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# Around the Jetties

## September 2013

### Issue No 72

#### An Anglers Newsletter

“Never doubt the environmental knowledge of a consistently successful fisherman. Always doubt the motives of a consistently argumentive environmental bureaucrat.”

Attributed to Jim Slinsky in the book Fishing Wit by Richard Benson



#### **Editorial**

This month Around the Jetties brings together a number of interesting issues, and certainly, the Winstanley paper on a possible increase in the All Waters Fishery Licence is one of those issues. This paper raises matters that we have discussed in some detail, in Around the Jetties, and the fact that licence fees have been manipulated by successive Governments to bolster the budget of Fisheries Victoria. This issue attempts to provide some light on the Recreational Fishing Roundtable, a body formed in 2005 to advise Fisheries Victoria, but it just so happened that anglers around the state had little if any knowledge on who were on this Roundtable and the advice they were providing. Finally, we have the preferred locations for artificial reefs in the Gippsland Lakes, Lake Tyers and Mallacoota and I would hope readers would discuss the locations recommended and communicate any concerns with Fisheries Victoria. Finally, I do love the story of the old chap with 16kgs of abalone on his person when apprehended by Fisheries Victoria getting on a tram in Melbourne. Perhaps VRFish could have a look at the information this publication provides to anglers.

#### **Fisheries Advisory Council**

In the last Around the Jetties, I reported on the Media release from the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security Peter Walsh, setting up Fisheries Advisory Council, and I now provide a listing of the members of this council and the experience they bring to this position. This Advisory Council was a commitment of the Coalition Government and is said to provide “effective and proactive consultation that involves all fisheries sectors.” The Minister in his release suggests that he will be asking this Council “for advice on issues such as making management more efficient and flexible, improving security of access, developing stewardship incentives and maximising value of our fisheries resources.”

## Members of the interim Fisheries Advisory Council

*(Items in italics I have added to the experience of Council members as provided by Fisheries Victoria)*

Position	Participant	Experience
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Neville	Former Chair of Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) and former head of Fisheries Queensland
<b>Fisheries Ecologist</b>	Dr Greg Jenkins	University of Melbourne, Department of Zoology
<b>Fisheries Economist</b>	Dr Caleb Gardner	Program Leader Fisheries, University of Tasmania
<b>Indigenous fishing interests</b>	Denise Lovett	Former Chair of the Aboriginal Heritage Council
<b>Commercial interests</b>	Dr Andrew Levings	Rock lobster fisher
	Barbara Konstas	Retail/wholesalers, CEO of the Melbourne Seafood Centre
	Maria Manias	Bays and inlets, Executive Officer of Victorian Fishery Association into Resource Management (VFARM)
	Geoff Ellis	Abalone and sea urchin, Chair Lakes Entrance Fishermen's Cooperative
	Simon Boag	Commonwealth fishing, CEO of the South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association (SETFIA) <i>Runs a consulting business from (Lakes Entrance)</i> <i>Editor SEFTIA newsletter Vice Chair Commonwealth Fisheries Association.</i>
<b>Recreational interests</b>	Ross Winstanley	<b>Member of the Recreational Fishing Roundtable.</b> <i>A former Manager in Fisheries Victoria, and currently a fishing writer and recreational researcher.</i>
	Merv McGuire	<b>Chair of the Recreational Fishing Roundtable.</b> <i>Independent recreational fishery consultant.</i>
	Russell Conway	Chair, VRFish Board. <i>Currently acting CEO VRFish, Member of Recreational Fishing Grants Committee. <b>Member of the Roundtable</b>, .Chair of RECFISH Aust.</i>
	John Willis	Charter boat owner/operator." <i>Boat sales and radio fishing shows, manager of Haines range of boats.</i>
	Pat Levy	Director, Victorian Branch of the Australian Fishing Trade Association. <i>Since 1978 and involved with J.M. Gillies fishing importer.</i>

<b>Observers (Non Voting)</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
<b>Renee Vajtauer</b>	Executive Director, Seafood Industry Victoria
<b>Member to be confirmed</b>	VRFish
<b>Department Representatives</b>	<b>Title</b>
<b>Ross McGowan</b>	Executive Director, Regulation and Compliance (Fisheries)
<b>Paul McGrath</b>	(Secretarial Support) Principal Policy Analyst.

## Editor

This Council is currently an Interim Council, until a Bill is introduced in Parliament later this year to embed the Council in legislation. Whilst this appears a high level Council of highly qualified members, well qualified to provide advice to Minister Peter Walsh on fisheries it does raise the question as to how it will operate given the Gippsland Lakes Advisory committee is providing specific fisheries advice to Minister Smith who is the Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Regional Development. With the approval of the Minister the **Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee** has already allocated funding to an investigation of the social and economic value of fishing in the Gippsland Lakes, (\$50,000) as well as reviewing fish stock assessment methods (\$75,000) with a view to improving the management of the black bream population. Further it suggests it will refine and consolidate fisheries management as part of its investigation into the social and economic value of fishing in the lakes. The problem of responsibility is further magnified in that the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee has a leading commercial fisherman on its membership, but no representative of recreational fishing, and this is vastly different to the membership of the **Fisheries Advisory Council**. Some clarification is needed on the specific areas of responsibility of both advisory bodies.

No information has been provided on the method members of the Advisory Council were selected or the tenure of the position on the Council or whether the Council will provide anglers with details of the advice provided to the Minister. Hopefully some additional information will be provided to those associated with fishing in the near future.

