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Around the Jetties

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An Anglers Newsletter

“The charm of fishing is that it is the pursuit of something that is elusive, but attainable, a perpetual series of occasions for hope.

Editorial



Readers of this issue of Around the Jetties face considerable pressure with the imminent release of the steps to protect spawning fish at the mouth of rivers. I am advised it will only apply to bream so bass and estuary perch will not be protected. It will be interesting whether the “cut” on the Mitchell River will be regarded as a river mouth, even though fish enter and leave the Mitchell River via this opening. Anglers will undoubtedly have an opportunity to respond to the recommendation contained in a Regulatory Impact statement.

The other imminent release is the proposal for an increase in the fishing licence and its extension to cover all anglers over 18. Again, Regulatory Impact Statement will be provided and anglers will have an opportunity to respond to the recommendations. It is unfortunate that VRFish has provided no guidance to anglers on either of these important changes, nor have they sought the views of anglers, which is most surprising. This publication has regarded both these issues as important and provided as much information as possible. It is now up to anglers and clubs to react when the recommendations are made, and it is worth remembering that it is an election year, and there are over 700,000 anglers in this state. This makes your views most important.

Iron Ore and Lake Tyers

A couple of weeks ago I had a visit from long time reader Dick Hargraves who is an experienced diver and welding inspector. Dick was concerned about the development of the iron ore mine at Nowa Nowa and the possibility that this could adversely affect areas of Lake Tyers, as water from the mine area will flow into Boggy Creek and then into the upper reaches of this estuary. Last week I had the opportunity to discuss these concerns with Anthony Hurst. Now anglers will remember Anthony as the highly respected Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria. Anthony was replaced in this position in a “restructure of fisheries” and is now Executive Director Earth Resources Development, and was in the area examining aspects of the proposed Nowa Nowa iron ore mine. Over a cup of tea, I put Dick Hargraves concerns to Anthony, as they are probably the concerns of many anglers. Anthony by the way enjoys regularly fishing the Lake Tyers estuary from his kayak, so he has a real love of this special lake. The following comes from my discussion as well as research on the mine itself.

The mine will produce high-grade magnetite/hematite from a massive open cut 700-800 metres in length and 300-400 metres in width. The most startling statistic is that this open cut will have a depth of 195 metres.

Anthony explained that the mine will construct three water storages to capture run-off including a sediment control dam of 1.12 hectares, and a clean water storage dam 1.69 hectares downstream of mine operations. This clean water will flow into Boggy Creek and ultimately 15kms into the Lake Tyers wetlands. Anthony had great confidence that the mine would not pose a risk to Lake Tyers and undoubtedly, the quality of the flow of any run-off to the estuary will be closely monitored. The mine site occurs principally within the catchment of Boggy Creek. The mine is expected to have a life of 8-10 years and at the end of that period the open cut is designed to flood and will be filled with water, and Anthony had no hesitation in suggesting that this could possibly provide an ideal trout fishery in the future.

After our discussion, Anthony said he would get a mine consultant to contact me to get any further concerns regarding Lake Tyers discussed, and I invite any anglers or clubs with concerns to get them to me in writing and I will raise them when contacted by the Eastern Mine Ltd consultant. Now what is also important is that an **Environmental Impact Statement** will be published in coming weeks and local anglers and angling clubs should be getting a copy and consider making a response.

The problem that I see as impacting locally will be the movement of a million tonnes of ore annually to the Port of Eden, and when the mine is fully working, it is suggested in the plan, that traffic flows will increase by 216 light vehicle and 368 heavy vehicle trips per day. The B-Double heavy vehicles will operate 24 hours per day, Monday to Friday on the 264 kms from Nowa Nowa to Eden carrying 80 tonnes of ore at a time, and it is suggested by the mining company that no road upgrades are envisaged as being necessary to cope with this increased road usage. I wonder at this statement.

This item is provided to encourage discussion amongst the angling community, and I thank Anthony Hurst for his response to my concerns. (Traffic increases on the Princes Highway were not specifically discussed.)

Bob McNeil's Lake Tyers Diary Report



“The current period has been part of one of the worst periods October- March that I have experienced in the main lake over the spawning period of the species. At no time this year did I find large concentrations of fish that could be regularly fished. The fish caught have been in good condition with an average size of 44cms whilst the smallest was 33 with several going 55cms and over. The weather has not helped over this period with northerly winds and flat water, which are my pet, hates. The water in the estuary remains very clear and quite warm. More regular anglers are fishing the estuary and this was brought home last time I was out when three boats fished the same spot within the space of an hour.

