

Wednesday, 5 December 2007

LAKE MOKOAN FISH TRANSLOCATION UNDERWAY

One of the most significant fish relocation operations ever carried out in Victoria has commenced at Lake Mokoan.

Golden Perch and Murray Cod will be relocated, technically known as “translocation”, over the next two weeks from Lake Mokoan to various sites along the Goulburn River, Lake Hume and Lake Benalla.

The decision to translocate the fish was made due to the succession of dry years leading to water levels in the Lake being at a very low level. The predicted water levels assume a continuation of the current dry spell.

Lake Mokoan is predicted to reach a level by the end of summer that will be critical in terms of fish survival. Low water levels and increasing water temperatures are expected to lead to reductions in the level of dissolved oxygen in the water which will increase the likelihood of fish deaths.

The translocation operation is not linked to any specific Government decision regarding the future of the Lake.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) has engaged a highly skilled licensed operator and Fisheries Victoria to undertake the capture and translocation of the fish, with assistance from DSE and Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW) staff.

The operation is being undertaken under permit conditions set out by Fisheries Victoria, which will ensure correct procedures are adhered to in the capture, transportation and release of native fish species, to secure their survival.

“DSE will ensure the operation complies with permit conditions and will monitor the procedure closely to provide the best chance of fish survival once they are relocated,” DSE North East Biodiversity and Water Manager, Tony Long, said.

“In addition to translocation of native fish, carp are also being captured and disposed of by the contractor. This is a great opportunity to reduce the overall population of carp in Lake Mokoan.”

Victoria’s Recreational Fishing Peak Body (VRFish) has been included in the development of this proposal.

Executive Officer of VRFish Christopher Collins said, “VRFish is delighted with the proposal and fully supports the attempt to relocate these precious native fish back into the Goulburn River.”

Marine Safety Victoria has implemented a no boating zone around the fish capture sites. This zone will be marked by four red buoys, which will move with the netting operations effective from now until 21 December.

Anglers and other boat users will not be able to access these sites while they are marked. This action has been taken in the interest of public safety at Lake Mokoan and to protect equipment used in the capture of native fish.

Other than these restrictions, recreational fishing will not be affected by the fish translocation process, which is expected to be completed in two weeks.