A final concern for anglers may be the role of the **Recreational Round Table** membership of this Advisory Council. (See the following item.)

## Recreational Round Table

I was somewhat surprised that two of the recreational members of the Fisheries Advisory Council were listed, as being members of the **DEPI Recreational Fisheries Round Table**. On further investigation, I found that three of the five recreational members of the Ministerial Advisory Council were members of the **Recreational Fishing Roundtable**. I had vaguely heard of this body but had never seen any information on just what was the role of the Recreational Round Table, or any publicity on its membership or activity. I had a discussion with the Round Table chairman, Merv Maguire, who provided information indicating this body was set up around 2005 by Executive Director of Fisheries Peter Appleford to “discuss and provide advice on strategic matters,” and to provide “a forum for the exchange of information and ideas about recreational fishing which will assist Fisheries Victoria to achieve its strategic vision.”

This body originally had around eight members, however according to the chairman Merv Maguire, the number of members grew to around 25 when Anthony Hurst became Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria. At this time, a 5-page “Terms of Reference” document provided the basis for the operation of this group. The Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria and the Forum Chairperson would jointly “determine the list of invited participants.”

Fisheries Victoria would provide administrative support including engaging an independent Chairperson (A paid position subject to government processes.). Travel funding was made available to participants, but sitting fees were not applicable. Forum meetings would be held quarterly with a proposed agenda available two weeks prior to the meetings, and most importantly “a summary of meeting outcomes will be circulated publicly via Fisheries Victoria’s website.”

The concerns I had with this body and which I put to the chairman Merv Maguire were that I could not find any record of meeting outcomes circulated, nor could I find any minutes of the meeting discussions, nor could I find any list of membership apart from a list of 14 members attached to the Terms of Reference 2010. Based on this evidence this Roundtable group held unpublicised meetings with Fisheries Victoria, provided no information to anglers on items discussed, and its membership was not publicized. I can find not a single summary of any meeting outcomes on the Fisheries Victoria website, and the chairman was surprised at this, and indicated he had immediately taken the matter up with Fisheries Victoria, who he felt were responsible for the circulation of meeting outcomes. On the surface, it would appear that the Recreational Roundtable was a secretive gathering, accountable to no one with almost total non-disclosure of advice provided to Fisheries Victoria or any discussion undertaken.

A few days after making these concerns known to Chairman Merv Maguire, I received from him details of the membership and the five page minutes from the June meeting and the 11 page minutes of the July meeting, which was held with the new Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria, Ross McGowan. I have indicated to the chairman of the Roundtable that if minutes or a meeting summary were made available to this publication I would ensure information was made available to readers.

As an observation, the membership of this body seems based on fishing groups such as Native fish Australia, VRFish, Australian Trout Foundation, Game Fishing Association Victoria, Fishcare Victoria, Boating Industry Association Victoria, Trailer Boat Fishing Magazine, and Metropolitan Anglers Association etc. as well as a number of key Fisheries managers. It would also appear that regional areas such as East Gippsland are not represented, and the membership would appear to lack regional representation.

Note- (a) Some confusion may exist from the Regional Recreational Forums being termed Roundtable Forums in some areas, and also the fact that the Federal Government has a Recreational Fishing Roundtable with members from around Australia.

(b) I thank Chairman Merv Maguire for his ready discussion of my concerns and for his willingness to provide reports of recent meeting outcomes. I would think Fisheries Victoria who the Terms of Reference suggested would provide “administrative support” should be embarrassed at the lack of any information of meetings being circulated to anglers of this state, which would seem to be part of “administrative support.”

(c) I was invited to attend the September meeting of the Recreational Roundtable as an observer, without any funding for travel, however because of the distance involved I have declined this offer.

## **A Sample of Items being Discussed by the Statewide Recreational Roundtable**

**The following are a few of the matters currently under discussion by this body.**

1. Concern was expressed that recreational fisher’s priorities were not being reflected in the expenditure of RFL funds currently held in trust.
2. Disapproval from the Roundtable was expressed with regard to the shifting of departmental responsibilities such as the printing of the fishing guide to RFL funds.
3. Examination of the cost of the Victorian Fishing Licence when compared to other states
4. Recreational fishers seek review the administration of the RFL process.
5. A list of projects to improve recreational spear fishing in Victoria to be drafted.
6. Concern at the Auditor Generals Report on Inland Fisheries Management. (See Issue 67 April 2013).
7. Trout stocking in Lake Hume suggested a revised stocking regime because of poor returns.
8. List of key managers and contacts within Fisheries required. (See Issue70 July 2013)
9. Lack of boat parking questioned. Up to 3.5 hour wait at some ramps to launch in Port Phillip.
10. It would seem a major issue is the Recreational fishing licence where only 25% of this states anglers pay a licence fee, yet receive the benefits of fish stocks access etc. (See Issue 71 August 2013)

This list gives an indication of items discussed at the meetings where I have had access to the Chairman’s Summary (June & July 2013). Whilst the issues being discussed are important, I wonder just who looks at issues like the protection of spawning black bream and other species at the mouths of rivers, the netting of the Maasbanker just off our beaches, and the lack of regulation of commercial fishing in our estuaries. **Certainly it would seem that VRFish is currently not in a position to represent anglers on recreational issues, and it would appear that the Statewide Recreational Round Table is city centric, however it does have strong lines of communication with Fisheries Victoria. Perhaps it is necessary for the Roundtable to seek submissions on major concerns of anglers and then seek to evaluate those submissions and provide advice to fisheries on these matters.**

## **Study of the Effect of Tuna Catch on Portland**

A study of the effect of the Southern Bluefin Tuna fishery has shown an enormous impact on the local economy and Portland in particular. This study showed that this fishery injected between \$7 and \$9 million into the local economy in 2012. Premier Dr Napthine stated in a Media release (16<sup>th</sup> August) that “Southern Bluefin Tuna off the south west coast is a truly world class recreational fishery that attracts thousands of anglers from across Australia between February and June each year.”



