



**COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

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**Project/Activity Name: Rehabilitation of aquatic habitat in the Barwon-Darling River**

Brief purpose: To improve aquatic habitat in the Barwon-Darling River by developing a 'demonstration reach' between Brewarrina and Bourke.

Start date: 18<sup>th</sup> January 2006

Target completion date: 17<sup>th</sup> January 2009

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**TOTAL FUNDING REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT PLAN: \$19,000**

## **1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### ***A brief summary of the background and issues relating to the development of the project***

Over the last 100 years, populations of native fish species in the Murray-Darling basin have suffered serious declines in both distribution and abundance. Experts estimate that current numbers are around 10% of pre-European settlement levels. Many factors have contributed to the deterioration of native fish habitat and populations including:

- significant changes to water flow and temperature;
- degradation of wetlands, instream habitat and riparian vegetation; and
- introduction of exotic species and fish passage barriers.

The Western Catchment Blueprint has identified rehabilitation of instream and riparian habitat as an important natural resource issue, so this demonstration reach project aims to show the community techniques that can improve aquatic habitat and overall ecosystem health.

The key objectives of this project are listed below.

- Raise community awareness about the pressures that affect native fish species and the types of on-ground works required to alleviate these pressures.
- Demonstrate the cumulative benefits of on-ground aquatic habitat rehabilitation for aquatic species and overall ecosystem health.
- Rehabilitate native fish habitat in a degraded section of the Barwon-Darling River, to show a positive impact on fish populations.
- Enable the community to continue improving the river environment after the project ends.
- Contribute to the Native Fish Strategy goal of rehabilitating native fish communities to 60 per cent of pre-European settlement levels within the next 50 years.

#### **1a Rationale**

A contractual obligation of the project is to develop and implement a targeted education/promotion/awareness strategy to guide the promotion of the demonstration reach throughout the catchment. Successful initiation and completion of on-ground works projects for aquatic rehabilitation are only possible with the support and involvement of all key stakeholders in the area at local and catchment scales.

#### **1b Partnerships**

##### **NSW DPI**

NSW DPI's Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation unit is undertaking on-ground works at demonstration reaches in the Murrumbidgee, upper Castlereagh, Lower and Mid Darling and Namoi Rivers. The unit also has several other promotional activities underway in the state to improve aquatic habitat.

NSW DPI's regional conservation staff in the Aquatic Habitat Protection and the Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation Unit, fisheries officers, freshwater recreational fisheries staff and media liaison officers all make in-kind contributions to the project.

##### **Aquatic programs**

Several aquatic programs contribute to this project's matching NHT in-kind contribution. Specifically identified in the material accompanying the contract are the MDBC carp project, daughterless carp project, fish habitat assessment and protection study, sustainable rivers audit, Recovery and Threat Abatement Plans, the detailed weir review, Environmental Trust-funded Brewarrina fishway project, State Water fish passage remediation, Freshwater Habitat Grant Program – Nidgery Weir and fish stocking efforts.

##### **CMAs**

The Brewarrina to Bourke demonstration reach is a subsidiary collaboration agreement between the Western Catchment Management Authority and NSW DPI. Similar agreements exist between NSW DPI and the Central West CMA, Murrumbidgee CMA, Lower Murray-Darling CMA and Namoi CMA for demonstration reach projects.

##### **MDBC Native Fish Strategy**

This strategy (NFS) has been designed to bring communities and governments together to enhance native fish populations throughout the basin over the next 50 years. The demonstration reach will adopt many of the objectives and driving actions of the NFS. The NFS also has linkages with other Basin initiatives: *Integrated Catchment Management Policy Statement*, *Sustainable Rivers Audit* and the *Living Murray* initiative.

MDBC has undertaken a series of works in relation to the development of demonstration reaches and has published material outlining the Native Fish Strategy and the demonstration reach concept. It is in the process of completing a manual for the development of demonstration reaches and, in May 2006, held a workshop on the practical processes of on-ground works. MDBC plans to release the proceedings from this workshop.

#### **Other states**

Other demonstration reach projects are currently underway in Queensland, for example on the Macintyre River upstream of Goondiwindi and at the junction of the Dumaresq River and Macintyre Brook.

The Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and the North-East CMA of Victoria are working in partnership with NSW DPI and NSW DNR on a project to reintroduce large woody habitat and revegetating the riparian zone in priority areas of the Murray River to enhance native fish habitat. This project is funded under The Living Murray's Environmental Works and Measures Program.

