

September 2025

# Recreational Fisheries Management Update



**Proposed Kingfish  
Changes**

**Booming Bass in  
the Snowy River**

**Fisheries Science  
Forecasting Success**

**Turning Old Shells  
into More Fish**



*Cover photo: Michelle Brittain with  
92cm Yellowtail Kingfish that she  
caught jigging near Port Phillip  
Heads in April 2025.*



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# Proposed Change to Kingfish Bag Limit

Yellowtail Kingfish are a highly sought after and valued recreational fish species in Victoria, typically averaging 5-10kg each.

In recent years, improved numbers of kingfish have been caught in Victorian waters such as Mallacoota, Marlo, Port Welshpool, Port Fairy, Portland, inside Western Port, and around the entrance to Port Phillip known as the rip.

Recreational fishers have raised concerns that current recreational fishing regulations for the species are outdated, particularly the 5 fish per person day bag limit, being seen as beyond a reasonable day's harvest.

The VFA, in partnership with recreational fishers, have reviewed bag and size limits for the species as well as scientific research and neighbouring jurisdictions management, and is proposing to reduce the bag limit from 5 to 2 kingfish per person per day.

The proposed changes are expected to:

- Better reflect rec fisher views of a reasonable day's harvest
- Better share the catch amongst more fishers
- Reduce local depletion of the species during peak fishing periods
- Potentially improve the fishery quality through better sized fish
- Align with the bag limit of other offshore species such as gummy and school shark.

Recreational fishers are invited to have their say on the proposal by emailing [taylor.hunt@vfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:taylor.hunt@vfa.vic.gov.au) by 30 September 2025.

If you have questions or would like further information, feel free to contact Taylor Hunt, Manager of Recreational Fisheries on [taylor.hunt@vfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:taylor.hunt@vfa.vic.gov.au) or 0418 478 028.





## Booming Bass fishery in the Snowy River



The Snowy River bass fishery is booming thanks to a combination of fish stocking, habitat restoration and environmental flows!

Luca and Jayd Wieland, James Norney, Bill Classon and the Australian Fishing Network (AFN) recently rafted down the Snowy River over 5 days catching hundreds of beautiful bass, including many 40cm+. Check out the incredible trip coverage on the [AFN 'The Fishing Show' series](#).

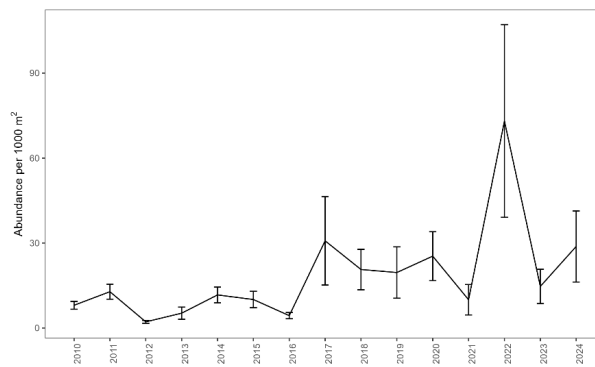
Australian bass (*Macquaria novemaculeata*) were once abundant throughout the Snowy, but over decades their numbers declined as their breeding cycle was disrupted by large-scale river regulation including dam construction and altered flows. Bass migrate downstream to estuarine waters to spawn with larvae relying on downstream drift and favourable salinity to survive. Changes to flow patterns and barriers to migration meant few young fish survived to replenish the population. By the early 2000s, natural recruitment in the Snowy River had collapsed to the point that catches were rare and the fishery was in poor condition. Stocking was identified as a strategy to prevent further decline and over 200,000 Australian bass have been released into the Snowy over the last five years to recover the population and fishery, complementing environmental flow management and habitat restoration.

As a result of these integrated fisheries and catchment management efforts, surveys and angler reports indicate a significant improvement in fish numbers and size range. Legal and trophy sized bass are being caught, with younger age classes showing stocked fish are surviving and contributing. This rebuilding has restored the Snowy River as one of Victoria's top Australian bass destinations.





# Fisheries Science Forecasting Fishery Success



Fisheries science surveys of key recreational fish stocks around the state are underpinning fisheries management and fishery success, such as for black bream in the Gippsland Lakes.