In the study initiated in 2011, Deloitte Access Economics found that anglers spent on average between \$381-\$508 each day they launched boats in the local sea, mainly on accommodation food and drinks, fuel, fishing

supplies and charter boat fees. An estimated 3000 anglers travelled to Portland to fish for Bluefin Tuna in 2012 with 300 or more trailer boats in the area at any one time. The report also found that only 5% of the anglers were locals with the vast majority of anglers travelling from other parts of Victoria and interstate. What was interesting was that the study found that anglers during their visit to Portland took an average of two boat trips and caught three fish per day of which about half were released. The total recreational catch of southern Bluefin tuna in 2011 was estimated at 240 tonnes.



The southern Bluefin tuna has been declared as a priority species which means that strong jail terms and large fines apply to the illegal commercial fishing of this species.

Just as a comparison the southern Bluefin tuna commercial catch was set at 4015 tonnes for 2011 and this figure complies with allocated commercial catch limits.

(Photos from DEPI Fisheries Website)



### Editor

The report on the effect of the development of the Southern Bluefin Tuna fishery at Portland provides a striking example of the effect of a dynamic recreational fishery on a local community with the recreational anglers providing between \$7-\$9 million annually to the local community.

This was little different to the black bream fishery of the Gippsland Lakes in the mid eighties, but which has been in consistent decline since that time.

Many anglers will recall the times when it was almost impossible to get a boat and trailer parking spot at launching ramps such as Johnsonville, and on the three rivers hundreds of boats would be launched by anglers from all over the state. Just as a matter of interest the following was part of a tourist report for the week ending 26/6/89.

*“Tambo River- On Sunday Frank Sommers and his wife from Mt Waverley landed 14 bream, 1 trevally and 1 tailor using prawn. Fishing on Saturday, Barry Wylie and Noel Robinson from Seaford landed 31 bream weighing up to 940grms using prawn at the mouth.”* This was a couple of the dozens of similar reports.

*“Mitchell River-Michael and Sue King from Eltham landed 34 bream weighing up to 680grms. Eddy Vieth from Doncaster and Jim west from Maidson, fished over two days taking 70 bream at ‘Two Bells’ using prawn”* And in the Gippsland lakes-

*“Metung-Peter Dewhrist and John Cox from Watsonia caught 20 bream 16 tailor and 6 trevally using local prawn in close to the marina.”*

The anglers came from all over the state to fish the Gippsland Lakes and rivers, and brought significant wealth to local businesses. Today there seems to be little interest from local businesses in recreational fishing, with commercial netting of tourist areas such as the Cunninghame Arm, and almost total inaction from Government, both local and state, on any steps to attempt to restore one of this states greatest fisheries. We still allow breeding bream to be netted and flood events to provide the killing of thousands of spawning bream in commercial nets at the mouths of rivers. We accept the deepening of the entrance to the Gippsland Lakes with no inquiry into the effect of the resulting increased salinity, on either the fish stocks of the lakes or the decline in seagrass. We hear of sludge from the Morwell open cut mine pouring into the lakes and its effect on sandworm and shell, and we allow unfettered netting of black bream with no limit on catches. Whilst Portland has boomed we have watched the decline of this states greatest black bream fishery, and this is a tragedy.

**Sources.** -South Coast Tourism Reports 1989 (provided by Geoff Trusler) DEPI Southern Bluefin Tuna, Premiers Media Release (16<sup>th</sup> August 2013) Copy of 2012 report [www.depi.vic.gov.au/tunastudy](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/tunastudy)

### 2013 Release of Bass in the Nicholson River

On the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012, 35,000 bass fingerlings were released into the Nicholson River, and this was the first release of a total of 100,000 bass to be released over three years. I would imagine that the next release would take place in December this year. Anthony Foster Freshwater Fisheries Manager at the time of the

first release when I wrote to him regarding the fact that the dam on the Nicholson River had not been removed and that some doubts existed that it would be removed wrote to me saying “It was always envisaged, the establishment of a population of bass in the Nicholson above the weir would create a “mountain to the sea” self sustaining bass fishery over time in the event the weir is removed.”

It has been confirmed that it is unlikely the weir will be removed, so that any hope of developing a self-sustaining bass population is nothing but a dream given the current situation. Bass require access to the estuary to spawn and as previously indicated the weir on the Nicholson will stop this access-taking place.

The attempt to develop a self-sustaining bass population is doomed to failure, and one must ask why this was not investigated prior to the release of these first fingerlings and the allocation of \$100,000 to the stocking when these fish would never have access to the estuary to spawn.

In the Lakes Entrance News May 2012 Local member Tim Bull was quoted as saying “With the decommissioning of the Nicholson Dam, this move to stock 33,000 fingerlings per year over the next three years is good news.” Tim Bull when informed of the likelihood that the dam would not be removed stated, “It is my intention to follow up on the situation with the dam in the coming weeks.”

