



Fish-e-Fax

A fortnightly round-up of recreational fishery management issues

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Greater protection for the iconic Murray cod

The great Australian icon, Murray cod will now have increased protection from organised crime.

Australia's largest native freshwater fish had been declared a priority species under the *Fisheries Act* meaning that those who possess or traffic commercial quantities of Murray cod can be charged and face penalties of up to 10 years jail.

Restocking, monitoring and the efforts of Victoria's recreational fishers continue over the past decade to be invaluable to the recovery of the fish. But there is now growing evidence that illegal trade is rising and trafficking is becoming more lucrative to organised criminals, threatening to derail this recovery effort.

For this reason, the new laws will give Murray cod the same priority protection as other valuable species such as abalone and rock lobster.

Under the new rules, a commercial quantity of Murray cod is defined as possessing three times the daily bag limit, or having 30 kilograms of Murray cod in any form other than a whole fish.

The legal recreational take of Murray cod in Victoria is a daily bag/possession limit of two fish, which must be between 60 centimetres and 100 centimetres in length.

Sophisticated investigative techniques used by Fisheries Victoria to successfully catch abalone and lobster thieves would be used to protect the cod. Anyone who sees or suspects illegal fishing activity is urged to call the 24-hour reporting line 13-FISH (13 3474).

Your licence fees at work at the Hopkins River

Recreational anglers are enjoying improved access to the Hopkins River, Warrnambool, thanks to the construction of two fishing platforms.

Following consultation with the Warrnambool and District Angling Club, the Allansford District Angling Club and the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, the Warrnambool City Council built the platforms at two of the river's most popular fishing spots.

Completed earlier in the year, the Lyndoch platform is accessed by a path leading upstream from the western bank of the Hopkins River Bridge. A new timber boardwalk leads from the Mahoneys Road car park area to the second platform.

The Lyndoch platform was already hosting anglers catching black bream, estuary perch, mullet and Australian salmon.

The platforms, which adjust to suit fluctuating river levels, were constructed with the help of \$89,455 from the annual Recreational Fishing Grants Program and \$5,200 from the City of Warrnambool.

Victoria's revised Rock Lobster Fishery Management Plan

The new *Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery Management Plan* provides clear guidance for the management of this sustainable and valuable community resource for at least the next five years. The plan has been developed with the assistance of a stakeholder-based steering committee that provided important strategic and management advice.

The plan includes actions to:

- Retain the quota scheme and pot limits for the commercial fishery.
- A strategy to rebuild lobster stocks and a new decision framework for setting the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC)
- Investigate the establishment of an independent tribunal to set the TACC
- Monitoring of changes in ecological risks to stocks and habitats
- Establish economic performance indicators for the rock lobster fishery
- Implement an effective method of estimating the recreational rock lobster catch
- Align the possession and daily bag limits in, on or adjacent to Victorian waters to two lobsters per day
- Establish a management advisory forum for the rock lobster fishery
- Investigate potential compliance tools such as tagging in the commercial fishery
- Provide better opportunities for commercial fishers to express their individual and collective views about the operation of the fishery regarding business considerations.

The management plan is available from the DPI website www.dpi.vic.gov.au/fishing or by contacting the DPI Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

South-west fishers doing the right thing for abalone

The fishing community in Victoria's South-West has been congratulated for observing the restricted fishing area between Lion Headland and the Aire River aimed at limiting the spread of abalone disease.

Fisheries Officers have undertaken numerous land and sea patrols of the restricted fishing area, during the day and night, and have not encountered anyone doing the wrong thing since the restrictions were introduced on June 26, 2009

Line fishing, diving and boating are permitted but the taking of rock lobster and shellfish, including abalone, and spearfishing are prohibited in the restricted fishing area until September 30, 2009.

For more information visit <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/abalonedisease>.