Monitoring pre-recruit (juvenile) fish numbers offers a unique opportunity to assess the future success of our fish stocks. Pre-recruits are typically too young or small to be caught using traditional fishing methods, but their abundance provides a critical insight into the future health of fish stocks and ecosystems. The success of future fish stocks is reliant on many factors, including a sufficient spawning biomass and environmental factors including temperature, salinity and associated ecosystems including habitat and food availability.

This year we celebrated 15 years of our black bream surveys in the Gippsland Lakes, which has been net-free since 2020. Surveying black bream takes around five to seven days at 50 sites within the expansive lakes system to ensure numbers obtained are representative of the entire area. In winter 2025, most juvenile black bream were found in the western region of the Lakes, which is different compared to other years.

Over the years this information has helped shaped the slot limit and revised bag limits for black bream, which are helping drive the recovery of this iconic species in the Gippsland Lakes.

Incorporating such data into our assessments provides a holistic perspective of bream numbers with the ability to forecast their sustainability into the future.

It's all contributing to great recreational fishing experiences such as this cracking 51cm bream caught by Brett Geddes – congratulations on your PB Brett!





# Australian Trout Foundation Leading the Way

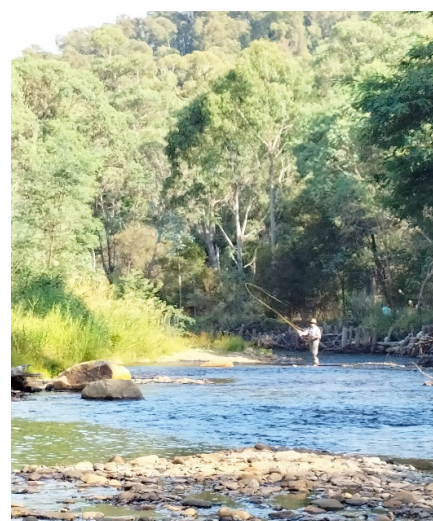
The 2025 Spring trout season opens on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September and with all the anticipation of what the new year will bring, it is timely to reflect on what has been done to improve our exciting trout fishing, and the rivers and streams in which they live.

The Australian Trout Foundation (ATF) has been working tirelessly for years to develop partnerships with landholders, Catchment Management Authorities and other waterway/land managers to improve the habitat for trout in our beautiful clearwater streams.

This massive effort is bearing fruit! The following statistics demonstrate the scale and impact that this band of volunteers is having:

- 32 riparian projects delivered across 14 rivers
- Nearly 80,000 trees planted to improve riparian areas
- 19 in-stream habitat projects in 10 rivers, including placement of hardwood logs and large boulders to create greater diversity, refuge and natural recruitment of wild trout
- Strong partnerships with around a dozen fishing clubs and four Catchment Management Authorities, and many more in the pipeline.

For more details on how to get involved with the ATF's many programs for restoring trout habitat please go to: <https://australiantroutfoundation.com.au/>





## Turning Old Shells into More Fish!



OzFish Unlimited are partnering with recreational fishers and the Nature Conservancy to add fish habitat and increase numbers of snapper, whiting and calamari in Port Phillip Bay!

Between 2009 and 2012, the VFA deployed concrete reef balls at six sites across Port Phillip Bay to recreate lost habitat and improve recreational fishing. These sites include Frankston Pier, Altona Pier, Portarlington Pier, and three deeper offshore reefs in the Carrum Bight area—Yakka Reef, Tadesco Reef, and Rhys's Reef.



The OzFish Reefball Rejuvenation project is now enhancing these structures by infilling them with recycled shell collected through OzFish's Shellsavers program and The Nature Conservancy's Shuck Don't Chuck initiative.

Volunteers and anglers' bag and deploy shell material directly over the reef balls, creating more complex habitat that supports native shellfish recruitment—particularly the Australian flat oyster (*Ostrea angasi*). This community-driven effort is increasing reef connectivity, boosting fish abundance, improving ecosystem resilience and creating better fishing opportunities. Running from 2024 to late 2026, the project also includes BRUV (baited remote underwater video) monitoring to track fish responses and habitat recovery.



