



MONTHLY REPORT FROM THE VRFISH OFFICE JUNE 2006

Welcome to the Monthly Report from the VRFish Office.

This newsletter should be sent on to all clubs and members of associations that you represent. Anyone wishing to receive this newsletter directly can e-mail Alison at alison@vrfish.com.au to be added to the distribution list.

- **Port Fairy Control Area** – The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) have declared a control area along 10 kilometres of coastline west of Port Fairy to help control the spread of a virus in abalone. The control area is from the high water mark from Boulder Point (east of the Crags) to the Moyne River mouth at Port Fairy. The control area will remain in effect for 60 days (until approximately early August) after which it will be reviewed. It is believed the virus is spread by direct contact between abalone, activity that involves human or equipment contact between an infected and healthy abalone and by other marine species. VRFish encourages all fishers to avoid this area until DPI has given it the “all-clear”.
- **Point Wilson - Marine Safety Exclusion Zone** – The Australian Defense Force explosive ordnance depot at Point Wilson has increased the marine safety exclusion zone around the Point Wilson Jetty from 300 metres to 1420 metres when a ship is at berth. This increase has been put in place, under Section 15 of the Marine Safety Act, to operate the explosives berth safely and to prevent members of the public being exposed to any unnecessary risk. Yellow marker buoys have been placed around the jetty to clearly identify the exclusion zone. When a ship is at berth, yellow lights on the buoys will continuously flash. All vessels must remove themselves outside the exclusion zone otherwise action will be taken against them by the Police.
- **Rock Lobster and Giant Crab Stock Assessment Workshop** – Lawrence Moore, VRFish Member, recently attended the 14 June 2006 Rock Lobster Workshop at PIRVic Queenscliff. Lawrence reported that there appears no significant change in the number of rock lobsters taken by the recreational sector. The eastern zone fish stocks are steady, and appear to be improving. However, the western zone commercial fishers advised that they are working harder and catching less fish. Fisheries Victoria advised that a better means for determining the recreational catch is essential.
- **King George Whiting Stock Assessment Workshop** – John Hotchin, Franz Grasser and Clive Bustard, VRFish Members, attended the 8 June 2006 Workshop at PIRVic Queenscliff. John Hotchin reported some interesting facts regarding the migratory patters of the King George Whiting. PIRVic scientists have established that the fish will migrate from Port Phillip Bay (PPB) to their breeding grounds located somewhere near the VIC/SA border each year, and depending on how strong the winds are after spawning this will determine how good the fishing season will be 3 years down the track in PPB. It is well known that PPB is a fantastic fish nursery! An interesting

fact – the current catch taken by commercial fishers is substantially less than the current catch taken by recreational fishers. VRFish encourages catch and release!

- **Native Fish Strategy Forum** – Rob Loats, VRFish Member, attended the 14-15 June 2006 Forum at the Murray Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) Canberra regarding the progression of the Native Fish Strategy. Wendy Craik, Chief Executive MDBC, noted many issues that were of importance to the progress of the Strategy, such as environmental sites (icon sites), habitat management areas, demonstration reach and carp control. Following the opening presentation key note speakers presented a host of reports on the current scientific research outcomes being implemented across the basin, including fish passage monitoring, carp control, impacts of fish stocking, protecting and rehabilitation of fish habitat, protecting threatened and native fish species, environmental water benefit outcomes and the current knowledge status associated with Murray Crayfish. At the conclusion of the Forum it was noted that an annual report document would be drafted to include all the summaries of the key note speakers. A copy of this document will be made available to all interested VRFish State Council Members when available.
- **Alien Fish Management** - A two day workshop was held in Brisbane, 30-31 May, on the emerging issues in alien fish management in the Murray Darling Basin, with a focus on redfin, tilapia and oriental weather loach. Rob Loats, VRFish Member, reported that the objective of the workshop focused on reviews of the current knowledge status, threats and management arrangements for selected alien fish species in or adjacent to the basin, and to identify management regimes and knowledge requirements to provide a way forward for the ongoing control and prevention of the spread of these species. It was clearly noted that Redfin is recognised in Victoria as a valuable recreational fishing species. Following input from the participants, a draft document titled 'statement and recommendation' has been compiled. A copy of this document will be distributed to all interested VRFish State Council Members when available.
- **Changes to Salmonid Regulations** – Salmonid fishing from boats at Lake Purrumbete is now permitted during the salmonid closed season; therefore salmonid fishing from boats or the bank is now permitted all year round at this location. Selected Victorian rivers have been added to the "sea-run trout streams" list; The Moyne River (downstream of Toolong Bridge) and Hopkins River (downstream of Hopkins Falls) are no longer seasonally closed for salmonid fishing. The downstream area of the Merri River has also been extended for year-long fishing from Dennington Railway Bridge to below the Broomfield Weir. (*Source Fish-e-Fax, Issue 174*).
- **Eel Fyke Nets and By-catch** – Robert Caune, VRFish Member and Gippsland Angling Clubs Association Member, has had a recent win in protecting fish stocks and reducing by-catch in the Gippsland Lakes. Through Robert's initiative Fisheries Victoria were able to fine commercial eel fishers for not complying with the Eel Fishery Management Plan and fishing in areas not listed in the Fisheries Regulations, Schedule of Waters. To assist in minimizing future non compliance, Fisheries Victoria will provide maps detailing where commercial eel fishers can place their fyke nets. Well done Robert and the Gippsland Angling Clubs Association!
- **Upcoming events** -
 - 25/7 – Club Talk – Midland & North Central Angling Association
 - 28/7 – Club Talk – Wimmera Anglers Association
 - 29/7 – Club Talk – Australian National Sportfishing Association