In the period from the 1st of January I have been on the water by 5.30am and have generally concluded my mornings fishing by 9am. In the eighteen mornings I fished I did catch five dusky flathead around the 30cm mark, and this is pleasing to see some small fish appearing whilst at the same time catching two large dusky flathead over 80cms. The only other species caught over this time was a couple of bream and two small salmon and two good size tailor, however it needs to be remembered my primary bait over this period was live mullet.”

Editor

Thanks to Bob for his usual comprehensive report. It needs to be said that over this fishing period Bob caught 79 dusky flathead, and on no occasion did he return home at the end of his mornings fishing without a couple of dusky flathead and he averaged 4 flathead per outing.

Bob brings a great deal of experience to his fishing. When reading through the Tourism Fishing Reports of 25 years ago (reported on in the last newsletter) I came across the following comment for the week ending 24/4/89 “On Saturday and Sunday Bob McNeil from Lake Tyers fished the Pile Bay area taking 10 good sized bream weighing up to 750grms using local prawn.”

And for the week ending 6/2/1989 “Local angler Bob McNeil caught 5 bream up to 1.3kgs near the Lake Tyers House on prawn last week.”

Bob brings many years experience to his reports on fishing in Lake Tyers.

Plenty of Fish in the Sea (Again)

This was the heading of an article in the SEFTIA newsletter (17th March 2014) covering the offshore trawl fishery. I have often quoted from this newsletter as in many ways it is regarded as providing a worlds best

practice approach to fisheries offshore and this approach is so different to the commercial Gippsland Lake fishery.

The following items from this article provide one of the reasons for the success of the offshore fishery, namely adherence to scientific quotas. Read on-

“Quotas for the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fisheries 2014/15 year commencing on May 1st have been announced.” The article went on to say the process to determine quotas starts with the CSIRO completing stock assessments on each stock. These assessments then pass through the Resource Assessment Group, the Management Advisory Committee, and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority before the Commonwealth Fisheries Commission makes a final decision on quotas or Total Allowable Catches.

Six stocks have increased including flathead, blue grenadier, pink ling, ribaldo, royal red prawns and saw shark, whilst six stocks have decreased including blue eyed trevally, deep water sharks east, mirror dory, redfish and silver trevally.

The point here is that all fish species are surveyed and quotas set, and the fishery is maintained.

This should be compared to the commercial fishery of the Gippsland Lakes where commercial fishermen can take all the fish they can catch regardless of the state of the fish species. I find it of some interest that the only fishers who have quotas are recreational anglers with their five dusky flathead limit and a maximum size limit of 55cms and ten bream bag limit although given the state of the fishery that is almost never achieved by anglers in the Gippsland Lakes.

The commercial fisherman can remove all the dusky flathead he can catch including the large females that may have been returned by recreational anglers in the interests of maintaining the stock of this species. Added to this there has never been a resource assessment for dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes as far as I am aware. At the same time commercial fishermen, at the mouth of rivers, may take spawning fish and when a flood occurs they can take all the bream they can catch as these fish exit the rivers. Governments and Fisheries Victoria do nothing to protect these species and continue to allow unfettered removal of these species.

I have heard it said, and it is fairly true, that recreational angler quotas or bag limits, are set to protect the commercial fishing industry of the Gippsland Lakes, remembering there are only ten commercial fishermen currently netting the lakes and they can take all they can catch with no quotas or scientific assessment of the species they are removing.

Your Fishing Licence under Consideration



An Important Notice to Anglers

I received the following email from Ross Winstanley which I believe is of great importance to all anglers.

Ross Writes

*G'Day Lynton- I read with great interest your "Increase in Licence fees" comments based on feedback you've had from readers of your newsletter. I wholly understand the concerns expressed and my advice to your readers is to keep a sharp eye out for the advertisement of the **Regulatory Impact Statement and draft regulations** relating to the proposed changes to the Recreational Fishing Licence arrangements. It's proposed that these changes be in place by mid-year so the time scale for consultation will be tight. **I expect that the release of the Regulatory Impact Statement is imminent.***

As soon as it's released I will let you know

Cheers Ross

Editor

This simply means the Government is moving quickly to introduce an increase in the cost of the recreational fishing licence to anglers, and to increase the scope of the licence given there are over 700,000 recreational anglers in this state and currently less than 50% actually contribute to the fishery by needing to purchase a licence. On the surface this is a realistic proposition given the All Waters Licence was \$20 when first introduced in 1999 and in the intervening years has only increased to \$24.50.