# Recreational Fishing Forums 2025

Throughout August and September, the VFA have been hitting the road, partnering with local angling clubs to host recreational fishing forums and talk all things fishing with anglers in Victoria!

Across both metro and regional Victoria, we've hosted 11 in-person fishing forums and it's been fantastic to chat with a diverse mix of anglers in person about key fishing topics and opportunities.



We value these forums as a chance to connect with the recreational fishing community, share updates on current VFA initiatives, and most importantly open the floor to questions and feedback.

Your input is invaluable because it helps us better understand local fishing experiences, identify emerging issues, and shape future projects.

## Key themes of the 2025 Recreational Fishing Forums have included:

- Urban fisheries and the smorgasbord of options available to recreational fishers in Victoria
- Catfish on the comeback, Rocklands and cracking estuary perch fisheries
- Kingfish, tuna, swordfish and the science behind our exciting offshore fisheries
- Macquarie perch, trout cod, catfish and blackfish – bringing out native fish back
- Fish production and stocking is creating great inland fisheries for anglers!
- Fish production at Snobs Creek and Arcadia
- Gippsland lakes fisheries, breeding cycles, harvest patterns of key fisheries

If you're interested in us visiting your angling club, please reach out to [taylor.hunt@vfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:taylor.hunt@vfa.vic.gov.au)





# Fish Stocking Program Updates



## Fish Stocking Season Progress

The salmonid stocking season has reached the halfway mark with over **750,000** fish stocked across Victoria's waters since March.

Victoria received minimal rainfall in 2024 leading to a challenging start to the season, with water levels in many waters remaining significantly low, leaving them unsuitable for stocking until levels increased.

Thankfully, the rain received over the winter months has enabled us to continue our salmonid stocking program pushing us towards to our goal of stocking **1.3 million** brown trout, rainbow trout, tiger trout and Chinook salmon into 150 waters by the end of October.

## May Stocking Record

In a new record, we stocked over 360,000 salmonids from Snobs Creek this May, beating the historical average ranging from 150,000 to 250,000 fish – that's **8.6 ton** of fish moved in one month!

This included a mix of brown and rainbow trout and resulted in 18 waters receiving their full allocation for the year.

Our specially on-grown family fishing rainbow trout were stocked in time for the June/July school holidays.

Within 3 weeks the Snobs Creek team were able to stock over 36,000 rainbows (5.8 ton) into 71 waterways.

Rain-reliant waters with low water levels did not receive fish but are scheduled to receive their share in time for the September school holidays.

We also had a first-time stocking of 300 on-grown rainbow trout into Expedition Pass Reservoir near Castlemaine, which will receive another 300 prior to the September school holidays, creating more angling opportunities in Victoria's northwest.





## Arcadia Hatchery Update

Arcadia has been receiving high-quality Murray cod and golden perch broodfish for our breeding and stocking program, sourced from channel rescues across the Shepparton, Numurkah and Yarrawonga regions. These healthy broodfish, with their varied genetics, strengthen diversity in our breeding program, and boost resilience to disease and environmental change in the fish we stock across Victoria. In addition, more than 150 freshwater Murray River mussels were collected during a channel rescue and are now living in our waste dams, where we are monitoring their potential to assist cleaning the water.

The rescued Murray cod broodfish are currently being held in plankton ponds while construction of new brood ponds is completed, while the golden perch broodfish have been added to the indoor maturation system.

As ectotherms, fish rely on external sources to regulate body heat, so temperature changes directly affect their feeding. With lower water temperatures at Arcadia, feeding has been reduced to fortnightly as fish slow down and feel 'full' for longer. Murray cod are currently being fed carp, while golden perch and catfish are on a diet of Gippsland prawns.

In preparation for the upcoming season, staff are preparing nesting boxes and constructing paddle wheels. While the hatchery expansion progresses, upgrades to the existing hatchery and filtration systems are also underway. Over the coming months, new sumps, a drum filter, biological filtration, and a temperature control system will be installed. These works also include expanding the Murray cod incubation and larval tray system.

