

**ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY  
ABOUT THE MDBC's  
*NATIVE FISH STRATEGY***

**By Adrian Wells**

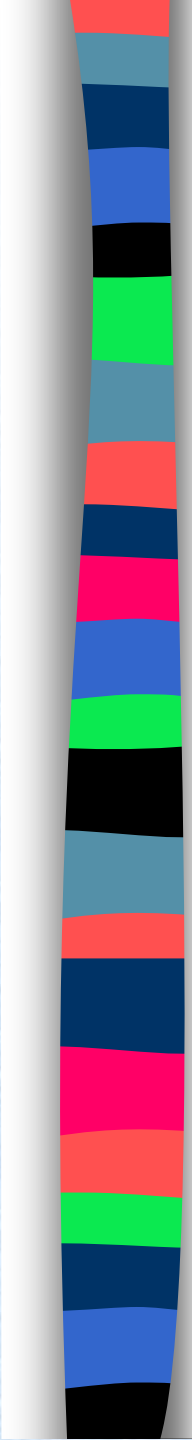
**Murray Darling Association**

**Community Stakeholder Taskforce – Native Fish Strategy**

**Presentation to the  
Native Fish Strategy Forum**

**Mildura, August 2007**





**In 2001, the Murray-Darling  
Basin Commission  
established the  
Community Stakeholder  
Taskforce to be proactive  
in community engagement  
about the *Native Fish  
Strategy***

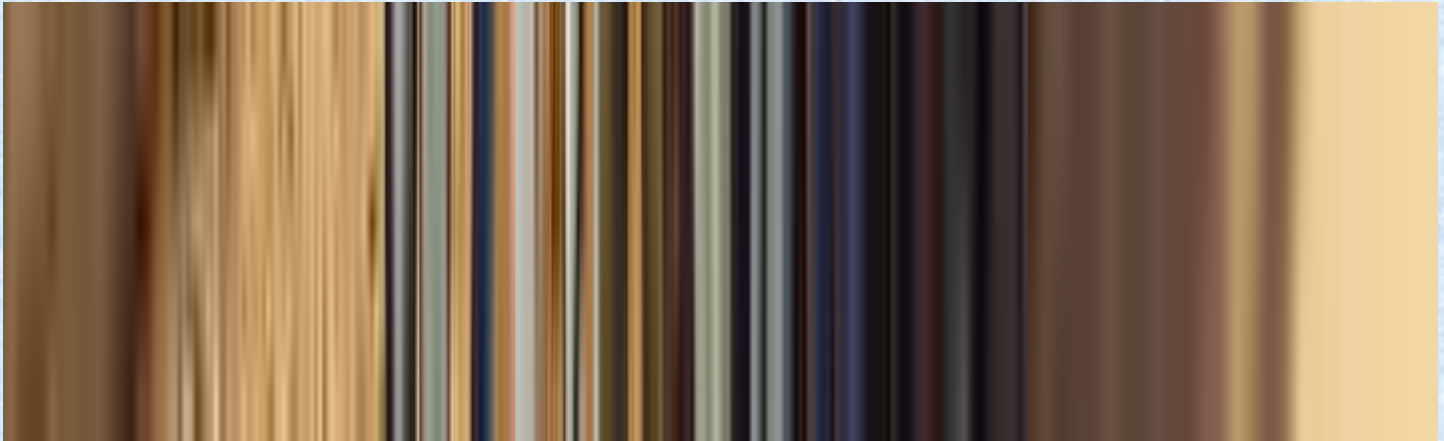




# Community Stakeholder Taskforce

**The Taskforce brings together a range of interests:**

- community
- commercial fishing
- Aboriginal
- catchment management
- Murray-Darling Basin Commission
- recreational anglers
- conservation
- aquaculture
- Local Government



# Community Stakeholder Taskforce

## Terms of reference

- Guide development of a communications strategy
- Foster community understanding & support
- Coordinate information and education activities
- Establish a representative network
- Promote incorporation of *Strategy* actions into local and regional plans
- Assist in monitoring, education, research & reporting
- Advise other groups on engaging the community
- Promote effective liaison between all groups involved with native fish management
- Be proactive





# Community Stakeholder Taskforce

## Being proactive

- Providing speakers for meetings,
- Attending fishing competitions & clinics
- Reporting to Local Government
- Identifying research opportunities
- Displays & presentations at shows, field days & conferences



# Community Stakeholder Taskforce

## Being proactive

- Working with state NFS Coordinators,
- Presenting papers at conferences and workshops
- Developing strategies with Aboriginal communities
- Preparing articles
- Providing media interviews



## Engaging the community

### Presentations to meetings, conferences and workshops

- *The Living Murray* Community Reference Group
- Public radio in Moree – NSW
- VIRFISH – Victoria’s peak recreational fishing body
- Public meetings at Murray Bridge, Renmark & Waikerie - SA
- Environment Victoria
- NSW REFTEC Committee
- Discovering Landcare Forum – Roma, QLD
- Fishing clubs across the Murray-Darling Basin
- Participated in *Native Fish Strategy* workshops on alien fish (QLD) and demonstration reaches (ACT)