When this licence was introduced in 1999 the brochure explaining the licence to anglers quite clearly stated to anglers **“The all-waters licence is linked to the State Government buy-back of commercial fishing licences from bays and inlets.”** Clearly this item would encourage recreational anglers to accept willingly the introduction of this licence. Unfortunately this only applied for a limited period and the **current Government has taken no steps to buy back commercial fishing licences in bays and inlets** in the last three years even when some commercial fishermen have asked to have the buy back considered.

What has occurred in recent times is that the Government has used the Recreational Fishing Licence income (around \$6m per annum) to fund items that were formerly the responsibility of Fisheries Victoria. This is regarded as **cost shifting** and today only about 37% of the RFL goes to projects. The licence fees now fund Fisheries Officers, Fishcare, fish stocking, community information costs such as the fishing guide, and the angler diary program. All these, originally funded by Fisheries Victoria as part of its budget, are now funded by the RFL licence and yet the Government continues to ignore **the Buy-Back** of commercial licences.

It would seem that an increase in the licence and a concessional licence that covers all anglers is warranted, however it is equally important that anglers see the increased funding being applied to items other than the core responsibilities of Fisheries Victoria. The use of the increased funding needs to be approved by those contributing the funds, namely the recreational anglers and it also needs a public Government commitment to the agreed funding model. This will require VRFish to represent strongly the views of anglers and clubs across the state. Currently VRFish has made no public statement on its position representing anglers across Victoria; however the chairman of VRFish and the Executive officer are members of the Statewide Roundtable where the increase in licences has been discussed since at least September 2013.

Anglers will first know the Governments intention when, as Ross Winstanley states, **a Regulatory Impact Statement** is published. Anglers and clubs will then have a limited time to respond before the changes in the Impact Statement are introduced. Given that anglers currently have almost no information this is a concern.

Statewide Recreational Anglers Roundtable Meeting

The last Recreational Roundtable meeting took place on the 13th March. As I write this item on the 4th April, no summary of that important March meeting has been provided on the Fisheries website despite the following statement appearing in the Terms of Reference that supposedly governs the operation of this body *“The chairperson of the Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable ...”will produce a chairperson summary reporting the mutually agreed outcomes of each Forum meeting for posting on the DEPI website.”* It is particularly important that the agreed outcomes of the current meeting be made available to recreational anglers, given that discussion papers on the possible increase in the Recreational Fishing Licence have been discussed. Recreational anglers may well consider this a closed meeting of decision makers, and that the angling clubs and anglers generally in this state have no part in that decision process, or even knowing details of the discussions taking place.

. I have said previously that recreational anglers and clubs deserve a better deal regarding communication from the Statewide Roundtable with its Fisheries Victoria support, and this view has not changed remembering, *“The Forums are a stakeholder’s forum independently chaired and hosted by Fisheries Victoria.”* It could be argued that every angler in this State is a stakeholder and every licence holder is a contributor to the well being of Victoria’s recreational fishery.

For Further Information see the attachment to this issue, pages 11&12

I have reproduced a paper submitted to the Roundtable written by Ross Winstanley and two other members of the Roundtable, which sets out in a brief form the current thinking of this body. This paper was submitted to the Minister on behalf of the Roundtable via Fisheries Victoria. I understand some of the current RFL proposals address some of the key issues raised in this paper. I urge anglers to read this carefully and perhaps clubs should be discussing the implications of a licence increase and most importantly how the increased funds made available would be controlled.

Note

Ross Winstanley is one of three recreational fishers on the Interim Fisheries Advisory Council, and Anglers and I owe a debt of gratitude to Ross Winstanley for making this information available.

Bemm River Report for April



Don Cunningham of Bemm River has prepared the following report
“Anglers are being rewarded with good catches of Bream. Live, fresh, or frozen prawn will work, and I often say don’t throw today’s bait. Tomorrow the old and smelly prawn can be the bait that catches the biggest Bream. The Flathead have scattered, and are much harder to find. A lot of anglers are finding that they come along when they are fishing for Bream. Most visitors are finding that the Bemm has an abundant range of undersized Bream, and the challenge is to find the better fish. I think it is great that we can catch and release these small fish; at least we know that the future looks great.

Most regular visitors have developed techniques to attract the larger Bream.

But it is not that simple any more, there are other issues, and angling pressure becomes a major factor. It is very relentless, every day the boats come, and the car park is full. This is probably most welcome, however constant boat traffic can have a huge impact in our small shallow estuary.

I see some of the catches and I am confident that patience, innovation and persistence will continue to be rewarded. The Bream are bulking up now, which is indicating there are currently good conditions for them at this time.

