Pearl Oyster Industry

Pearl industry management in the NT

Fisheries manages compliance with licence conditions by the pearl industry. This includes quota management, licence management including compliance with their Environmental Management Plan conditions, vessels associated with the operation, health and translocation of pearl oyster stocks.

Fisheries management is governed by the *Fisheries Act 1988*, and the *Fisheries Regulations*. This covers areas including translocation permits.

The pearling industry is mainly managed through the:

- Pearl oyster Fishery management plan 1993
- Pearl oyster culture industry management plan 1998 (as in force 2014)
- Northern Territory Pearl Oyster Industry Compliance Plan (2024).

Further regulation is provided through licensing for aquaculture and movement of stock. These documents can be requested from Fisheries if required.

Fisheries has an oversight and regulation role in the pearl industry to ensure that the industry is compatible with sustainable fishery practices for the fishery sector.

For the aquaculture part of the pearl oyster industry Fisheries aims to ensure that the industry is managed to minimise risks from spread of pests or diseases, and that farming has minimal impact on the environment. Pearl oyster aquaculture is very different to many other forms of aquaculture in that there is no feeding of stock, stock are held in very low density in high current environments, and there are no chemicals or other artificial substances used in production. Pearl oysters are held in very low density to ensure that oysters have an uninterrupted flow of fresh oceanic water which brings the food (plankton) to the animals, and lowers risk of disease transmission or overloading of the environment.

Annual government audits of the pearl oyster farm operations and hatcheries are made to ensure compliance with licence conditions and the farm's Environmental Management Plan. Audits of oyster returns are done annually to ensure that farms and harvest is done within quota limits.