



VRFish

Noxious Fish Harvesting Policy

Noxious Aquatic Species Permit Holders

2001

(Updated 2005)

Introduction

Following an extensive consultation process in the year 2000, VRFish successfully lobbied the Victorian government to phase out all inland recreational mesh netting licenses.

This successful campaign was implemented and formalized in September 2000 as part of the VRFish policy direction that offers no support for passive fishing equipment.

In 2002, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment initiated a review of the thirty designated “Schedule 8 Waters” across Victoria.

Following extensive consultation and support from VRFish, all of these waters were removed from the Schedule 8 listing, and most importantly, a buy-out of all Inland Access Holder licenses from these waters was initiated by VRFish and finally completed in September 2002.

This management arrangement effectively ended all inland commercial fishing operations in Victorian inland public waters except for eel aquaculture and fish species proclaimed as noxious under the Fisheries Act 1995.

Many of these once designated “Schedule 8 Waters” are now extremely valuable permanent recreational fishing water bodies containing various “wild” fish populations, (native and introduced species) and are currently stock enhanced with suitable recreational fishing species utilizing approved funds from the all waters recreational license trust account (FRAC).

This new recreational fishing resource management has effectively implemented a management regime that excludes commercial mesh netting operations in all stocked inland waters Victoria wide.

Commercial carp harvesting in Victorian waters is now subject to a permit system issued under the “Fisheries Act 1995 S 81 Noxious Aquatic Species Permits” on a case by case basis. These permits only allow for the harvesting of declared noxious species where permit holders are subject to the taking of noxious species only, with no provision for retaining other fish species (by-catch).

VRFish fully supports a management regime that excludes the setting of large numbers of undesirable mesh nets in all of our valuable inland recreational fishing waters for the harvesting of noxious fish species for the following reasons:

- Many of our inland waters are stock enhanced for recreational fishing opportunities only.
- Many of our inland waters are stock enhanced utilizing monies from recreational license trust funds (FRAC).
- Undesirable impacts associated with by-catch of native and introduced (salmonids, redfin) recreational angling fish species.
- Undesirable impacts associated with by-catch of protected fauna.
- The EPBC Act 1999 listing of several native fish species.
- The FFG Act listing of several native fish species.
- The conservation status of aquatic fauna has changed in recent times.
- The by-catch of commercial fishing operations, whether they are marine, estuarine or inland waters, are coming under closer public scrutiny.

The 2005 VRFish Noxious Fish Harvesting

POLICY

GENUINE IDENTIFIED AGGREGATIONS OF CARP AND/OR OTHER NOXIOUS FISH SPECIES ONLY

Authorization for commercial noxious fish harvesting operations in all inland waters must be obtained at least 48 hours prior to the commencement of fishing operations and only approved following confirmation that the area to be fished, and the gear to be used, is unlikely to result in “by-catch” of native and other important recreational angling species¹ and protected fauna.

Additionally, permit holders must focus on areas where native and other important recreational angling species and protected fauna “by-catch” is highly unlikely, and/or use techniques that will allow for the release of all “by-catch” with minimal or no injury, prior to these commercial operations being authorized and fully supervised.

At least 48 hours notice is to be confirmed by an onsite inspection by a regional DPI Fisheries Division Officer to define a genuine aggregation of noxious fish species, with relevant VRFish Regional State Council Member(s) informed accordingly.

The harvesting operation must be both authorized and supervised by a DPI Fisheries Division regional officer.

¹Other important recreational angling species means, all salmonid species and redfin perch.



Robert Pearce
VRFish Chairman