



MONTHLY REPORT FROM THE
VRFISH OFFICE
MARCH 2008

Welcome to the Monthly Report from the VRFish Office.

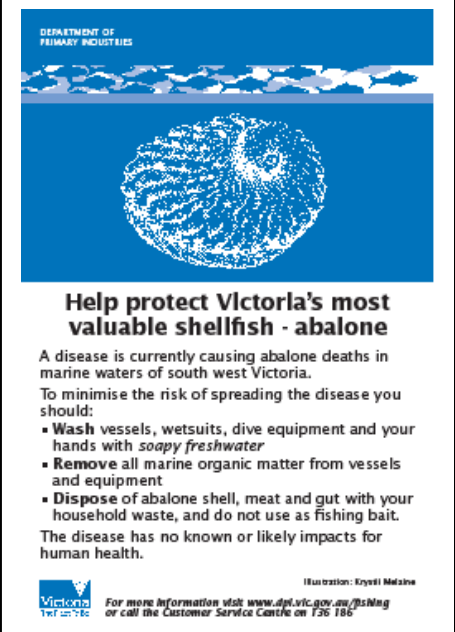
This newsletter should be sent on to all clubs and members of associations that you represent. Anyone wishing to receive this newsletter directly can e-mail Alison at alison@vrfish.com.au or phone (03) 9686 7077 to be added to the distribution list. If you have any difficulty reading or receiving this Report, this month's edition is also now on our website at http://www.vrfish.com.au/news_index.htm

- **April Edition of Fishing Lines** – VRFish is pleased to announce that the 2nd edition of the 'new look' Fishing Lines is hot off the press. Read some great articles on fishing in Port Phillip Bay and Sydney Harbour. Get up to speed on the Governments electoral commitments. Find out about the Family Fishing Festivals happening around Victoria. These stories and more are available to you for FREE www.vrfish.com.au
- **Comments due next month** – Don't forget that comments on the revised Trout Policy are due 16 May 2008. VRFish has posted this draft Policy onto our website www.vrfish.com.au and encourages anyone interested in commenting to do so. Once finalised the revised Policy will form part of the Inland Fisheries Policy.
- **Great Otway Plan** – Parks Victoria have released three draft management plans for the Great Otway National Park and Otway Forest Park. The plans propose a vision, strategies and actions to achieve conservation of the important values of both parks, to protect water supplies and to provide a broad range of recreational experiences and tourism opportunities. Parks Victoria will be running three open houses to provide interested people more opportunities to find out information, discuss issues with park managers and other interested people; and offer an alternative to making a written submission. Open houses will be conducted in Apollo Bay on 20 April, Gellibrand on 23 April and Anglesea on 27 April. VRFish encourages recreational fishers to attend these open houses, as the plans identify review of access to recreational fishing locations within the Parks. For full details on Open Houses go to www.parkweb.vic.gov.au and follow the link through 'Have Your Say'. Comments on the draft plans are due 2 June 2008.
- **Stream Classification Model on Tour** – The Victorian Government has made a commitment to classify rivers and streams throughout the State, first stop, North East Victoria. This classification will be used to identify how different rivers and river systems would be managed in the future as 'native only', 'trout and salmonid only' or 'mixed fisheries. Consultation meetings will be held in Bright on 7 May, Wodonga on 8 May, Corryong on



21 May and Melbourne on 29 May. To register for any of the meetings, please contact Alison, phone 03 9686 7077 or email alison@vrfish.com.au. This will be followed by a 60-day public consultation process, where the community can submit comments on the model.

- **CMA removing woody habitat** – Local North Central VRFish Members have been made aware of some activity being undertaken by the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) to remove woody habitat from the Avoca River. This flies in the face of efforts being undertaken by Fisheries Victoria to protect woody habitat, who have just reissued a Fisheries Notice to protect woody habitat in select waters to prevent the damage or removal of fallen or standing dead timber, being a component of aquatic habitat, which has become vulnerable to being taken from inland waters as a result of low water levels. For a copy of the Fisheries Notice go to http://www.vrfish.com.au/Angler_Info.htm VRFish has written to the CMA asking why they have not properly consulted with all major stakeholders. This kind of activity can have detrimental effects on the future river health.
- **Voluntary Ban** – As a bio-security measure to protect vulnerable stocks of abalone from the spread of the Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG) VRFish is calling on recreational fishers to abide by a voluntary ban on using abalone viscera (gut) as bait throughout Victoria. This is in support of Fisheries Victoria's (FV) strategy to protect vulnerable and accessible abalone stocks close to Port Fairy. FV has introduced a ban on harvesting abalone from the high water mark west of The Craggs car park to Killarney Beach car park. If you find yourself in an area that you suspect is infected with AVG or some other disease please call the disease watch hotline 1800 675 888 or 13FISH (133 474). Ensure that you decontaminate your fishing vessels, plus all equipment, including wetsuits and gloves, by washing thoroughly with soapy fresh water. For full details on the bio-security measures go to www.dpi.vic.gov.au/fishing. **So help protect our abalone stocks and don't use abalone gut as bait!**
- **New Size Limit** – Abalone size limits in the Victorian western zone have been increased from 120mm to 130mm, the closure between Craggs and Killarney has also been renewed. These management changes have been implemented to again try and slow down the process of the abalone virus. As reported in the last edition of the newsletter the virus has traveled as far as the Cape Bridgewater Discovery Bay Marine National Park and all the way through to London Bridge on the Great Ocean Road, heading toward the Twelve Apostles Marine National Park. For a copy of the Fisheries Notice go to http://www.vrfish.com.au/Angler_Info.htm
- **Doctors Join the Fight** – Victorian Doctors have written to Minister Pallas expressing their concern about the potential impacts the Channel Deepening Project, specifically the dredging of the Yarra River bed, could have on human health. Chemicals and heavy metals such as lead, mercury and cadmium which are present in the Yarra bed can build up in the body and can cause problems to the immune and nervous system, and lead



DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Help protect Victoria's most valuable shellfish - abalone

A disease is currently causing abalone deaths in marine waters of south west Victoria. To minimise the risk of spreading the disease you should:

- Wash vessels, wetsuits, dive equipment and your hands with *soapy freshwater*
- Remove all marine organic matter from vessels and equipment
- Dispose of abalone shell, meat and gut with your household waste, and do not use as fishing bait.