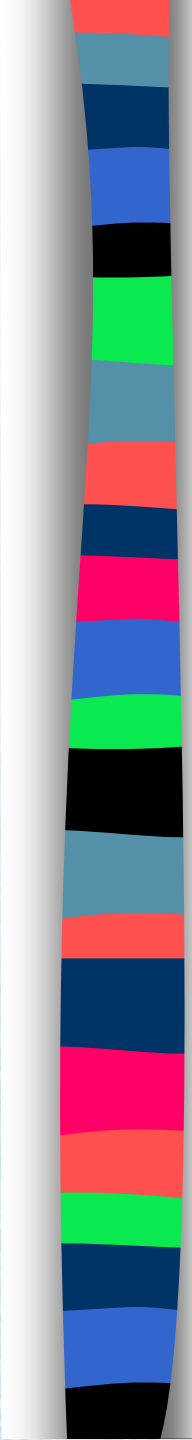
## Engaging the community

### Participating in events, field days, fishing competitions and fishing clinics

- Threatened Species Day – NSW and QLD
- Freshwater Field Day, Yea - VIC
- Fishing clinics for young people at Moree - NSW
- Catch-A-Carp Day at Mildura-Wentworth - VIC/NSW
- Teaching Aboriginal youth to fish responsibly - NSW







Community Stakeholder Taskforce

# Engaging the community

## Participating in research

- SARDI research on Golden perch – SA
- Mortality of catch-and-release activities – NSW
- Resnagging and restocking – QLD
- Impact of native fish in the Upper Murrumbidgee and Snowy Rivers – ACT/NSW
- Monitoring native fish in irrigation off-takes
- Researching catfish above and below Copeton Dam
- Mapping catfish DNA in the Gwydir River
- Helping to establish demonstration reaches in the Macintyre and Condamine catchments – NSW/QLD

Community Stakeholder Taskforce

## Engaging the community

**Helping schools and students better understand the importance of native fish and aquatic habitats**

- Presentations to schools at Murray Bridge, Barmera, Berri & Waikerie - SA
- Primary student Environment Festivals at Swan Hill & Kerang - VIC
- Gunbower Forest Environment Day – NSW/VIC
- Student forums at Coomealla (NSW) and Wangaratta (VIC)
- Year 11 & 12 geography student lecture - Melbourne



# Engaging the community

and .....

- Contributing to fishing publications and websites
- Changing attitudes to catch-and-release programs
- Working with WWF on endangered ecological rivers
- Raising awareness amongst CMA's about the *Native Fish Strategy* and Aboriginal participation
- Providing advice to the Murray Cod Recovery Plan
- Working with fishing groups to assess the impact of drying waterways on native fish
- Trying to influence government policy in NSW to ensure Aboriginal participation is through a partnership approach



## Native Fish Awareness Week

- To focus on community engagement in one particular area of the Murray-Darling Basin
- Engage with communities
- Raise awareness of the *Native Fish Strategy*
- Discuss local freshwater fish issues
- Listen to community concerns
- Inspect Commission, agency and community activities that benefit native fish
- March 2007 – River Murray in South Australia
- Focus is listening and learning





## Links to *The Living Murray*

- Need to work with other MDBC initiatives
- Discussions held with *The Living Murray* Community Reference Group
- Exploring how *The Living Murray* and the *Native Fish Strategy* can work more closely together
- Joint publication in *Building Fish Freeways*
- Joining in activities – hopefully will expand this activity





## Engaging with Aboriginal people

- Learning more about Aboriginal communities
- Engaging more effectively with Aboriginal people
- Has created some tensions – but also opportunities
- Helping Aboriginal communities identify opportunities to be involved in the *Strategy*
- Encouraging participation in mainstream partnership projects
- Two-way learning process



*“Healthy rivers mean healthy Aboriginal communities ... and healthy native fish populations”*



## Links to the work of the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre

- The IACRC required to have community engagement program for its projects on managing on carp and alien fish
- Projects principally funded by the MDBC through the *Native Fish Strategy*
- Needs to have links and consistencies between community engagement in both programs
- This is now happening.



# Drought

- Most Taskforce activities are result of invitations
- Providing information through existing networks
- Invitations continued over past 24 months
- Community still very receptive to discussions about native fish
- Community in South Australia welcomed *Native Fish Awareness Week* activities
- Taskforce members are very sensitive to current climate and social conditions
- Can offer messages of hope by celebrating adaptability of native fish over millions of years activity and promise of native fish breeding when droughts break













## Community Stakeholder Taskforce

- Without community ownership, the *Native Fish Strategy* will not be successful
- Community Stakeholder Taskforce activities reflect a community-government partnership
- Draws on and respects community wisdom, skills and knowledge

