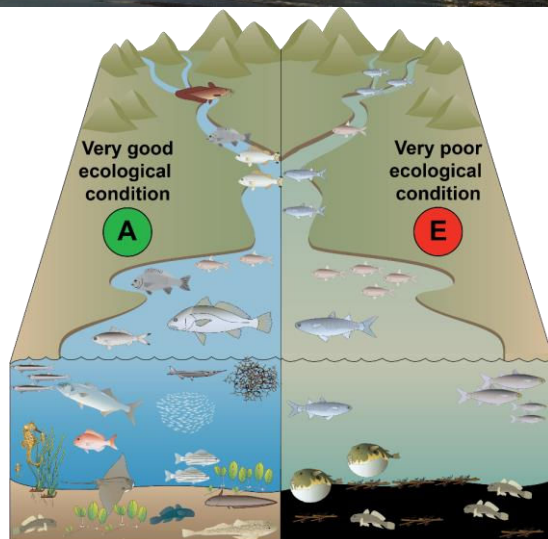


Peel-Harvey Estuary condition assessment based on fish communities - 2020/21: Report card

Background

- Fish communities provide important 'signals' about the ecosystem health of estuaries.
- The Peel Fish Community Index synthesises complex information from a range of structural and functional metrics of the fish community into an index and graded from A (*Very good*) to E (*Very poor*).
- Shallow, nearshore (≤ 1 m deep) and deeper, offshore (> 1 m deep) regions of the Peel-Harvey Estuary sampled during summer and autumn of 2020/21.



Key results

- Nearshore** waters were in *Fair* (C) condition overall (across both seasons) in 2020/21 and better in autumn than summer.
- Conditions were better in the more 'upstream' regions, with a *Very poor/Poor* (E/D) score for the Mandurah Channel in summer and *Poor* (D) scores in Peel Inlet in both seasons.
- Offshore** waters also assessed as *Fair* overall, having been *Good* (B) in summer and *Fair* in autumn.
- The Upper Murray was assessed as *Very poor* (E) in autumn due to very low oxygen levels from stratification resulting in low diversity and abundances of fish.
- The occurrence of low oxygen levels are predicted to increase in the future due to climate change, placing the ecological health of this region under significant threat.