Prawning has always attracted visitors to Bemm, and as the months go by, it is turning into a sustained period, and although the prawn is only big bait size, they are plentiful. How long it will last is the question, and I believe that a lot of rain would end the prawn season.

There are so many ways you can use a live prawn. Under a float is one method that can be used more, especially when the estuary is closed like it is now. Night fishing using hit lights attached to a float is probably the most exciting bait fishing I have ever done. Using live prawn or sand worm, fished this way attracts Bream, Perch and Luderick, in a way that will show you how aggressive these species can be, and usually the quality is excellent.

Surf anglers will be disappointed to hear that crabs are hard to get away from at the moment. I would encourage anglers to try some of the metal lures available, and by walking along the beach, can often find a hole that holds Salmon and Taylor.

Bemm has been a haven for the twelve-foot tinny. The shallow nature of the estuary lends itself towards this sort of craft. More importantly they are affordable. They cost a lot less to tow, and a very modest cost to run. I have seen a resurgence of the tinny in use at Bemm this year, and remind visitors Sydenham Inlet has always provided good opportunity for productive angling within 1km of the boat ramp."

Don Cunningham. 3/4/2014

Protection of Spawning Fish at the Mouth of Rivers.



The following was an update for the Ministers Office (18/2/2014) on the then current situation regarding protection of spawning fish at the mouth of rivers.

It has given me cause for considerable concern as to whether the commitment made by the Government prior to the election over three years ago will achieve the protection that recreational anglers hoped. The update is the italics in blue.

"An update on where the review process currently sits.

DEPI Fisheries scientists have analysed the flow in the rivers and commercial catch to determine what impact commercial fishers have on spawning black bream moving into and out of rivers during the spawning season in the Gippsland Lakes."

I would interpret that this update to the Minister has totally neglected the movement of bass and estuary perch to the Gippsland Lakes to spawn. This is hard to understand given that the Recreational Fishing Licence has funded the stocking of bass in these rivers. The analysing of the river flows would also suggest that DEPI scientists are examining the flood events and the resulting massive catches of black bream. It is to be hoped they will also be examining the normal movements of black bream in and out of the rivers. Already solid evidence exists of the removal of estuary perch and bass in commercial nets. To ignore the movement of these species undermines the commitment of the Government 'to protect spawning fish at the mouth of rivers.'(In 2011/12 two tonnes of estuary perch were removed in commercial nets, and this would include bass. A study has been undertaken by Fisheries using angler funds into the movement of bass in the Snowy River (2009) and a second study again using angler funds into the movement of estuary perch in the Snowy River (2010). Both studies show the movement of these species into the estuaries to spawn and when this movement takes place.

"When will public consultation be conducted?

DEPI will communicate the findings of this research and proposed management responses with key stakeholders as soon as possible following agreement with the Minister. This will include meetings with recreational and commercial stakeholders in Lakes Entrance."

I find it interesting that the findings will be communicated to the ten commercial fishermen at a meeting, and that is relatively easy, however it is far more difficult to communicate with the angling clubs and thousands of recreational anglers that fish the Gippsland Lakes.

It is also interesting that this process has taken over three years, and we still have no definitive answers, however the move to increase fishing licence costs and extend the number of anglers covered seems to have been accepted in a matter of months. Perhaps it is simply where this Government's interests currently lie.

“What is the estimated conclusion date for changes to be made?”

DEPI will begin implementing any management changes immediately after consultation and a clear direction on the appropriate response is reached. The amount of time to implement management arrangements will depend on their complexity.”

Given this information I doubt anglers will see regulations that protect bass or estuary perch and that as more bass are stocked in our rivers paid for by recreational anglers more will be removed in commercial nets, and it is happening already. Remember 82,000 bass have been stocked in East Gippsland in the last year and many of these have been stocked in rivers providing spawning access to the Gippsland Lakes. Remember also 100,000 bass were to be stocked in the Nicholson River at a cost of \$100,000, and this was stopped after the stocking of 40,000 due to the dam on the Nicholson stopping the ability of these fish to reach the estuary to spawn.

VRFish Monthly Report



The following are some items taken from the VRFish Monthly report

Corio Bay

A Joint industry/VRFish-working group has been established to discuss proposals from recreational fishers to reduce conflict and this will include consideration of compensation and adjustments. It is estimated that a compulsory buy back of commercial entitlements would be \$30-40 million. A voluntary buyback of licences would be cheaper but should not be a stand-alone measure.

Review of VRFish Structure and Future Resource Needs

A new structure has been approved by the Board of VRFish that would include the current Executive Officer becoming General Manager and the Finance Officer would include in his role administration and business support. The biggest change is creating a Senior Programs and Partnerships position that replaces the Operations Manager role and the creation of a Recreational Fisheries Liaison Officer to engage with grass roots fishers.