### Arcadia Hatchery Expansion:

The Arcadia expansion will triple the hatchery's size and capacity, creating the biggest native fish hatchery of its kind in the world, capable of producing over 6 million fish annually!! Works include increasing production ponds from 30 to more than 125, constructing a new office building, extending the fish processing and hatchery buildings, and creating water re-use storages.

On ground works began in mid-2024 with local contractors completing the hatchery building and fish processing facility expansions. The major civil works began in November 2024 and will be completed in Spring 2025, all in time for the 2025-26 native fish breeding season.





# Snobs Creek Hatchery Update

Fish production at Snobs Creek continues through Winter and Spring, which are key developmental periods for salmonid species.

One of the fascinating parts of growing fish is how water temperature controls egg development. For rainbow trout, we track this using degree days - the running total of daily average water temperature. At 70-degree days (7 days at 10°C), we test fertilisation by soaking eggs in vinegar to reveal the neural ridge. At 170-degree days the eggs reach the “eyed” stage, hatching at 310, and by 550 the yolk sac is absorbed and feeding begins. Chinook salmon, however, take roughly three times longer.

The Snobs team had some extra helping hands over the July school holidays, with seven secondary college students joining us for work experience. They got hands-on across all three production areas and helped stock fish around the state. It's a great opportunity to share what we do and inspire future aquaculture careers.

Our Chinook salmon, tiny eggs just over four months ago, are now actively feeding and currently sitting at around 1 gram. We are targeting weights between 10g (spring stocking) and 50g (yearlings) before being stocked into Purumbete and Bullen Merri. The 2025 trout cod broodstock collection wrapped up in early May, with broodfish electrofished from waterways across Victoria and New South Wales. After clearing quarantine, they're settling well in Snobs' brood ponds. The 2025 brown and rainbow trout production season has officially wrapped, with over one million eggs of each species now either incubating or have hatched in the troughs. It's just the beginning of the journey before they're ready for release into Victorian waterways.



## Snobs Creek Hatchery Expansion:

Once completed, the Snobs Creek fish hatchery expansion will deliver a Macquarie Perch Recovery Centre capable of producing 500,000 Macquarie perch and 500,000 trout cod annually. Using advanced recirculating aquaculture technology to control water temperature, oxygen levels and light intensity to create the optimal breeding conditions.

Works began in June 2025, with practical completion and commissioning expected late 2025, ready for the 2025-26 native fish breeding season.



# Conservation Hatchery Update

At the Conservation hatchery, trials investigating the possibility of a 6-month breeding cycle for key threatened species of galaxids and blackfish are currently underway. These trials expose fish in the hatchery to the variations in light exposure and temperature they would experience in the natural environment but at different times of the year. So, while it's cold outside, our fish experience a warm spring day.

Altering these conditions in a simulated environment means breeding trials can continue throughout the year, freeing us from waiting for seasonal changes. Instead of waiting 12 months to make changes in breeding methods, trials like these allow us to make changes at 6-month intervals and spread the work throughout the year allowing us to provide the highest care to the vulnerable native fish we house.



The 6-month trials are yielding promising results – we've seen promising egg development in our critically endangered West Gippsland and tapered galaxias, and the culturally significant Wimmera blackfish. This is a huge milestone that could allow for increased production of these species, meaning more opportunities for stocking to bolster wild populations.

In a world-first, our trials have produced Glenelg mussels! This is the first time that the species has been bred in a 6-month cycle. Despite freshwater mussels' notoriety for being difficult to breed in captivity, we have produced over 30,000 mussel larvae (glochidia)- an incredible milestone that we're very proud of.

Glochidia have a parasitic life stage where they need to attach to a fish host. In addition to our light and temperature trials, we have been trialling several different species of fish to determine which is preferred by the mussels as a host. Included in the host trials are variations in the number of glochidia exposed and length of exposure to fish.

Our first baby mussels have dropped off the hosts and we now enter the next stage of the process – feeding and rearing the mussels to a size suitable for release back into Victorian waters.

# Recreational Fishing Licence (RFL)

## Grants Update

Twenty-six Large RFL Grant applications that were received during 2024–25 have been assessed by the RFL Advisory Committee who have made their recommendations for funding to the Minister, the Hon. Steve Dimopoulos. Subject to Ministerial approval, this will see a great range of projects funded that aim to improve recreational fishing across Victoria.

