October inclusive.

- **Participate in the Marine Fauna Sightings app**

To support researchers in better understanding the paths of migrating whales.

- **Dog boning of rope**

Dog boning of rope can occur if fishers wish to reduce rope on or near the surface when fishing with less than 32.9 m of rope.

- **Avoid setting pots in clusters**
- **Regularly check pots**

The Disentanglement teams have a greater chance of success if the entanglement is discovered quickly.

- **DO NOT leave pots in the water for prolonged periods**

(mandatory to pull pots with weighted ropes once every 7 days).

Pots should be retained on board or returned to shore when they are not fishing for prolonged periods.

- **Collect abandoned/lost or cut pot lines, rope or fishing gear**
- **Investigate all new technologies that may reduce entanglements**

Gear modifications

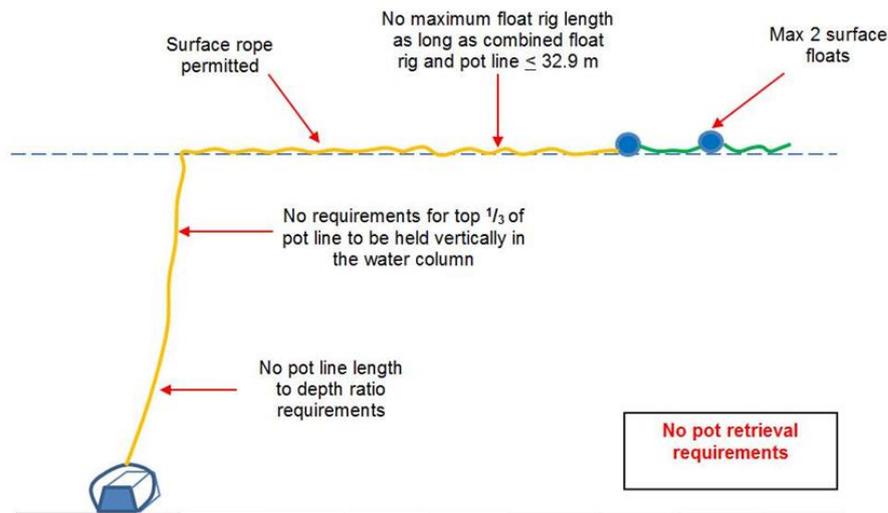
On 1 May 2016 new modified whale entanglement mitigation measures were implemented in order to reduce the risk of whale entanglements in the fishery during the whale migration season.

These measures will be in place from 1 May to 31 October inclusive each year. As part of these changes the 'whale zone', which was introduced in 2015, has been removed.

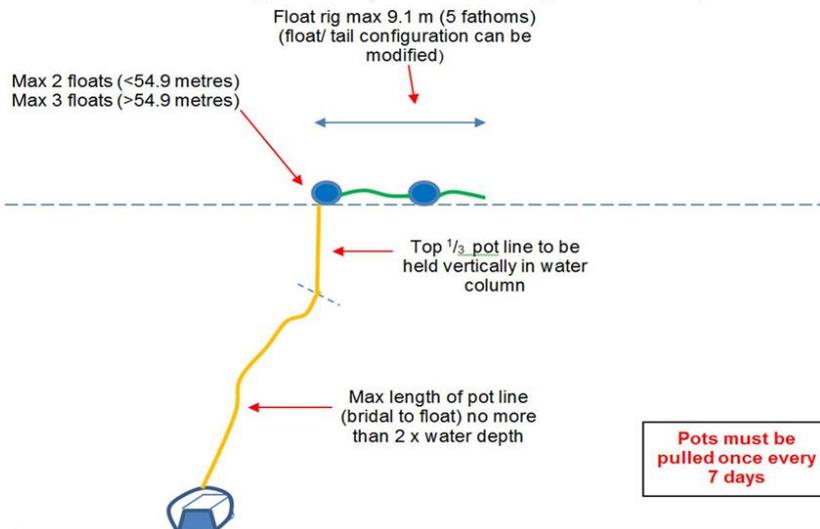
To simplify the requirements, fishers who use more than 32.9m (18 fathoms) of rope, are required to abide by the gear modifications which include restrictions on rope length and requirements of negatively buoyant rope and minimum pot retrieval requirements (*image below; not to scale, guide only*).

Specific details on the gear modifications can also be found at the Department of Fisheries website as well as the WRLC website.

When fishing with ropes ≤ 32.9 m (18 fathoms)



When fishing with ropes > 32.9 m (18 fathoms)



Whale App to help get the big picture on WA migration

A whale app is now available to encourage all fishers to assist with whale migration research by reporting sightings on their smart phone.

Marine Fauna Sightings can be downloaded for free and it enables all water users to submit their sightings of whales along the coast. The WRLC requests that all rock lobster fishers download and use this app to report all whale sightings.

To map the migration corridor of humpback whales, dedicated app users are required to log all sightings when returning to port in June and September.

If you are interested please contact Jason How (details overleaf).