#### **Volunteers**

Conservation Volunteers and Fishcare volunteers are potential in-kind contributors for on-ground works. There is also an opportunity for in-kind contributions to be received from local fishing club members, riparian landholders, indigenous community groups, education establishments (eg. TAFE, high schools etc.) and other community service organizations to assist with on-ground works.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

### **Communication goal**

To demonstrate to the community the cumulative benefits of applying interventions to rehabilitate native fish habitat and populations.

### **Communication objectives**

#### **1. Raise community awareness**

Raise community awareness of project objectives, on-ground works and outcomes through regional field days, workshops, information sessions or other community forums, media releases and events, publications and the distribution of advisory materials.

#### **2. Encourage involvement of stakeholders**

Achieve a combination of financial and in-kind contributions to undertake on-ground works from volunteer working groups, riparian landholders, fishing clubs and other community groups.

#### **3. Educate stakeholders**

Educate recreational anglers, indigenous community groups, local residents and landholders and tourists on the importance of habitat through advisory materials, signage at public locations, meetings and community forums.

#### **4. Obtain feedback**

Encourage stakeholder feedback on priority sites and rehabilitation activities, and the outcomes of the project.

### 3. TARGET AUDIENCES AND STAKEHOLDERS

The target audiences and stakeholders for this project include landholders, river users, volunteers, government agencies and non-government and industry organizations. In addition, there is an incidental audience in the form of tourists. These target audiences are listed in Table 1 and their potential communication issues identified.

**Table 1: Target audiences and stakeholders and their communication issues**

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Potential issue / project risk</b>
Riparian landholders	Change in traditional land and resource management, additional cost/labour associated with change.
Irrigation industry	Infrastructure and management changes to address entrainment, water quality, flow regimes and flow sharing arrangements.
Indigenous community	Excited about prospect of changes, concerned about potential impact on sites of cultural importance, will want local employment opportunities.
Brewarrina & Bourke shire councils	May want to know economic, social and environmental impacts of fishway design and on-ground works implemented on public land.
Brewarrina & Bourke Community Working Party, Goolbri Men's Group	Reintroduction of river values into the younger generations of local indigenous culture.
Recreational anglers	Generally supportive of rehabilitation activities and prepared to provide some financial and in-kind contributions. Will require consultation to improve their awareness of the impacts of recreational fishing and rehabilitation works on fish populations.
Murray Darling Basin Commission	Demonstration reach objectives and actions to complement the Native Fish Strategy and other plans.
Western Catchment Management Authority	Will want to know that the project milestones are being met according to schedule and in a manner that satisfies their statutory requirements. Progression towards meeting Catchment Targets
NGOs – Inland Rivers Network, ACF, Conservation Volunteers Australia, etc	Supportive of rehabilitation activities and generally willing participants in riparian rehabilitation works. These opportunities will most likely be limited, but when the opportunities arise, volunteer organisations will be invited to take part.
Local urban communities – Bourke and Brewarrina	Support from and education of local communities for such projects is imperative for success. Local media releases, advisory materials and participation in field days and other social events are effective means of promoting benefits of the works. Engaging the community through participation is also a valuable way to raise awareness.
General public – local & neighbouring towns (eg. Dubbo, Nyngan, Cobar)	Lack of knowledge about aquatic habitat rehabilitation initiatives being undertaken in Western NSW. Poor perceptions about the quality of fishing in the Barwon-Darling River.
Tourists	Information relating to rehabilitation works is often difficult to pass onto tourists. This can be overcome through works and signage at strategic popular tourist locations, coupled with an alliance with local tour guides and tourist centres.

*Which staff member/s has the primary responsibility for liaison with these stakeholders/audiences?*

The primary responsibility for liaison with these stakeholders/audiences rests with the Project Manager, David Cordina, with support from the DPI NRM Communications Officer and assistance from Project Steering Committee where required.

#### 4. MESSAGES

1. Native fish communities of the Murray-Darling Basin are at risk, but there are things we can do to help.
2. Carrying out a range of activities simultaneously increases the benefit to fish, aquatic habitat, and river health.
3. We can improve fish habitats, leading to healthier fish populations.
4. If we know what the problems are, we can plan how to fix them.
5. Restoring fish communities won't happen overnight: it's a long-term commitment.
6. Native fish need the help of everyone, no matter how small you think your contribution is.