Applications for Intermediate and Small RFL Grants are open year-round. Six Intermediate Grant applications received a total funding of \$217,754 and 36 Small Grant applications received a total of \$113,398 in 2024-25.

2025-26 is already off to a great start with 5 Small Grant applications approved for funding, and 2 Intermediate Grant applications to be recommended for funding.

**Here are some examples of recently completed projects showing how your recreational fishing licence funds are being used:**

### SMALL GRANTS

#### Salvation Army – Get Hooked on Fishing 2025!

The Salvation Army received funding from a Small Grant application to host a Get Hooked on Fishing event. The event took place at the Arcadia Native Fish Hatchery Visitor Centre and was targeted at young people aged 12-25 and catered for all levels of fishing experience. First-timers had the chance to pick up a rod and learn the basics, while others had the opportunity to learn new skills, meet likeminded people and form new connections.

Well-known angler Robbie Alexander was also in attendance to provide tips, tricks and advice to anyone who wanted to listen to the words of an experienced angler.

The day was a huge excess with 175 people in attendance. We look forward to hearing the fishing stories from our new budding young anglers.





## INTERMEDIATE GRANTS

### Australian Trout Foundation (ATF) - Bridging Waters



The ATF received funding through an Intermediate Grant to deliver the Bridging Waters project. The project sought to improve habitat for fish species along the Ovens River, including the endangered Macquarie perch and trout cod.

The project revamped over a kilometre of river to mitigate the negative effects of historic mining and aquaculture on fish habitat. Important breeding habitat was created by introducing large timber log jams, installing large boulders and treating riparian weeds.

This newly installed habitat generated deeper 'fishway' channels, which produced areas of high flow in what was once a very shallow run. The river was further improved by the planting of 500 trees along the adjacent banks.

This bank-based part of the project was supported by the North-East Catchment Management Authority, the Wangaratta Fly Fishing Club and Alpine Fly Fishers.

This project is invaluable for the Ovens River as it provides a habitat corridor connecting to habitat areas upstream, which were previously restored through the ATF's Mayfly Rise projects.

## LARGE GRANTS

### Lake Marma – Lake Marma Committee of Management

Thanks to your fishing licence fees the Murtoa township has received a boost. Lake Marma in the heart of Murtoa is a popular fishing spot among local anglers. Through the VFA's large grants program the Lake Marma Committee of Management received a grant to create a fishing platform in the northeast corner of the lake.

Previously the lake only had a small jetty for land-based fishing opportunities, with most of the lake inaccessible without a boat. The new platform provides greater access whilst encouraging tourism by being located close to the local caravan park. This project was listed on the Murtoa Community Action plan as a priority project and has therefore received great support from local residents.