Logo Motto and Organisation Name

The Board and council considered this issue at a recent meeting and agreed to revise the motto to Representing Recreational Fishers. It was agreed to defer the name change to a later date and hold further discussions on the issue.

Other Items Discussed included

Potential for an increased water allocation for Toolondo, Murray Cod management with an aim to strike a better balance between resource usage and protection, and current Murray Crayfish protection was also discussed.

The Law and Recreational Anglers



This legal situation raises an interesting case that I have not seen previously. The information in this report was the result of a Media Release received from Fisheries Victoria on the 21/3/2014.

Fishing in Point Lonsdale Marine Park

A 43-year-old Ivanhoe man is being questioned by Fisheries Officers in relation to allegedly fishing for sharks in the Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park.

DEPI Officers will allege the man intentionally drifted a whole tuna bait that held two large hooks on the in going tide 169 metres from the Point Lonsdale Pier. The bait was according to the Fisheries Officer connected to sophisticated game fishing equipment.

Anglers are only permitted to fish off the Point Lonsdale Pier to a distance of 50 metres.

The man's fishing rod and gear was seized and it is expected he would be charged on summons.

The Media release stated-

“The taking or attempting to take any marine species from a Marine National Park or Sanctuary is a serious offence and there are penalties of up to \$8,600 for recreational offences.”

Editor

I wonder how many anglers would have thought that fishing from a pier and drifting your bait out into a Marine Park could yield such a result. I understand that VRFish are currently putting the case for a trial of allowing recreational fishing in a marine park with a view to opening up a number of marine parks to recreational fishing.

Some Observations

Major Release of Macquarie Perch in Victorian Waters

In a Media Release on the 31st March, Fisheries Victoria Executive Director Ross McGowan announced the release of 72,000 Macquarie perch in Victorian waters in the past two months. These fish have been stocked in Expedition Pass Reservoir near Castlemaine (10,000), The Ovens River above Wangaratta (45,000) and the Goulbourn River (20,000). Fisheries managers are not looking to open fisheries for Macquarie perch but rather are investing in the long-term survival of the species for future generations. These fingerlings were grown at Snobs Creek hatchery using Recreational Licence Funding and also using the \$16 million Government Recreational Fishing Initiative funded over four years.



Currently Macquarie perch can only be taken in three Victorian waters Lake Dartmouth and its tributaries (Bag limit 1), and the Yarra River and Upper Coliban Reservoir, (Bag limit 2)

Editor

Fisheries Victoria is to be congratulated on the introduction of Macquarie perch to these Victorian waters. The stocking of the Ovens River is particularly interesting given the river has a developing trout cod population, and trout cod are also found in the Goulbourn River. I had hoped that we might see Macquarie perch returned to Lake Eildon, given that in the early 1960's Macquarie perch came out of the lake in massive numbers entering the Jamieson River to spawn. Over a tonne of Macquarie perch were removed from the Jamieson swimming pool by recreational anglers with no bag limits at that time, according to the Sun Newspaper. Over the next few years the river was netted by Fisheries to establish a brood stock for breeding, however the “Macca” fishery never recovered and I doubt today that any Macquarie perch enter the Jamieson River to spawn. Perhaps the release of 1 million Murray cod in Eildon in recent years may be a reason that Macquarie perch have not been released in these waters.

Dining Out

Recently Dawn and I went to a delightful restaurant, the River Grill in Bairnsdale, for their two-course lunch including a glass of wine for \$30. It was a delightful meal sitting in the sunshine and the food and presentation could only be described as excellent. Dawn had lamb cutlets whilst I had a filet of Hapuka served on salad. This Hapuka was a beautiful eating fish, with white flesh and the filet had been grilled. I had never previously tasted this species and so I asked the waiter about this fish being termed on the menu as local. He seemed well informed and indicated it was obtained off one of the trawlers at Lakes Entrance and was a deep-sea variety of fish.

On arriving home I did some research on this species and found about 10 tonnes per annum was caught off the NSW coast, however the greatest fishery for this species is in New Zealand where the annual catch of around 2,000 tonnes is valued at over \$30 million per annum.



In Victoria it is often regarded as by catch when the offshore trawl is fishing for other species. This fish grows to 1.8 metres and 70kgs although most fish taken are in the 20kg range. It takes 10-13 years to reach maturity at which time it is 80-85cms in length and it lives to an age of around 60 years. It is found in depths

of 50-800 fathoms. I became more interested in this fish as I discovered more about it. It is highly rated as an eating fish with work being undertaken in New Zealand to adapt the species to production via aquaculture. The catch of Hapuka in New Zealand operates under a Quota Management System. In New Zealand the recreational catch limit for this species is five fish per day. Now don't take my word for it, but if you ever see Hapuka on the menu do try it for yourself.

