

Freshwater Fisheries Management Update

Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable

Fish Habitat and Flows Roundtable

27 November 2020

Talk Wild Trout Conference

- Over three nights between 24th and 26th November we held the sixth Talk Wild Trout Conference - the first fully digital event!
- The Conference was held in partnership with the Australian Trout Foundation and Victoria Trout Fisher Reference Group and featured 12 fantastic presentations from international and local experts, as well as three open and live question and answer panel sessions.
- Highlights of the conference included:
 - Sascha Danylchuk (USA) from the international 'Keep Fish Wet' organisation who spoke about the latest science of best-practice catch and release of fish that can be applied to caring for Victoria's fisheries.
 - Dr Paul Gaskell (UK) from the Wild trout Trust who spoke about the inspirational 'Trout in Towns' project to restore wild trout populations and fisheries in urban environments
 - David Anderson (Flylife Magazine, Twigwater.com) who provided a visually stunning presentation on photographing your catch while taking care of it
- It was another sensational conference with hundreds of anglers tuning in and participating in the discussions.
- All presentations have been recorded and can be viewed on the [VFA YouTube channel](#).



Native Fish Hatchery

- Pond earthworks design including pipes, electrical conduits, pond walkways, harvest sump and drainage systems have been completed.
- An expression of Interest (EOI) tender process for earthworks construction has resulted in a shortlist of six contractors. Short-listed contractors have been invited to provide a tender for a final earthwork quotation.
- The VFA has secured a Goulburn Murray Water license to extract up to 250ML of bore water each year from the property.
- Construction of a large-scale production bore has started and is expected to be completed by the end of this week. Our targeted groundwater aquifer has been reached at 55 metres with yield and water quality results expected soon.



Stage 2 – VFA's Native Fish Hatchery (Arcadia)



Target One Million
More Victorians fishing, more often

- A draft design for a water re-use / constructed wetland system has been prepared that will enable more than 60% water re-use.
- Fencing around the property has been inspected and large sections replaced. Expert independent power supply advice suggests solar power is a viable option for part of the operation.
- Broodstock ponds completed by April will enable broodstock to be bought onto property by May 2021. Completion of the whole hatchery is on target for October 2021.
- A concept design for a visitor's facility at the front of the hatchery property has been prepared, in the event that funding is secured for this additional element in the state budget.
- See Anthony Forster for more details.

Vic Fish Stock

- The Vic Fish Stock report is complete and currently being posted out to angling clubs and is also available on the VFA website.
- It covers 8 million fish across 13 species has been prepared with assistance from anglers.
- The next Vic Fish Stock meetings will be conducted in 2021.
- Further information will be posted out shortly regarding the timing of the meetings and to prepare stocking submissions.



Inter-Valley Transfers and our precious native fisheries

- 'Inter-Valley Transfers' (IVTs) between the Goulburn and Murray in order to meet irrigation demands have been occurring at unprecedented high levels and reversing seasonal water flows on the Lower Goulburn River.
- Prolonged and unseasonal IVTs over late spring and summer (a period critical to the recruitment success of many native fish species) are jeopardising native fisheries, including threatened populations of native fish, habitat and environmental restoration efforts, along with recreational, socio-economic and cultural values of the Lower Goulburn River.
- Due to impacts on these values, IVTs have been subject to review. The review commenced in 2019 and was due for completion with new trade and operational rules to be introduced in July 2021 with interim operating rules continuing to apply under a 40GL/month limit (see Minister Neville's media release: <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/delivering-basin-water-users>).
- Recently, the MDBA have put in an order for IVTs in the range of 27GL for November 2020 and 40GL for December 2020. 40GL equates to ~1,290ML/day, which is well in excess of our recommendations and the VEWB and GBCMA seasonal watering recommendations of 940ML/day. These flows have commenced and were coordinated with e-flows to cue fish spawning, peaking at around 6,600 ML/day by 17 November 2020.



- Public consultation is due to commence on the new rules early 2021 with the release of a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) on the proposed rules. The VFA is strongly engaged in this process.
- The VFA is continuing to work with a range of stakeholders, including water managers and CMAs, to advocate for base flows to be maintained below 1,000 ML/day to protect native fish populations, fisheries, and indigenous heritage and community values of the river.

Bushfire stocking trial

- In the wake of last summer's devastating bushfires, a meeting was held in June 2020 between VFA, local anglers and representatives from the Australian Trout Foundation, Native Fish Australia, VRFish and the North East CMA to discuss the recovery of river systems and fisheries in north east Victoria.
- Encouragingly some signs of recovery are evident. Meeting attendees agreed baseline fish population surveys and fish stocking trials be conducted to investigate if fish population recovery can be accelerated through stocking of trout and Murray cod.
- The Australian Trout Foundation have long wanted to trial the stocking of wild fish and secured a commitment of trout eggs from NSW Fisheries Gaden Hatchery.
- The eggs were from wild parents as brown trout from Lake Jindabyne run up the Thredbo River to spawn and are trapped at Gaden hatchery's fish trap, where the ripe fish can be stripped. NSW Fisheries donated some eggs for the trial, took tissue samples from the parents (for later genetic identification of the fry) and helped transport the eggs across the border with VFA staff.
- The trout eggs were incubated at Snobs Creek and were released on the 18th November as first feeding fry into the Nariel Creek with the aid of Australian Trout Foundation, local anglers and North East CMA. Murray cod will be stocked into Corryong and Cudgewa Creeks later this year.
- The survey and fish stocking trials will involve anglers and the results will be shared through Talk Wild Trout Conference, Murray Codference and social media.





Our developing stocked estuary perch fisheries in the Maribyrnong and Barwon rivers are coming of age! (Photos: John 'Jigman' Didge)

If you have any questions or comments about these or other projects, feel free to get in contact with the freshwater fisheries management team:

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