

Hi all

A great deal has been going on behind the scenes, since the last update advising of the final draft report from consultant Wayne Erskine, *River Reaches, Historical Channel Changes and Recommended Methods to Improve Macquarie Perch Habitat on Hughes Creek*.

Acting on recommendations of the Erskine report, Will Trueman, took the initiative to walk reaches 3, 4 and 5 over the Xmas period and produced detailed reports of his findings. In addition to being the author of *True Tales of the Trout Cod*, Will is a keen fisherman and returning resident to the region with a great deal of knowledge of the Hughes Creek. With many thanks, Will's reports identified several degraded Macquarie perch habitat sites for potential investment, of which three closely situated pools have been prioritised for works. These pools are downstream of the gorge in reach 4 and have to varying degrees been infilled by sand. With instream works focused at re-establishing depth and shelter with placement of wood, it is hoped these sites could once again provide suitable habitat for perch and extend their range down from the gorge. These three sites are being considered trial sites and hence will be thoroughly surveyed, pre and post works, to ensure we can learn/confirm how to best achieve the desired outcomes for replication at other locations.

To facilitate works at these priority trial sites, the following are progressing;

- Finalise agreement with the adjoining landholder for site works
- Investigating suitability of stockpiled wood from the Creightons Creek fire for use instream
- Coordinating pre and post surveys of fish (Arthur Rhyllah Institute) and macro-invertebrates (Waterwatch), as well as the physical features of the channel (cross sectional survey)
- Consulting with specialist, Bob Keller (former lecturer at Melbourne University) on designs for wood placement to induce scour

Other potential works sites highlighted by Will are being investigated.

Development of two Macquarie perch signs for the Hughes Creek are progressing. The content has been defined and the artwork is underway. When the proofs are available, I will circulate them for review and final comment before they are fabricated. One sign is intended for the day visitor sites along Hughes Creek Road and the other is to be placed near the old Hume bridge in Avenel (I will be meeting with a Shire representative next week to confirm approval for sign location).

There has recently been some discussion with local angler, Dave Palmer, who featured in the *The Seymour Telegraph* and on WINnews around management of carp in the Hughes Creek. With input from other community representatives, Landcare and agency staff, a bid for funding is developing for a Fish Circus/Catch a Carp Day. With support, the event would aim to provide opportunity for families to get involved and fish for carp, learn about Macquarie perch and the aquatic environment in a fun round robin of activities. We are hopeful to involve a celebrity chef that is able to meet the challenge of cooking carp on site to demonstrate how they can be enjoyed as an eating fish, along with a competition for carp catches and demonstrated techniques for anglers to target them. As with previous Fish Circus events, we will aim to involve Waterwatch undertaking bug (macro-invertebrate) identification, ARI with fish displays, and the 'Tram Conductor' sharing a wealth of knowledge on Australian fauna, to garner interest from a wide audience. In addition to increasing understanding of the Hughes Creek, a primary aim is to promote carp as a recreational sporting fish and reduce the number of carp instream. Without further consultation yet on the details, (this only being roughed out over the week) we are working towards coordinating this event in late spring to maximise benefits of carp reduction for perch spawning season. An ideal big picture spin off, as promoted by Dave, would be an annual event like 'Clean Up Australia Day' so we'll see where we can take it. If you support the 'catch a carp day' concept and want to contribute in some way, please let me know.

Until the next update.

Christine Glassford River Health Officer