



7th July 2012

To: Stocking Groups

New Protection Plan for Mary River Cod.

FFSAQ apologizes for the late timing of this circular that relates to the outcomes of a forum held in February regarding future management options for the recovery of Mary River cod. FFSAQ was assured by Fisheries Queensland that a report would be provided to south-east Queensland stocking groups with an interest in Mary River cod. An undertaking was also given by Fisheries Queensland that a further stocking group stakeholder meeting would be convened to discuss the outcomes. Neither of these commitments has come to fruition. FFSAQ did not circularize stocking groups as it expected that Fisheries Queensland would do so. In hind sight, this was a mistake by FFSAQ.

FFSAQ did have a report published in the May edition of Queensland Fishing Monthly, but a number of stocking groups have sought the outcomes of the February forum. The QFM report was as below:

Mary River cod were listed as an endangered species under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) in July 2000. This status remains today.

The Mary River Cod Research and Recovery Plan was formally adopted in May 2001 and apart from a minor update in 2003 remains in place. The plan describes the development of a plan to improve hatchery production of the Mary River cod, and restock Mary River cod throughout its former range. The plan includes:

1. To develop and implement a management plan for hatchery production of cod.
2. To develop and implement a restocking criteria for cod.
3. To develop and implement a restocking/monitoring program for cod.
4. To develop and implement a program to establish breeding populations of cod in impoundments.

The Recovery Plan has not been formally reviewed since it was adopted. During the Environmental Impact Assessment process for the proposed Traveston Dam, Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Ltd (QWI) commissioned limited surveys of Mary River cod and a review of the Mary River Cod Research and Recovery Plan. The review included detailed assessments of progress against the six broad actions and made a series of management recommendations. Permission has been granted from QWI to use this document in ongoing planning processes.

In 2010, the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC) initiated a process to develop a recovery plan for threatened species in the Mary River. The Recovery Team and Technical Advisory Group associated with that process are re-assessing threats to aquatic species including Mary River cod and will recommend recovery actions during the development of the plan. During this process the Team will need to revisit the concept of restocking as a conservation management tool for Mary River cod and make recommendations about its future.

It was thought appropriate that local key stakeholders associated with Mary River cod meet to discuss aspects of any recovery plan and to make recommendations to the Recovery Team and Technical Advisory Group. A key stakeholders forum was held on the 21st February 2012 to evaluate the ongoing role of fish stocking in Mary River cod management. The forum served several purposes including ;

- Providing a forum for exchange of information and ideas between organisations and individuals interested in the recovery and management of Mary River cod.
- Providing an opportunity to evaluate available scientific data related to Mary River cod stocks including ongoing stocking programs
- To improve understanding of roles and responsibilities of various agencies in managing cod stocks
- To inform ongoing processes to develop management programs for Mary River cod
- To provide specific recommendations in relation to ongoing use of stocking as a recovery action and fisheries management tool for Mary River cod.

The main recommendations and conclusions relevant to existing stocking programs to come from the forum were;

1. No stocking has occurred in the Mary River or its tributaries since 2008. This position should continue for a period of five years (ending in 2013) and then be reviewed by Fisheries Queensland. There is some evidence that stocking has increased the number of cod in the catchment. However, angling continues to occur in the catchment and some illegal harvest and accidental mortality is likely to be ongoing. During the moratorium on stocking, assessments should be made to determine the size of existing stocks and whether natural recruitment is occurring.
2. Prior to recommencing stocking in the Mary River Catchment, habitat suitability criteria in the existing Mary River Cod Research and Recovery Program should be reviewed and updated if necessary. These criteria should be incorporated into the proposed cod stocking policy and applied to future stocking programs in the Mary River Catchment
3. Dams in the Mary River Catchment (Lake Borumba, Baroon Pocket Dam and Lake MacDonald) should continue to be stocked. Specific conditions for stocking these dams should be developed and included in the proposed Mary River cod stocking policy.
4. DEEDI should investigate whether Mary River cod fingerlings can be Calcein marked to assist with understanding of post release movements and survival. If this is feasible it should be undertaken routinely at dam stocking sites in the Mary Valley
5. Stocking programs in catchments outside of the Mary Valley should continue. These programs have established populations of cod in parts of the species former distribution, which are providing recreational cod fisheries and generating associated economic opportunities

It is to be noted that these recommendations may not be accepted by the EPBC Recovery Team and Technical Advisory Group.

Any changes to existing management arrangements for restocking of Mary River cod that arise from the adoption of the Recovery Plan for Threatened Species in the Mary Catchment would need to be implemented by Fisheries Queensland.

FFSAQ has on a number of occasions since February, questioned Fisheries Queensland when the stocking group stakeholders meeting is to be held, but has never been given a definite date. FFSAQ will continue its endeavour to ensure that this meeting does occur.

Again, FFSAQ apologies for not providing an update to stocking groups.



Les Kowitz
FFSAQ Executive Officer.

Representing Queensland's Freshwater Fishing and Stocking Associations.

Postal Address:
PO Box 311
Nanango Q 4615

Phone: 07 41631191
Email: exec@ffsaq.com.au
Web: www.ffsaq.com.au