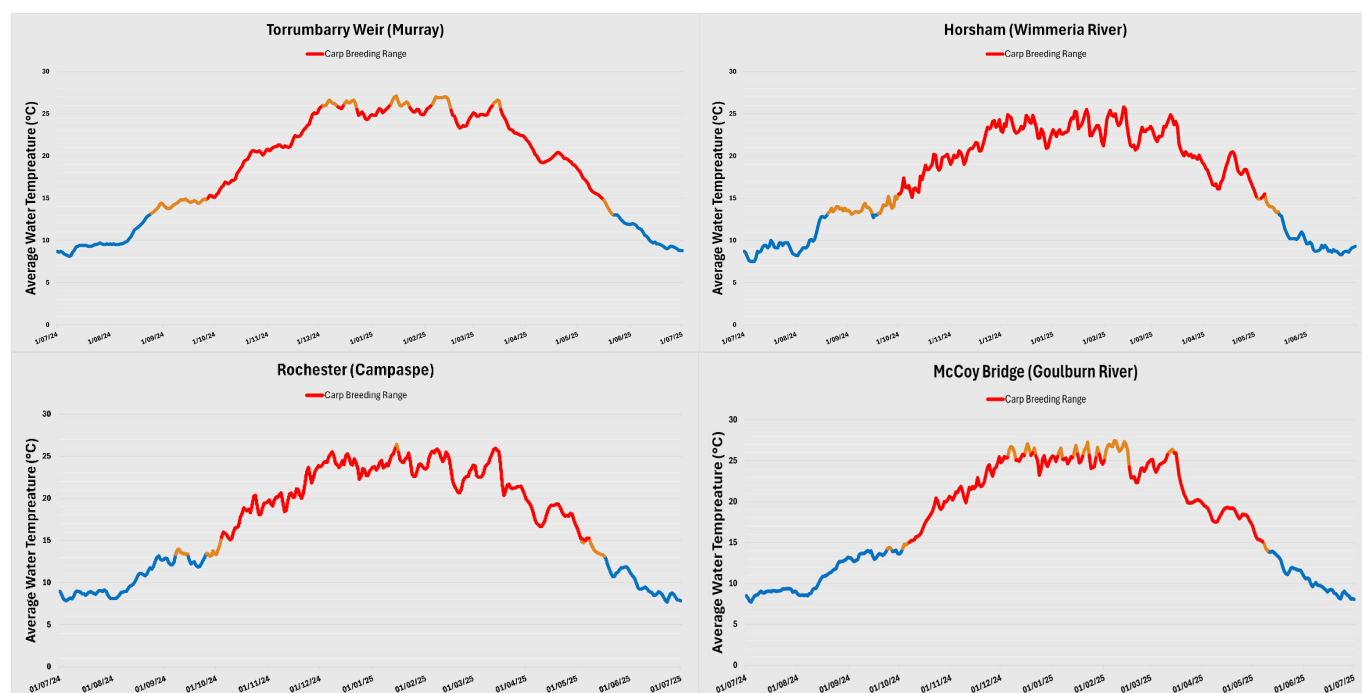




# Springs Arrived, Waters Warming, Carp are Spawning

But there's hope for decisive action. We've prepared some ready-reckoner charts for several waterways across Victoria to show when daily water temperatures get into the range that carp love for breeding. Carp love to aggregate in massive numbers to spawn when water temperatures hit 15°C and up to 26°C. One adult female carp can produce one million eggs annually, and carp make up to 90 per cent of the total fish biomass across the Murray Darling Basin.

It's a tragic love story we want to disrupt...because we love native fish and healthy aquatic ecosystems.



Like any love story, there's hope and opportunities.

The VFA has nominated carp for listing as potentially threatening process under Victoria's *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. The nominations provide a foundation for building a coordinated approach to improve the health of our freshwater native fisheries and aquatic ecosystems by managing carp.

And like all love stories, action to control carp takes long term commitment and support.



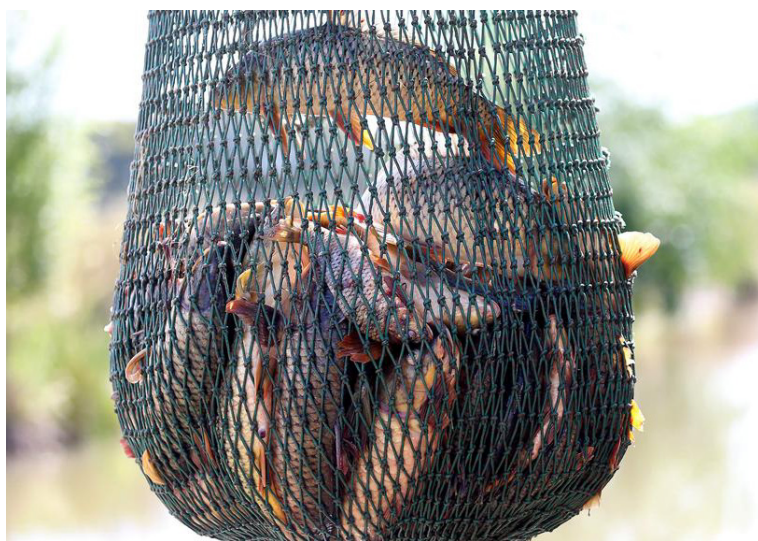


# Federal Government reject VFA's EPBC Nomination

In disappointing news, the Federal Government has rejected the VFA's proposal to nominate carp as a Key Threatening Process under the Federal EPBC Act. The EPBC lists 11 other invasive species as Key Threatening Processes including rabbits, goats, rats, foxes, feral pigs, fire ants and others. These listings have driven threat abatement plans and actions over decades to better manage these invasive species.