(Around the Jetties Issue 67 May 2013). No information has been forthcoming so now action seems more urgent than ever, if the dream of a self-sustaining bass population in the Nicholson River is to become a reality.

### Editor

I recently read a report of a bypass built on the Barwon River by the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority to allow fish to bypass the weir and migrate upstream for breeding. In the Nicholson case the intent would be for bass to bypass the weir and migrate downstream to the estuary for breeding. The Victorian Government, together with funds from the recreational fishing licence fees, funded this project.



It seems surprising that this has not been a consideration on the Nicholson River by local authorities including Fisheries Victoria and the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, given that over \$1 million has been allocated over recent years to this authority for habitat works on the Tambo, Nicholson and Mitchell Rivers, and these works were under the general heading of sustainability and habitat with almost total funding derived from the Fishing Licence Fees contributed by anglers. **It hard to visualize anything having a greater effect on the sustainability of bass, than providing access for 100,000 bass to enter the Gippsland Lakes to spawn.** Readers may recall that in the

previous issue of Around the Jetties it was suggested by some fisheries scientists that they were seeking information on the on the part played by the introduction of snags to Gippsland Rivers in returning fish to the rivers. Perhaps some of the funding applied to the provision of woody debris in these river from recreational anglers licence fees might be applied to providing a fishway for the bass being introduced in the Nicholson River to access the Gippsland Lakes for spawning and bypass the weir. In May it was announced that a further \$300,000 over 3 years would be allocated to the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority from Recreational licence Funds. The matter of

research into the effects of woody debris on fish numbers was raised in some detail in issue 69 (June) of Around the Jetties

Source Fish Fax 338 August 2013(See also Issue 69 June 2013)

## **Important**

### **Gippsland Lakes Commercial Catch Statistics for 2011/12**

On Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> August the Commercial Fish Production Information Bulletin was released. This bulletin provides information on the commercial catches in Victorian waters including the Gippsland Lakes. The 2011/12 commercial catch of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes of 96 tonnes reflects the 2011 flood event and the removal of spawning fish from the river systems. For the eight years without flood the average commercial catch of black bream has been 34 tonnes, however the 2011 flood event did not produce the massive 144 tonnes of the 2007/8 event. This again accentuates the urgent need for protection of spawning fish at the mouth of rivers, which was a commitment of the Coalition Government prior to the last election. The delay in any action in this area almost certainly has long-term effects on the sustainability of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes.

The tonnage of dusky flathead has remained at 23 tonnes with an average of 24 tonnes over the last four years. Anglers have been watching these figures given that the regulations introduced in 2011 to protect Dusky flathead and supported by recreational anglers have not been applied to commercial fishermen. This in turn means the commercial fishermen have no catch limit in these waters or any maximum size limit for dusky flathead, whilst recreational anglers have a bag limit of five fish with a maximum size limit of 55cms. Many Gippsland anglers believe that by the application of these regulations to the recreational angler in the Gippsland Lakes, any increase in the stock of dusky flathead thus made is likely to be removed by the total lack of any regulation associated with dusky flathead being applied to commercial fishermen.

An interesting commercial catch in 2011/12 in the Gippsland Lakes was two tonnes of estuary perch. This fish moves from the rivers to the estuary to spawn, which would seem to indicate that this species was subject to the current netting at the mouth of rivers, and provides a cause for concern that stocked bass may be subject to the same result when moving to the estuary to spawn.

The catch of carp, a mere 30 tonnes indicates the increased salinity of the Gippsland Lakes and it was only in the period 2001/2-2004/5 that the average was around 450 tonnes annually. A puzzling result is that despite the increased salinity only 2 tonnes of Australian salmon were listed in the production figures. The overall tonnage of fish taken in commercial nets in the Gippsland Lakes in 2011/12 was 267 tonnes and this is the second lowest tonnage in the last 35 years, and demonstrates a marked decline in fish stocks when compared with the catch in 2001/2, which was 826 tonnes. Apart from the commercial catch of black bream and dusky flathead the only other species of note are the low market value tailor (22 tonnes) yellow eye mullet (22 tonnes) and luderick (12 tonnes).

Given these figures it is easy to understand why several of the local commercial fishermen have requested the buyback of commercial licences again be placed on the table. What is harder to understand is why Minister Walsh has not responded to this request; given the introduction of an all waters licence in 1999 was linked to **“a voluntary buyback of commercial licences from bays and inlets from Port Phillip Bay to Mallacoota.”** Perhaps it is as we have suggested previously, that sufficient funds derived from Recreational Fishing Licence fees are not available due to other demand on those funds.

In previous years the dollar value of the fisheries production on a species basis was included in the bulletin and this data was supplied by Melbourne Fish Market, fish processors and selected aquaculture farms. Today however the Fish Market is no longer able to supply price data and as a result for the second time in 35 years the value of the fishery in the Gippsland Lakes and other waters across the state is not available.

#### **Editorial comment**

It is difficult to understand how iconic species such as black bream and dusky flathead are targeted in an estuary such as the Gippsland Lakes with no quotas or regulations to protect a declining fish stock, when the regulated offshore trawl fishery catches flathead and sea bream with the catch protected by scientific quotas. Today there are ten commercial fishermen who have no quotas or catch limits, and who have access to the entire Gippsland Lakes system. The question remains as to why commercial netting of such species as black bream and dusky flathead are allowed in estuaries, given the availability of similar species offshore in a scientifically controlled fishery.