The Maasbanker and Surf Fishing



In discussions with VRFish Executive Officer Dallas D'Silva earlier in the year I raised the issue of the operation of the Maasbanker close to beaches where anglers were surf fishing. Dallas indicated he would take this generally felt local concern up. On the 27th March Dallas provided the following statement for Around the Jetties.

“VRFish are in the early stages of discussion with the owner operator of the Maasbanker. These efforts are to reduce conflict with the recreational anglers in East Gippsland and maintain the supply of fresh bait to local markets.

Stay tuned for further information on this important issue'

This photo supplied by a reader shows the Maasbanker so close into shore that the flags of Life Saving Victoria on the beach at Lakes Entrance are clearly in the photo.

I did raise the wording that indicated the Maasbanker supplied bait to local markets. Dallas responded saying- *“In terms of the word ‘local’ I mean Victorian Markets.”*

I thank Dallas for his efforts to achieve a solution to a problem that has caused concern amongst recreational anglers over the years, and recreational anglers will certainly stay tuned for further information. With over 90 miles of surf beaches it does seem realistic that some areas should be allocated for surf fishing, and other areas made available for commercial netting.

North East Trout Populations

A meeting is to be held in Mansfield organised by local member Bill Sykes so that recreational anglers can have the opportunity to hear the results of a recent trout population survey in NE rivers. Expert freshwater fisheries managers will deliver results. Anglers raised concerns with Dr Sykes at a suggested decline in trout populations. Sites were surveyed on the King River, the Howqua River, the Jamieson River and the Upper Goulbourn River. Prior to the meeting fisheries managers will convene a meeting to consider management options. The situation in East Gippsland streams was discussed with the chairman of VRFish hoping that the NE trout survey could also include Gippsland streams, as anglers had indicated a decline in trout populations in East Gippsland. Perhaps the survey of trout streams should be extended to cover major streams across the state, however congratulations to Dr Sykes for the action he has taken supporting recreational anglers in his area.

Learn More about our Estuaries

A program was held at the Nicholson Angling Club rooms by the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority looking at improvements in the estuarine reaches of rivers in the Region. An invitation for anglers to attend this program was advertised in the last Around the Jetties. Renae Ayres, a scientist associated with waterway management spoke on the link between habitat and fish and the need for a variety of habitats for different fish species, and how the number of fish an area can support is limited by the type and quality of habitat available. Renae also spoke on the threats to habitat and how fishing communities working with angling clubs and Catchment Management authorities can improve estuarine habitat. Ken Judd Manager of Water Programs with the EGCMA explained how some plants can improve rivers and how others such as willows and English broom can pose a threat to our waterways. The current waterway strategy is focussing on the lower levels of the rivers. Ken made the comment that the upper reaches of the Nicholson River provide a particularly beautiful example of a stream in good condition, and to have such an example so close to communities makes it rather special. Ken had recently canoed the upper reaches of this stream.

These short talks were followed by a display of electro fishing in the area around the highway bridge, and we as observers were able to stand within 10-15 metres of this boat and see it operate. This was said to be the only boat of its type, and can operate in salt water, and actually the Nicholson River was quite salty in this area.



Several luderick 30-35cms were taken, and released no worse for the experience, and of particular interest small bream around 5-6cms were taken and released. This method would seem to have application to ascertaining fish using woody debris in our rivers. Adrian Kitchingman an Aquatic Spatial Scientist from the Arthur Rylah Institute and operator of the boat described results in the Murray River where cod up to 1.4 metres in length had been caught measured and tagged and released.

The program concluded with Simon Conran a leading scientist with Fisheries Victoria who has been involved with Gippsland Lakes bream research and stock assessments over many years, describing methods of sampling black bream. Simon indicated that no single method covers sampling and that some methods vary according to the size of the fish being sampled. He was also quite excited by the addition of electro fishing to other sampling methods such as the use of commercial statistics, trawl netting, recreational monitoring and the Angler Diary program. The morning program concluded with a question and answer session chaired by John Pearson, Research and Communication Officer of EGCMA.

I have left to last the report of Nicholson Angling Club member, Ken Bradley as it seems to have important implications for anglers.