The disease has no known or likely impacts for human health.

Illustration: Kyohei Matsuda

Victoria Tel 03 9760 For more information visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au/fishing or call the Customer Service Centre on 136 186

to learning difficulties and behavioural problems especially to children. While the effect of the toxic cocktail that will be released from dredging operations is not known, it is known that dredging can create a plume of fine silts and contaminants which are released into the water column once the seabed is disturbed. These Victorian Doctors also said if these chemicals or heavy metals leak into the bay either from dredging or from the northern dredge material disposal site which has a design life of 30 years, we may not be able to eat the fish from the bay or it may even be dangerous for us to swim in some beaches in the future. These Doctors even suggested that Port Phillip Bay could turn out just like Sydney Harbour, where eating of fish taken from the harbour has been banned!

- **Fish Kill @ Lake Tyers** – Some local fishers have recently reported a fish kill at Lake Tyers, it has been noted that there is a strong smell of hydrogen sulphide and a dark discoloration of the waters in the Nowa Nowa area. The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) at Traralgon has been notified. It is likely that this event is the result of a combination of natural environmental circumstances; similar events at the location and at this time of year are well known to have occurred on a number of previous occasions. The effect is localized in the northern reaches of the Nowa Nowa arm and does not affect the vast majority of the Lake Tyers system. Lakes Entrance Fisheries staff will continue to support the EPA in the investigation.
- **Fish Lesions in Port Phillip Bay** – During January some fish were found with lesions in Port Phillip Bay. At the time the EPA and the Department of Primary Industries investigated water quality (including pH, salinity, and dissolved oxygen), pollutants (including metals and organic compounds) and toxic phytoplankton (i.e. algae) that have potential to impact on fish in the bay. They also investigated viral, bacterial and fungal diseases. This and previous investigations have not found a single cause resulting in this condition. It is possible that the fish were being stressed by a combination of natural environmental variations, such as high water temperature and salinity. Port Phillip Bay acts like a large estuary and its waters change to reflect many variables, including rainfall and air temperature. These changes can cause fish to become stressed and then they become ill. The fish were found to be suffering from “chronic ulcerative dermatitis” which means that they had open sores on the skin (in this case, only on the head region). Some fish also had cloudy eyes. This condition can result from a range of causes. The EPA and the Department of Primary Industries have investigated the events and no singular cause can be identified. Similarly affected fish were found in 1984 and 1998 in areas across Port Phillip Bay. These events were investigated and no cause identified. In those past events fish stocks and fish health recovered after these events. An extensive fish survey conducted in March 2008 of Port Phillip Bay by Fisheries Victoria research staff didn't find any fish with these symptoms indicating the event has passed. As a general precaution the Department of Human Services (DHS) has advised not to touch or eat fish that have lesions or appear sick in any way. There is no seafood safety program for recreationally caught fish. Like collecting mushrooms from a field, if you are unsure a fish is safe to eat don't eat it. If you catch a fish with lesions in Port Phillip Bay you should preferably wrap it in a plastic bag and dispose of the fish in a rubbish bin. Please wash your hands thoroughly in warm water after touching any sick fish. You should also contact the DPI 24 hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.



- **Gibson's Steps Closed** – Parks Victoria have announced a temporary closure of Gibson's Steps, located at Port Campbell National Park on the Great Ocean Road. The Steps, which provide access to the beach beneath the main lookout, have been closed because of risk posed to visitors. An engineering report found that there is an unacceptable level of risk to visitors at the site, from potential collapse of the cliff directly onto the Steps. At this stage the closure of the Gibson's Steps is temporary while Parks Victoria explores and evaluates all options for providing access to the beach at this icon site.
- **Want to keep up to date on Electoral Commitments?** – The Department of Primary Industries have released a website containing updates on each of the Labor Governments electoral commitments under the recreational boating and fishing policy, such as the artificial reefs trial, installation of fish cleaning tables, adopt-a-stream etc. So to keep up to date check out www.dpi.vic.gov.au/enhancedfishing. In case you forget the link, it's posted on the VRFish website!
- **MDBC Tender Update** – The Murray Darling Basin Commission have advised that the request for tender to complete the three-year study into the effect of alien fish on the native fish populations closed in early January. Chief Executive Wendy Craik said the call for tender had been subject of some mixed and misleading media reporting, Dr Craik said "I would like to make it absolutely clear that there is no intention of eradicating trout from Basin streams". The study would create a better understanding of the impact of alien species on native fish in Basin streams. The final document, due in 2011, will establish environmental, social and economic benefits of control measures it will then up to governments to decide what is best.
- **Upcoming events** -
 - 17/4 – Artificial Reef Forum, Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron
 - 19/4 – Hyland Lake Family Fishing Festival www.dpi.vic.gov.au/gofishing
 - 20/4 – Great Otway Parks Open House, Apollo Bay www.parkweb.vic.gov.au
 - 23/4 – Great Otway Parks Open House, Gellibrand www.parkweb.vic.gov.au
 - 27/4 – Great Otway Parks Open House, Anglesea www.parkweb.vic.gov.au
 - 3-4/5 – Yamaha Expo www.streakerboats.com.au



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