Source- My thanks to Paula Barker Manager Catch and Effort Unit for the bulletin. (Any interpretation and comment on these statistics is my responsibility Editor)

## **Fishing Licence Increases Under Discussion**

This publication has indicated to readers in recent issues that the possibility of an increase in the cost of the angling licence was currently being discussed.

I have since received an excellent research paper prepared by Ross Winstanley, a member of the Roundtable, and former Fisheries Victoria Manager on the issue of an increase in the cost of the current fishing licence. This paper was presented at the Recreational Fishing Roundtable held on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2013. Briefly I will provide some details from this report, which I think will provide anglers with information on the issue of a possible increase in the Recreational Fishing Licence.

In this state 720,000 Victorians fish, however just 24% of them pay 85% of the annual RFL revenue whilst 85% of those who fish pay nothing and receive the same services with fish stocking access etc. This research paper suggests that increasing the licence paid by that 24% who currently are licensed would be unfair and a better option would be to increase the base so that all who fish would share the cost of the fishery.

In addition the paper suggests the Government must also play a part by relieving the RFL of charges such as the employment of Fisheries Officers and other charges such as community information costs including handbooks and ruler etc, which were previously Government funded. The paper also notes that Fishcare was formerly fully Government funded as part of the community education program. The paper states, "now the cost (Fishcare) is being passed on to the recreational fishing sector and is trending upwards." The paper points out that today the employment of fisheries Officers is taking 31% of the funds generated from the recreational angling licence compared with 12% of the RFL when it was introduced. The paper makes the point that up until 2004 the Government was responsible for the full costs of fish stocking, however today \$200,000 is taken annually from RFL funds for fish stocking. The point is forcefully made that there has been a shift to using RFL funds in areas formerly regarded as a normal part of the Fisheries Victoria budget. As a result, today only about 37% of the money generated by the Recreational Angling Licence is available for grants and projects the other 63% is being used to cover items formerly part of the Fisheries budget.

The paper points to the fact that the participation rate in recreational fishing has fallen from 36% in the 1970's to 13% twenty five years later and is still trending down and of course as the population ages under the current licence system the RFL revenue will decline.

This paper suggests that all anglers should contribute, and if a concessionary one-year licence were introduced for those who do not currently need a licence then this would yield almost an additional \$4 million on top of the current RFL licence revenue yielding \$6 million. The paper suggests this would be fair to all and provide over \$10 million to support ongoing development of recreational fisheries in this state.

If an increase in the fishing licence is to be considered then sweeping changes need to be made and many responsibilities currently funded from the Recreational Fishing Licence should be re-examined in an open and transparent manner and the Government would need to meet its community service obligations to this states anglers, rather than transferring these obligations to funds derived from the Recreational Angling Licence

### **Editors Comment**

I thank Ross Winstanley for the research he has put into this paper and for making the options available to recreational anglers very clear, and also for allowing me to summarize this paper and make the summary available to readers of Around the Jetties. Readers would be aware that this newsletter has argued strongly over recent years at the \$2 million taken from RFL funds to provide salaries for Fisheries Officers, (now called Field Service) as well as the increasing funding of Fishcare and the community publicity which is now a line item funded as a matter of course from RFL funds. Added to this the All Waters licence was set at \$20 when introduced in 1999 and almost fifteen years later it has risen to only \$24.50

I wonder at the inability of Governments to realize the importance of recreational fishing and its contribution to employment and the state economy. Currently the Government announces by Media Release with some regularity the funding of projects from **the \$16 million Recreational Fishing Initiative**. What is not stated is that this amount is over 4 years, which means it only provides \$4 million to recreational fishing per annum. Perhaps this funding needs to be compared to the Governments support of the Melbourne Grand Prix, which is \$50 million annually or \$200 million over four years. **I think anglers have considerable unease at the way the funding from the recreational Fishing Licence has been manipulated by successive Governments of all persuasions.**

Source- Paper entitled "Its time for a Review of the Recreational Fishing Licence" by Ross Winstanley presented at the 14<sup>th</sup> June Meeting of the Recreational Fishing Roundtable.

## Odd Bits and More

### Fish Stocking Record

A media release on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August states, “*The Victorian Coalition Government has stocked a record 2.3 million native fish increasing opportunities for anglers*”. It is acknowledged that funding for this stocking came from the “Coalition Governments \$16 million Recreational Fishing Initiative” and recreational angler licence fees. Thirty waterways shared in more than 1 million Murray cod fingerlings produced at the Snobs creek hatchery run by the DEPI.

The Snobs Creek Hatchery has a wonderful record of fish production, and I recall in the early 1960’s taking students on excursions to Snobs Creek, which at that time was almost entirely associated with the stocking of trout in our lakes and rivers.

Land was bought for the establishment of Snobs Creek in 1945, and original buildings were ex-army and the Traralgon and Warburton hatcheries buildings were also moved to Snobs Creek. In the first season 1946/7 only 500 yearling trout were produced. By 1960 Snobs creek had a capacity for 2 million yearling trout. In the beginning there were no permanent hatchery staff and it was Dunbavin Butcher, (later to become the first Director of Fisheries Victoria) and a number of inspectors who carried out much of the production work. Henry Bolte Premier of Victoria officially opened Snobs Creek on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 1960.