Ken spoke of how the Nicholson Club had been actively involved in projects with Fisheries Victoria such as the electronic tagging of bream, and riverbank restoration including tree planting and fencing out stock from riverbanks. The club regularly runs education days for young anglers but these days have been handicapped by an almost total lack of fish for young anglers when they apply what they have learnt.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Nicholson Angling Club. When the club was formed it had over 300 members who came to the area to fish for bream whilst at the same time bringing economic benefits to the area.. Today the club has 90 members, The club until a couple of years ago had five major competitions per year, today the club has only one, and to provide the chance of catching fish the boundaries for that competition have been increased to include Lake Tyers. Ken stated that without the inclusion of Lake Tyers the club would be a social club, so poor is the fishing in the beautiful Nicholson River.

Ken concluded his talk with the following statement, "the only way to catch fish in the Nicholson River is to get rid of commercial netting at the mouth of this river."

I was moved by the description of how the depletion of bream in one of the Gippsland Lakes great rivers has impacted on one of the finest angling clubs in Gippsland, and I worry that I see little evidence of any real plans to improve this situation in the future. This morning concluded with a hot dinner served in the clubrooms by the Angling Club ladies, which allowed those present to continue to discuss matters raised during the morning sessions. Congratulations to the EGCMA for their organisation of an informative program. A second program covering the same topics was held in the afternoon.

Letters Letters Letters

What Fish is That ?

Readers will remember the photo that John Scott sent me of estuary perch or bass in the Mitchell River recently, and featured in the last issue of Around the Jetties. On the 16th March I had the following email from Chris Hoyne.

"Those fish in the photograph are clearly bream-they look like bream including the dark band on the edge of the tail, and they are sitting like bream do in snags everywhere. Regards Chris"

Editor

I approached Dr Jeremy Hindell, former fisheries scientist, and the person responsible for tracking the movements of bream and dusky flathead with the use of transmitters for his view on the photograph. He responded saying-



*“Hard to say what those fish could have been. It’s not uncommon to see bream, perch or bass lying like that under snags. Although a lot of bream I have seen while diving in the Gippsland Lakes have been under snags closer to the bottom, like the video I sent you. Hence the implications for Large Wooden Debris design. One thing I did notice was a dark fringe on the tail of at least one of the fish. This to me is more reflective of bream. But there is also no reason why at least estuary perch and bream would not be schooling together. I have seen evidence of this when diving.
Cheers Jeremy”*

Editor

Well I think the outcome of this photo is that it is most likely the fish on the snag were estuary perch and bream together. Thanks to Dr Hindell for his considered thoughts on this issue.

Dr Hindell did forward several videos of fish on snags and they may be seen on

<http://youtu.be/fndBXu6-yRE>

Letter Regarding Bemm River

I received the following letter from Don Ellis for the Metropolitan Anglers Association

“Lynton

I have previously raised the issue about the great difficulty in accessing the banks of the Bemm River when inclement weather prevents fishing in Sydenham Inlet. As previously mentioned the lack of river access points and the massive growth of riparian vegetation almost eliminate bank fishing on this river.

You will be pleased to know that this matter was raised at the March Roundtable Forum and Fisheries Victoria gave an undertaking to investigate fully the problem. Hopefully “the ball will really start to role on this issue.”

I propose placing a detailed submission to Fisheries making them completely aware of the magnitude of the problem. I would greatly appreciate any input/data you could add to support my submission.

Don Ellis for the Metropolitan Anglers Association.”

Editor

This publication has commented on the river situation at the Bemm and will provide further supporting material. I have forwarded this letter to Don Cunningham of Bemm River who has a more intimate knowledge of the problem than anyone does, however I do invite any anglers who would like to provide supporting information to forward it to me and I will see Don Ellis receives it for his submission. This is a most important issue and I can recall in the early 1990’s fishing the Bemm River and was then stunned to see access closed. This has particularly affected the aged and handicapped anglers who no longer have access to a boat and yet love their days out fishing. Please contribute to this submission. I look at the Tambo River in East Gippsland with its roads on both sides of the stream, which provide excellent access for the aged and handicapped to fish within metres of their vehicles. Given the ageing population such access becomes an important issue.

Be Aware-

The release of the Regulatory Impact Statement covering the proposed increased Recreational Fishing Licence costs is close. It is only by reading this document that you will be aware of the proposed changes affecting you

Special Attachment

Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable proposals for the Recreational Fishing Licence

Members of the Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable have resolved to remedy some grossly unfair aspects of the current RFL structure and the unsatisfactory manner in which trust fund expenditure appears to have morphed from a contract with recreational fishers into a quasi-cost recovery regime.

