

Kimberley coastline to be focus of study

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One of the world's last great wilderness areas, the West Australian Kimberley coast, is the focus of a new study that will help guide its development.

Scientists believe the waters and coast harbour some of the most extensive coral fringing reefs but factual scientific knowledge of the area is limited.

The WA Marine Science Institution will now investigate the area which is coming under increasing pressure from the resources and tourism sectors.

WAMSI chief executive Steve Blake said decisions needed to be made about the level of acceptable infrastructure investment in the region.

"You can't make these decisions without informed scientific knowledge," Dr Blake said.

It will provide a marine science case and a supporting business case by August 2008, examining gaps in knowledge of the marine science of the region, its oceanography, biodiversity, fisheries, ecology and human usage.

Offshore development in the state's Pilbara region, south of the Kimberley, the future home of the Gorgon Gas project and other offshore oil and gas projects, have faced strong resistance from environmentalists .

AAP