In another Media Release (22<sup>nd</sup> August 2013) Dr Bill Sykes MLA for Benalla noted the release of 22,000 Chinook salmon across seven additional Victorian lakes. Already lakes Bullen Merri and Purrumbete will receive 20,000 and 25,000 Chinook salmon respectively, however now smaller waters like Lake Bellfield in the Grampians will be stocked with 10,000 Chinook salmon. All these fish have been produced at Snobs Creek with the program being funded from Recreational Fishing Licence funds. Now it is interesting that at the opening of the Snobs Creek hatchery in 1960 in the brochure released on that day 30,000 Chinook salmon are recorded as being liberated, and the ova for these fish, were thought to have been imported from New Zealand. In 1954 57,000 Chinook salmon were released into Lake Purrumbete and 30,000 into Lake Bullen Merri. Snobs Creek hatchery has a remarkable place in Victorian fishing.

### The Law and Recreational Anglers



Whilst this legal matter does not apply to a recreational angler I found the circumstances of this case intriguing, and hope that you do also.

#### Abalone Trafficker Jailed

The following was the heading of a Media release on the 26<sup>th</sup> August which indicated that a 72 year old Collingwood man had been jailed for three months after being caught with eight bags of blacklip abalone while waiting for a city bound tram in Doncaster. In court the man pleaded guilty to trafficking and breaching a court imposed prohibition order.

The court heard the man had 452-abalone weighing more than 16kgs this was more than four times what is considered a commercial quantity. He told the court he was planning to sell the abalone for \$50 a kilogram after paying \$45 for it and used the proceeds to supplement his pension. The DEPI Prosecutor Amanda Ring told the magistrate that the accused had been prosecuted on five previous occasions for similar offences

The magistrate sentenced the man to eight months jail with three months to be served immediately and 5 months suspended for eighteen months. The magistrate also said the penalty would have been twelve months without the guilty plea.

Fisheries Victoria Chief Investigator Murray Donaldson said, "People trafficking abalone or other priority species could expect that substantial custodial penalties will be sought as organised fisheries criminals must be deterred."

#### **Editor**

Well done Fisheries, but what an amazing story of an old chap making \$5 a kilo selling abalone to boost his pension, and having been caught five times previously for the same offence. I just wonder who supplied the abalone to the defendant, and hope in the future the abalone supplier will be apprehended.



### **Problems on a Launching Ramp**

On a recent trip to Inverloch, we were having a cup of coffee parked in a parking area overlooking the bay when we were directed by a passing chap to the launching ramp about 80 metres away. On arriving at the ramp we were in time to see a large crane set up, and a diver entering the water adjacent to the ramp. We were informed by an interested bystander that the previous day a young 19 year old chap had borrowed his fathers new ford utility and with his jet ski on the back of the utility had reversed on the ramp to launch the jet ski. On getting out of the utility and dropping the back down he was alarmed to see the utility start to slide back into the water and vanish from sight.



We were watching the final outcome of this event as the diver came back into view and the crane lifted a battered bright red utility from the water. As I watched I wondered at who was responsible for the state of the launching ramp, which was covered with green algae and was unsafe to walk on. I was informed there were no notices indicating the ramp was dangerous. This could easily have been a tragedy.

My mind went back to the situation at Metung when a truck slipped into the water and which received coverage in Issue 55 March 2012 of Around the Jetties. Readers would recall the petition that Mark Frost of Lakes Entrance Marine developed to bring to the attention of the public the state of Lakes Entrance and Metung launching ramps, and which this publication designed and printed. This was an issue reported on in detail in Around the Jetties. The East Gippsland Shire responded with signage warning of the state of the ramps, and later with a fibreglass material sourced from Western Australia to cover the ramps and provide a firm footing. This was an outstanding example of the public and the East Gippsland Shire working together to resolve a dangerous problem, all of which was accomplished prior to the Christmas holidays and the massive visitor usage of these facilities.

## **VRFish Marking Time.**

As we enter the eighth month of the year it seems remarkable that in those eight months only two newsletters have been sent to anglers, and anglers generally have had no information on the resignation of the Executive Officer nor has there been any information bulletins on the procedure and advertising being undertaken by the board to secure a replacement. This publication did provide details of the resignation and the fact that the board chairman was undertaking the role of Acting Executive Officer until a replacement is found for Christopher Collins, however not all anglers receive this publication. Surely it would not be too difficult to have a Media release informing anglers across the state of the current situation in their association, remembering that anglers contribute \$400,000 from Recreational Licence fees to maintain this representative body. The last eight months have been disastrous for the image of VRFish, and the current seeming inaction has added to this. What is urgently needed is open and transparent leadership from the Acting C.E.O. and Board members, and the re-establishment of lines of communication with anglers across the state.

## **Commitment Delays**

A long delay seems to have afflicted the commitment of the Coalition Government in introducing steps to protect spawning fish at the mouth of rivers from commercial nets. This of course does not only affect the movements of black bream but also the movement of bass and estuary perch into the Gippsland Lakes to spawn, and the importance of this consideration was reinforced with the commercial catch of 2 tonnes of estuary perch in the last year. The protection of fish becomes a critical issue when flood events occur and no better example exists than in 2007 when the commercial catch rose from 49 tonnes in 2006/7 to 144 tonnes of black bream in 2007/8 due to netting of black bream leaving the rivers during the flood of fresh water, and then in the following year the catch returned to the normal average 36 tonnes. I am concerned that the commitment of the Government to protecting fish at river mouths may be much less than anglers expect, remembering that former Director Travis Dowling indicated at the Lakes Entrance Recreational Fishing Forum that recreational anglers may get less than they are expecting with regard to protection of spawning fish at river mouths. What I find concerning is a lack of consultation with recreational anglers and on the issue of protection of spawning fish I am unaware of any discussion at all. After almost three years of waiting for action on this issue the lack of any consultation is disturbing particularly given that in that time two flood events have taken place, and thousands of spawning black bream removed from the system as a result, and this could have been avoided..