Details of expenditure from the RFL trust account since 1999 show clear evidence:

- of cost-shifting of Government programs – some statutory responsibilities and some longstanding services to the community – to the RFL; and
- that the cost burden is being borne – unfairly – by just 42% of Victoria’s estimated 721,000 recreational fishers.

The SRFR is resolved that neither situation should be allowed to continue. Our preferred strategy is to work through DEPI with the Minister to achieve satisfactory outcomes.

The 1999 agreement between the Government and recreational fishers was explicit about dedicating all RFL revenue to new initiatives. That understanding began to unravel around 2003, deteriorating to the point where the level of funding for DEPI programs has risen from around 16% of RFL revenue to 43% while total annual RFL sales have risen from \$3.9M to \$6.6M.

On top of the apparent breaching of the founding agreement, SRFR members are very concerned by the manner in which DEPI project cost shifting has increased over the past decade without appropriate open and transparent dialogue with recreational fishers. This is in a clear contrast to the way in which engagement has occurred in the commercial sector.

Since 2004 implementation of the Government’s cost recovery policy has been developed jointly by DEPI and the commercial fishing sector. That process has faithfully followed Treasury and Finance guidelines in terms of inclusiveness, consultation, transparency and avoidance of cross-subsidies and “free riders”. Referring to the principles of equity, transparency and collective decision-making on program cost contributions, DEPI’s Future Fisheries Strategy states, “*In principle [these] same issues should be considered for the recreational sector*”. It is time to put these principles into practice.

DEPI has chosen - rightly - not to formally extend the cost recovery policy to the recreational fisheries program which serves the Government’s public interest and community service obligations. However, by increasingly shifting program costs to the RFL trust fund, DEPI is in effect, implementing a quasi-cost recovery agenda. The difference is that, in doing so it has operated in a non-inclusive manner, in effect, transferring the funding burden of what for a decade or more were integral parts of the core Government program, to a minority – 42% in 2011/12 – of Victoria’s recreational fishers. The SRFR considers this unfair and unacceptable.

Whether or not the Future Fisheries Strategy is fully implemented, the strategy contains some sound principles and proposals, some of which are now in place. One of the deficiencies the Strategy seeks to address is the lack of transparency and accountability of cost recovery arrangements. This clearly typifies the position in relation to recreational fisheries licensing. One of the 10 major areas for reform commits DEPI to “*providing effective opportunities for fishers to engage in decisions on the nature and extent of services*” for which fishers contribute towards costs. That commitment makes no distinction between commercial and recreational fishers. It has been explicitly met in relation to commercial fishers while to date; this policy has not been applied to the recreational fishing sector.

There are two major issues that the SRFR is determined to see rectified.

The first is a commitment to improved governance allowing RFL-holders greater direct decision-making, oversight and reviewing roles in relation to RFL expenditure and accountability to license holders. This measure can be seen as enabling “*fishers to support, through collective decisions, levels of service above a baseline set by government*” as advocated in the Future Fisheries Strategy.

The second is the expansion of the current RFL structure to cover all recreational fishers over the age of 18 years, requiring currently exempt fishers to take out concessional-fee RFLs. On the surface, it would appear that the Government is either unwilling or unable to meet its Community Service Obligations by making pro rata contributions to program costs on behalf of exempt fishers.

This SRFR proposal serves two major objectives. First, it will address the current inequities, cross-subsidies, free rider and governance defects of the current licensing and program funding arrangements. Second, it will enable the full value of the licensing system to be realized – as a communication and research/survey medium embracing all recreational fishers as well as an efficient and equitable program-funding source.

The SRFR emphasizes that achieving a satisfactory outcome for the two objectives outlined above will be the recreational fishing sector's main objective in the lead-up to the 2014 State election.

Achieving the first should be straightforward administratively with appropriate engagement with representatives of the sector.

We believe the political challenges inherent in the second objective can also be overcome with positive engagement and support from sector representatives.

SRFR members are committed to playing a positive role in facilitating the working relationships to achieve a satisfactory outcome on these significant and important reforms.

Prepared by Ross Winstanley

Around the Jetties on Line

We are pleased to announce that Around the Jetties can now be sourced on the Lake Tyers beach website- www.laketyersbeach.net.au

The newsletter will still be emailed to readers and of course, those who do not have access to email facilities will still receive hard copies. Now those with email facilities will be able to direct friends and other anglers to Around the Jetties on this website and they will be able to access back copies. Currently the most recent five back copies are on the website and future newsletters will add to this source of information.

This is a great site with fishing news; local accommodation available at Lake Tyers and local weather plus reports on the lake and this is always interesting to anglers.

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.

Good Health and Good fishing