

Thursday, 8 November 2007

## **GOLDEN PERCH AND MURRAY COD IN LAKE MOKOAN TO BE MOVED**

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW), Fisheries Victoria and GBCMA will be relocating native fish species, namely Golden Perch and Murray Cod, from Lake Mokoan in the near future.

This is expected to take place before the end of this month, when conditions are likely to be favourable for the capture and relocation of the fishes to appropriate water bodies such as the Goulburn River.

The decision to do so was due to the succession of dry years, which is likely to result in water levels in the Lake being too low for the fishes to survive over the summer months.

“The majority of water loss is through large amounts of evaporation due to the nature of the storage,” Mokoan Project Director, David Jeffrey, said.

“The resulting low water levels have forced a re-examination of initial plans for relocation to occur next year.

“Without further inflows, the water levels in Lake Mokoan are likely to fall to extremely low levels over summer.

“Advice from DPI Fisheries is that these low water levels are likely to be critical in terms of larger fish survival over summer.”

Current fish stock at Lake Mokoan shows there is a potential for the lake to contain many large native fish species. Larger native fishes need to be relocated to more suitable water bodies before the lake levels reach critical levels.

A draft fish management plan has been developed for Lake Mokoan focusing on fish management requirements over the next two years, and the main objective of the plan is to minimise the likelihood of fish deaths in Lake Mokoan.

The plan also lists a number of possible receiving water bodies but the dry conditions have indicated the Goulburn River is the most appropriate for this year’s operation. The exact location of release sites will be finalised soon. VRFish, a peak body representing Victorian recreational anglers, has been consulted in the decision to relocate the fishes and will also be consulted on potential release sites.

“Expert advice has been sought from a variety of government agencies, fishing organisations and contractors on fish capture, transportation and potential release sites,” DSE North East Biodiversity and Water Manager, Tony Long, said.

“DSE is working in conjunction with Fisheries Victoria and Goulburn Murray Water to ensure an efficient operation and to give the fishes the maximum opportunity of survival.

“The operation will involve an experienced contractor working in conjunction with Fisheries Victoria staff.

“We are seeking final approval for the translocation process through Fisheries Victoria and from a Technical Evaluation Panel assessment.

“This operation is based on the critically low levels predicted for Lake Mokoan and is not linked to any specific government decision regarding the future of the Lake.”

State Government funding has provided for the removal and relocation of the fishes.

Lake Mokoan has been stocked with Murray Cod and Golden Perch from 1990 until 2003, when the State Government decided to decommission the lake due to its high water losses.