## **Letters Letters Letters**

I received the following email from Bruce Robinson (13<sup>th</sup> August) former co-ordinator of VICTAG. This letter was in response to the letter from Chris Hoyne published in the last issue of Around the Jetties, in which he stated "I know the perch move from McLaughlin's to Seaspray easily." I was unaware of this movement nor had any evidence of the movement of estuary perch between estuaries and so was pleased to receive the following.

*Hi Lynton*

*Thanks again for a great read. I can confirm Estuary Perch do swim between estuaries. When I was co-ordinating VICTAG I had an Estuary Perch reported being caught at McLaughlin's Beach after being tagged and released in the headwaters of the Perry River several years earlier. It's a well known fact that the Estuary Perch's arrive at McLaughlin's at certain times of the year, and the pro's that fish this water exploit this species at this time. I also had a recapture where a bream had swum between Lake Tyers and Marlo.*

*Regards Bruce Robinson.*

## **Editor**

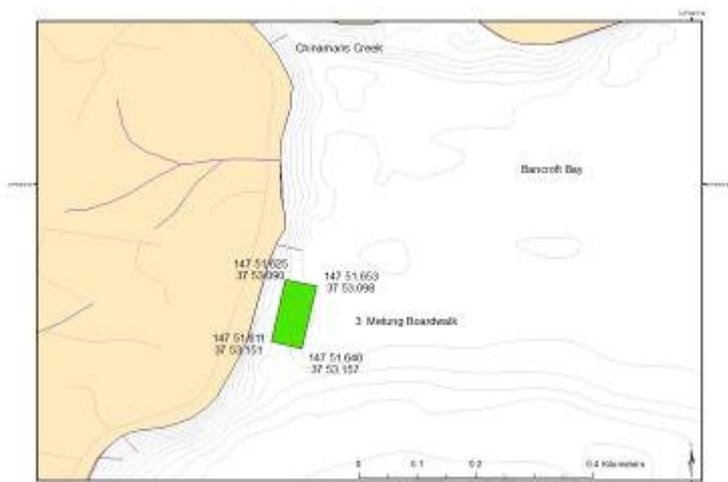
Thanks Bruce for this information. I was aware of the movement of that black bream between Lake Tyers and Marlo, but was totally unaware of the movement of estuary perch between estuaries. A special thanks to Chris Hoyne, for alerting us to this movement of estuary perch. I must say as I have said many times before that we are much poorer for not having an active VICTAG supported by Fisheries Victoria. I and other anglers have learnt so much about fish movements in estuaries, and when tagging is applied to species like shark the results are almost unbelievable. Perhaps my vision is clouded as I remember the late Peter Spehrs launching his boat before daylight to tag fish in Lake Tyers and Mallacoota, and the fact that he had tagged and released over 5000 fish. His committed work added to our basic knowledge of fish movements.

## Locations for Estuarine Artificial Reefs Announced

### Seven proposed artificial reef sites in East Gippsland estuaries

Gippsland Anglers will recall the meeting of recreational anglers held in Lakes Entrance on February 20th and attended by over 50 enthusiastic anglers to examine large aerial photographs and put forward suggestions for the location of reefs in Lake Tyers and the Gippsland Lakes. A separate meeting was held with the commercial fisherman prior to the meeting with the recreational anglers. A number of potential locations were identified, and after the meetings a further assessment of the sites was carried out examining the possible locations in detail, and the effects on other stakeholders of these locations as well as assessing reef stability and the dynamics of the estuary. In June 2013 this involved scientific site assessment. Fisheries Victoria's Brian Mottram has now released the five preferred locations for Lake Tyers and the Gippsland Lakes as well as the two preferred locations for Mallacoota.

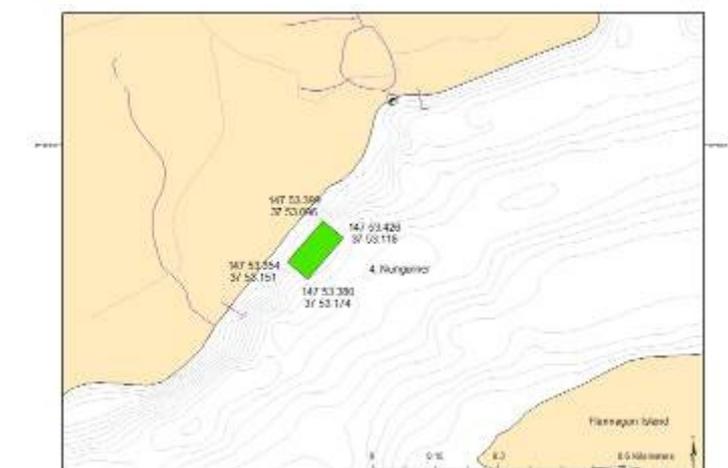
The reef zones are relatively small taking up an area of 50sq metres. Any readers who would like to comment on the locations for the artificial reefs should contact Richard Rogala/ Senior Fisheries Project Officer/ Fisheries Victoria on 9658 4374 or [Richard.rogala@depi.vic.gov.au](mailto:Richard.rogala@depi.vic.gov.au)



The following are maps of the locations for the seven reefs.

