

Rubicon River Fishery Assessment

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Abstract:

The interaction between anglers and fish populations forms the basis for recreational fisheries management. The challenge for fisheries managers is to protect, maintain or enhance both the fish stocks and the angling experience. A common approach employed to achieve these outcomes is the implementation of angling regulations. Licences, bag limits, size limits and closed fishing seasons are all common management-tools familiar to recreational fishers. Prior to any consideration of changing the current management approach in the Rubicon River, fisheries managers had to first determine whether a problem exists. The Rubicon River is a popular angling stream in north-east Victoria. Angler surveys and trout population studies were conducted over two trout seasons in this river to investigate whether the fishery was being over-exploited and if a change was required to current angling regulations.

Key Findings:

- The assessment of the fishery found no evidence in either the population of brown trout, or angler catch rates, that could be considered as consistent with over-harvest of the fishery.
- Catch rates decreased over the summer period but probably as a response to increasing water temperatures and human activity.
- The fishery varied in terms of angling performance and in the brown trout population between the two fishing seasons studied.
- The brown trout caught by anglers fishing that the Rubicon River were generally small (<300 mm total length) and the catch rates reported from the fishery were generally below what anglers consider as satisfactory.

Implications:

- A key recommendation was that an assessment of the extent and condition of existing trout habitat and the potential for rehabilitation should be undertaken with a view to implementing a habitat rehabilitation program in the Rubicon River specifically aimed at maximising trout habitat and fish densities.

Further Reading:

- Douglas J (2004) 'Rubicon River Trout Fishery Assessment.' Department of Primary Industries, Fisheries Victoria Research Report Series No.19, Snobs Creek, Victoria.