

Fishery seeks eco stamp

■ Daniel Mercer

Commercial and recreational crab fishers will bury their fishing knives as part of a joint move to accredit Mandurah's crab fishery as sustainable.

It is the latest WA fishery to seek approval in the brave new world of eco accreditation, where environmentally conscious consumers can make or break a fishing business.

Under the deal to be announced by Fisheries Minister Ken Baston today, the Peel-Harvey estuary's blue swimmer crab fishery will be assessed by the Marine Stewardship Council — the "gold standard" of international accreditation.

It would be funded by the State Government's \$14.5 million fisheries certification program and will cover the fishery's commercial and recreational side — a move believed to be a world first.

Damien Bell, a second-generation crab fisher from Mandurah, said the system had its knockers



Pact: Fisher Barry Wiseman and commercial fisherman Damien Bell.

but he was adamant accreditation was vital for the sector.

"This is about building a social licence to operate, to help educate the consumer about the fact their seafood is being caught in a sustainable manner," Mr Bell said.

Recfishwest chief executive Andrew Rowland said certification "would improve the stewardship of the estuarine environment on which the stock depends".

Mr Baston said the accreditation would take 12 to 18 months.