

John Douglas
Victorian Fisheries Authority
Fishery Manager
By email: john.douglas@vfa.vic.gov.au

Dear John,

VICTORIAN FISH STOCKING PLAN 2020-21

Thank you for the opportunity for recreational fishers to comment on the draft Victorian fish stocking plan.

As the peak body for recreational fishing in Victoria we have a broad statewide representation and our members look forward to the opportunity to provide advice and comments through the Vic Stock Meeting process.

Devising and agreeing upon the best stocking regime is often a very localised aspect of our work. VRFish leverages the experience and knowledge of our local members and their organisations to provide input and comment into the stocking program. In absence of monitoring programs, including catch and effort data, we highly value these insights from our members who we consider 'experts' in their local waterways.

The impacts of Covid-19 has prevented the opportunity for Vic Stock Meetings to be held. This year is a very different consultation process, including the timing of when to provide input. For the first time, VRFish sent the draft stocking plan by email to all our members for comment. We understand many of our members have provided their comments to you directly.

Overall, VRFish supports the fish stocking program. There will always be some areas that require some healthy discussion and debate from time to time, especially in the absence of data. However, with the large number of fish that is now available, this is becoming less of an issue.

What we have heard is that fishers would like to see an increase of golden perch stocking in Lake Boga, but not at the expense of other local lakes. We have also detected conjecture with the proposal of Murray cod in the Wimmera River. Some fishers would like the fishery to remain a golden, silver perch and catfish fishery. These fishers cite a high predation risk by cod on other key recreational fishing species during low flow conditions and concerns about long-term water security in what is a fragmented and closed system.

As part of the fish stocking program we would like to highlight and endorse the continued stocking to build new fisheries at locations such as Rocklands Reservoir, Pykes Creek Reservoir, Bellfield Reservoir, Ouyen Lake and Ferntree Gully Quarry.

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

VRFish and our members have previously given support for mixed fisheries across the Kyneton-Bendigo Reservoirs to enhance year-round fishing experience for both salmonids and native fish. These stockings are incorporated in the plan.

We welcome the recovery stocking of Australian bass in the Snowy River, golden perch in Walkers Lakes and Murray cod in the north-east following fish kills. We also welcome the expansion of the estuary perch (aka. The Gippsland Perch) stocking into Gippsland Lakes for the first time following the buy-back of commercial nets.

Family fishing lakes are an important aspect of our stocking program with catchable sized rainbow trout and now extended to native fish in some areas. These fisheries offer great local access for kids and their families. We note the increased stocking at St. Augustine Pool of trout which is highly supported as the area limited with other trout fisheries. We also received comments that Lake Pertobe in Warrnambool could be promoted more as a family fishing lake and receive more fish than 900.

Members have come to us to support 'boutique' fish stocking which adds some uniqueness and excitement to our fisheries. We continue to support the trial of tiger and cheetah trout in Lake Purrumbete and the top-up stocking of Australian bass in Lake Bullen Merri. Further, stocking of chinook salmon fry into Lake Bullen Merri last year appears to be yielding good results.

We continue to receive strong interest from recreational fishers to have an expanded marine restocking program consisting of species such as black bream, flathead and mulloway.

In conclusion, our shared outcome for success in the fish stocking program is quality recreational fishing experiences. We would encourage the VFA and recreational fishers working together on:

- Methods and ongoing data collection to help monitor the success of stocking and fisher satisfaction rates of stocked fisheries;
- Reaffirm stocking/fishery objectives for each waterway;
- Expanding Victoria's estuarine and marine stocking program;
- Evaluating stocking larger fish, rather than higher numbers of small fish;
- Upscale stocking programs for trout cod, Macquarie perch and blackfish; and
- Continue to take into consideration water quality, water levels and environmental considerations, both in the short and long-term.

Yours sincerely,



Rob Loats
Chairperson
Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body

30 June 2020