

Yellingbo Conservation Area Submission
DELWP
Private Bag 15
Ferntree Gully VIC 3156
By email: YCA.Plan@delwp.vic.gov.au

SUBMISSION TO YELLINGBO CONSERVATION AREA DRAFT 10 YEAR PLAN

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing on behalf of VRFish, the peak body representing Victoria's 838,000 recreational fishers. VRFish welcomes the opportunity to provide our submission and represent the views of Victoria's fishing community on this important matter.

VRFish is fully supportive of any actions that aim to improve water quality, restore streamside vegetation and appropriately manage riparian grazing to reduce erosion within the Yarra catchment. Fishers are increasingly aware of the important link between healthy waterways and healthy fisheries and consistently report fish habitat as the top priority for investment.

However, VRFish is deeply concerned that the released draft management plan has effectively locked anglers out of waterways. Existing management arrangements currently permit full access to anglers. Throughout the draft plan there is equally no justification for loss of access, nor recognition of the social and economic benefits of fishing.

Recreational fishing in the Yarra Valley is a popular pastime that provides numerous economic benefits to local communities. Across the state, recreational angling contributes \$7.1 billion to the Victorian economy and supports 34,000 jobs. Anglers spend on average \$326 per fishing trip, with over 6 million trips carried out annually (Ernst and Young, 2015).

VRFish met with DELWP on 21 September 2018 to raise our concerns over not only the lack of recognition of recreational fishing and its significance as a primary recreational pastime within the draft plan, but also the many

***Let's make fishing
better, for everyone.***

access issues that must be addressed prior to the release of a final management plan. The questions raised were as follows:

1. What stakeholder consultation has taken place during the development of the draft plan with angling clubs, associations or peak bodies?
2. What are the current impacts of recreational fishing in the current Yellingbo Conservation Reserve? How have these impacts been measured, and by who?
3. Why is recreational fishing being excluded from 'conservation' zones if current impacts are nil or negligible?
4. What benefits to conservation will excluding recreational fishing in 'conservation' zones provide?
5. How are introduced/noxious fish species currently being managed in these waterways?
6. What will the impacts be of these introduced/noxious species on native fish if recreational fishing is excluded from these zones?
7. How will introduced/noxious fish species be controlled under the final management plan in the 'conservation zones'.
8. Why is fishing not recognised as a priority 'recreational use' in the introductory paragraph on page 29 of the draft plan?
9. Why is fishing allowed either side of the Warramate Nature Conservation Reserve, but not directly adjoining? How will this be enforced? How will this affect anglers in kayaks moving down the Yarra River and Woori Yallock creek?
10. Do anglers have access to fish the Don River in Haining Farm under the proposed draft plan? The precinct 2 map shows it marked as 'restoration zone', but the Haining farm map shows areas within (including the Don River) as 'conservation zone.
11. Why are anglers being locked out of the following waterways that under existing management arrangements, currently provide full access:

Precinct 1

- Woori Yallock creek (Warramate nature reserve creek frontage)

Precinct 2

- Haining Farm (Don River flows through from confluence with Yarra River) (Clarification required as its marked as both Conservation and Restoration zone)

Precinct 3

- Wetlead Creek (very small section)

- Hoddles Creek (section downstream from the south of Hoddles creek education area to just east of the adjoining Beenak bushland reserve)

Precinct 4

- Woori Yallock Creek (Extremely large section from just North of the Parslow Bridge to South of Macclesfield.)
- Cockatoo Creek (Full section enclosed in the current YCR)
- Shepherd Creek (From confluence with Macclesfield creek to east of the YCR reserve boundary, then east of Woori Yallock Road to where it adjoins with Kirth Kiln regional park)
- Mccrae creek (section NE of old Beenak rd)

Precinct 5

- Cockatoo Creek (Small area east of Woori Yallock road and adjoining the Wright Forest bushland reserve)

Precinct 6

- Perrins Creek (from confluence with Sassafras Creek to just south of Olinda)
- Sassafras Creek (Full length)
- Ti-tree Creek (from confluence with Sassafras creek to northern side of Kallista-Emerald Road)

VRFish requested a response to these questions prior to the final submission date, however as yet our concerns have not been addressed.

Considering the disregard for recreational fishing within the plan, we are compelled to enlighten you that many fishers are working in partnership with CMA's, land holders and other government agencies to actively enhance the health of our waterways. We are proud to report there is a number of active riparian and fish habitat restoration projects across the State.

Your very own Department facilitates the 'Angler Riparian Partnerships Program' which has seen fishers volunteer countless manhours towards conservation efforts to improve our fisheries for future generations. The riparian restoration works that will be carried out as part of the new Yellingbo Conservation Reserve will drastically improve the performance of the fisheries throughout the Yarra Valley in coming years. We would envisage recreational fishers could be both a supporter and active participant in these improvements.

To effectively lock out anglers from many of these waterways without providing any evidence, is a slap in the face to the thousands of anglers that volunteer countless manhours towards improving the health of our waterways in the pursuit of their pastime.

In conclusion, VRFish is fully supportive of the expansion of the Yellingbo Conservation Reserve, and applauds the efforts of government departments and the community in preserving and enhancing this ecologically important area for future generation. However, VRFish is staunchly opposed to excluding recreational fishing from 'conservation' zones within the reserve. The social, economic and environmental benefits that recreational fishing provides to the broader community are well documented and cannot be ignored. We cannot support the draft plan in its current form.

VRFish looks forward to working collaboratively with local communities of the Yarra Valley, DELWP and other agencies involved in the development of the final Yellingbo Conservation Reserve plan to ensure recreational fishing is an integral part of its future management with access maintained.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Loats', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rob Loats
Chair
Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body

5 October 2018