### *Gippsland Lakes (2 proposed sites) – Metung & Nungurner.*

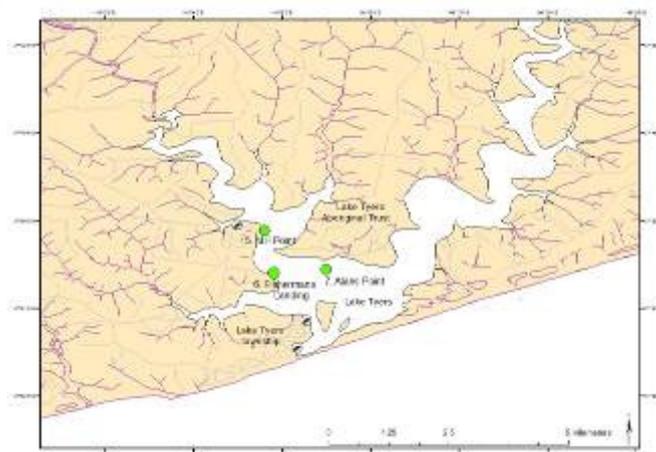
**Figure 1.** Map showing Metung Boardwalk proposed artificial reef zone to scale, co-ordinates of zone corner points are in degrees and decimal minutes.

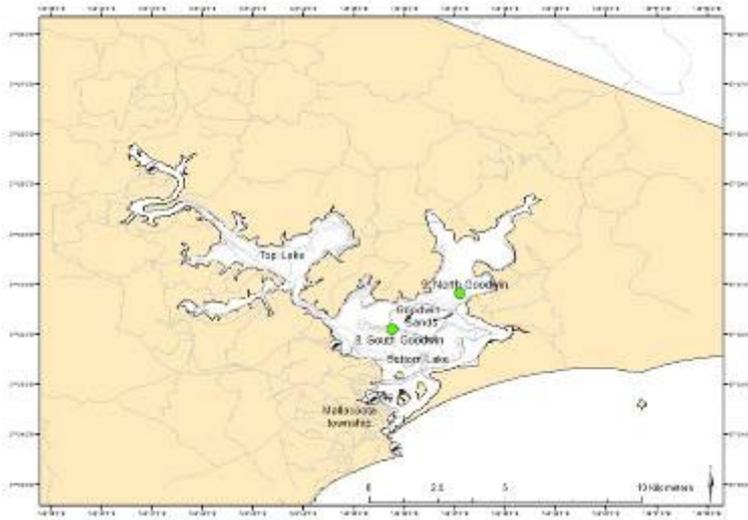


**Figure 2.** Map showing Nungurner proposed artificial reef zone to scale, co-ordinates of zone corner points are in degrees and decimal minutes.

### *Lake Tyers (3 proposed sites).*

**Figure 3.** Map of Lake Tyers showing proposed sites for artificial reefs : Mill Point, Fishermans Landing, Alans Point.





***Mallacoota Inlet (2 proposed sites).***

**Figure 5.** Map of Mallacoota Inlet showing proposed sites for artificial reefs : sites 8 and 9, South Goodwin and North Goodwin sands.

**Editorial Comment**

Fisheries have provided larger copies of these maps with co-ordinates. We will make copies and provide these additional maps to any angler who requires them to assist them in their comments to Fisheries. For our phone and/or email address see page 1

I thank Brian Mottram, Manager of Recreational Fisheries Improvements and Richard Rogala, Senior Project Officer of Fisheries Victoria for providing this information and giving anglers the chance to comment on the locations. This is appreciated. I was surprised at the small size of the reefs being placed in the Gippsland estuaries and would compare the 50sq metre artificial reefs with the fifth reef that was placed in the Merimbula Lake in 2009, that was 1600sq metres and involved the placement of 400 reef balls, and this was part of a five year enhancement program. The total reef area of 250sq metres for Lake Tyers and the Gippsland Lakes is very small by comparison with the reef structures in the Merimbula lake. I would question whether an assessment of the value of reef structures in estuaries can be made with such a small area of reef. The placement of the artificial reefs will always be debatable however, I would have thought the Gippsland Lakes with its increasing salinity and vast area (400sq kms) might have warranted more reef area than the 25 km sq Lake Tyers with its excellent habitat up the arms, but that's just a personal expectation. The NSW reefs in Merimbula Lake were financed from fishing licence funds.

**Readers-** Don't forget you may get a friend or an interested angler onto the mailing list for Around the Jetties by simply sending us an email with details of the person you are nominating and his email address or a letter with details of a mailing address. We do not advertise but rely on readers talking to others and the number of readers just continues to increase.

By the way your contributions and letters are greatly appreciated

**Good Health and Good fishing**

**Lynton Barr**



**Thanks to readers for assistance in recovering email addresses after the problems with the last issue. Some are still missing. Many are DEPI folk who may have moved jobs.**

**If you know someone who did not receive last month's newsletter or this one, would you ask them to contact us please.**

**Dawn**

**Next Issue -We may not have an October Issue due to the fact that I will be taking the entire publication staff to a sixteen day cruise undertaking a study in the William Bligh story of Bounty fame.**

**No Prizes for Guessing whose Boat is called BOUNTY.**