The grounds for their decision include "... there are a range of established abatement arrangements, emerging technologies and biocontrol approaches that are already being employed to address impacts of common carp". This decision was made despite the Federal Government's conservation theme for the 2025 to "support the protection and recovery of species and ecological communities at risk from invasive species, disease and pathogens". Our response to this decision is:

- Current "established abatement arrangements" are not effective in managing carp numbers. Carp numbers are at an all-time high across the MD Basin and their impacts are devastating rivers wetlands and threatened native fish.
- "Emerging technologies and biocontrol approaches are not being employed to address the impacts of common carp". The carp virus research has been going for 17 years and there is no clear timeline for deciding about the use of the carp virus.



Despite this set back, we're committed to raising awareness about the impacts of carp, the need for more resources and more effective tools to manage carp. We're developing a plan to trial the carp virus in a bio secure, controlled field facility, if we can secure access to the carp virus. The cost of doing nothing more on carp threatens our rivers, wetlands and native fish while undermining the development of our inland recreational fisheries.

*Carpe Diem*

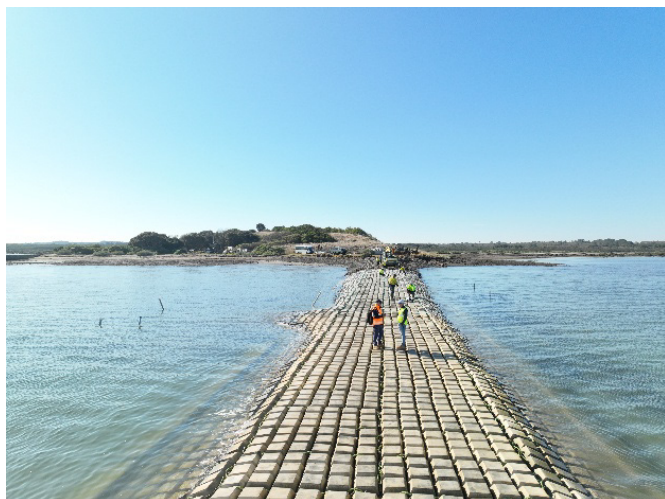


*Seize the Day*



## Better Boating Victoria (BBV) Updates

- BBV team is delivering Victoria's largest ever boat ramp construction program, funded through the Recreational Boating Strategy 2021–2030 and the Better Boating Fund (BBF). To date, more than 70 projects have been completed, with 30 more underway!
- Rocklands Reservoir-Hynes Road upgrade is now complete, rounding out the over \$1 million from the BBF invested in projects run by Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water.
- The Tankerton boat ramp upgrade is now complete, with the facility receiving a northern ramp and turning area, as well as articulated concrete mats.
- BBV worked with Parks Victoria to upgrade Horseshoe Bend boat ramp in Mildura. The facility received a wider & steeper concrete ramp with grooves to provide more traction.
- Two boat ramp extensions have been completed by West Wimmera Shire Council in Lake Wallace, providing better access to the lake.
- Inverloch boat ramp has received new asphalt re-surfacing, and reinstatement of line markings.
- Works to improve the rock groyne at the Bastion Point boat ramp in Mallacoota, are now complete.
- Dredging has been undertaken in the Lower Yarra, and at Kananook Creek by local ramp managers through BBF grants.
- Lang Lang boat ramp construction has kicked off and will be completed in late 2025. The facility will receive an extended ramp, and new jetty to cater to a wider tidal range for boaters.
- Construction is underway on a new all-accessible ramp pontoon at Blue Rock Lake and will be completed by spring 2025. The project will include a wheelchair accessible gangway, with a wider landing area and a hoist.



**Tankerton Now**



**Construction at Lang Lang**

BBV has been attending angling club meetings in 2025 to chat all things boating. If you would like BBV to attend one of your club meetings, email [bbv.communications@vfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:bbv.communications@vfa.vic.gov.au). For further information on projects near you, check out our website: <https://betterboating.vic.gov.au/>