#### 5. MEDIUMS AND METHODS TO REACH TARGET AUDIENCE WITH YOUR MESSAGE

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Publicity/Media           | <input type="checkbox"/> Web site/Web page                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Affairs     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advertising               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Events                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Investor Relations |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Consultation    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsorship                                   |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mailouts/direct marketing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education program                  |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal communication    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Publication or other printed media |   |

Specific methods of communication are outlined in Attachment 1. An additional, and perhaps very important, method of communication will involve informal communication with stakeholders, within and outside formal work hours. Experience has suggested that landholders often tend to shy away from being directly and formally approached by Government agencies and that informal engagement can at times have greater effect, especially if conducted in an environment where the landholder is relaxed (ie. at social gatherings or at the pub). This method of communication requires project officers to always be looking for opportunities to informally promote the benefits of the project and on-farm riparian works wherever and whenever the opportunities arise. To formalise when advantage has been taken of these informal opportunities, a register of conversations with stakeholders (including details about location, time, event etc.) will be maintained throughout the life of the project.

#### 6. KEY COMMUNICATION OUTCOMES

1. Raise community awareness
  - Host 1 on-property demonstration for riparian vegetation works.
  - Host 2 on-site demonstrations for re-snagging activities.
  - Attend 2 field day/demonstration days being conducted by DPI or WCMA.
  - Attend and give presentation to 1 nationally recognised forum/conference/symposium.
  - Develop a media strategy and organise and participate in at least 2 local media events.
  - Publish 3 media releases at different stages throughout the project.
  - Prepare and publish 4 advisory brochures.
  - Publish 2 articles in DPI Western Division Newsletter.
  - Publish 1 article in other widely distributed newsletters such as the Freshwater Fisher Newsletter.
2. Encourage involvement of stakeholders
  - Organise 3 volunteer working groups to undertake weed removal and riparian planting exercises.
  - Provide assistance funding to water licence holders to install native fish exclusion screens at 30% of pump sites in the demonstration reach.
  - Provide incentive funding to landholders to fence off 25% of riparian country for stock management purposes in the demonstration reach.
  - Co-organise at least 6 carp management activities with the Bourke and Brewarrina fishing clubs.
  - Distribute information to encourage recreational anglers to report tagged fish caught as part of the freshwater fish tagging program.
3. Educate stakeholders
  - Erect project-related advisory signage in at least 4 public locations including public access points within or close to the townships of Bourke and Brewarrina

- Prepare advisory material for at least 4 habitat rehabilitation works such as fishways, instream habitat and riparian vegetation
  - Host 2 meetings each with the Outback and Brewarrina fishing clubs
4. Obtain feedback
- Hold 3 community consultation forums to consult stakeholders on priority sites and rehabilitation activities

*How will the outcomes be shared with others?*

- Media releases/media events
- Community information forums
- Published articles in DPI circulars/newsletters
- Presentation at a nationally recognised forum focusing on riverine health/instream rehabilitation
- Targeted signage at strategic locations in the Demonstration reach
- Promotions through local tourism agencies/guides
- Engagement of landholders and community and cultural groups

**See Attachment 1 for the Communications Action Plan**

## 7. BUDGET AND RESOURCES

Total budget: \$19,000

	Cost	Responsibility Centre/code
Strategy Development	In Kind	NSW DPI 2012-1
Communications Materials	\$9,400	NSW DPI 1988-1/2012-5
Media events/releases	In Kind	NSW DPI 2012-1
Community Consultation	\$5,350	NSW DPI 1988-1/2012-5
Community Engagement	\$4,250	NSW DPI 1988-1/2012-5
<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>\$19,000</b>	

## 8. TIMING

**Government Events coinciding with this communications strategy**

Event	Theme	Location	Method	Lead Agency	When	Contact
Landholder information sessions	Riparian land management/ alternative watering points	Bourke & Brewarrina	Presentation	NSW DPI	March 2007	David Cordina/ Charlie Grove
Targeted incentive program	Catchment Management targets	Western CMA region	Include advisory material with mailout	WCMA	Late 2007	Andrew Hull
Annual achievement report	WCMA projects in progress/completed	Western CMA region	Publish project update	WCMA	June 2007	Maree Barnes (WCMA Dubbo)
Fish Friendly Farms	On-farm management of riparian lands	NSW	Presentation/ advisory material	NSW DPI	2006/ 2007	Charlie Grove (DPI Wollongbar)

## 9. EVALUATION

Project communication objective	What will success look like?
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% of landholders to attend information sessions</li> <li>• 2 articles published in the Western Division Newsletter</li> <li>• 3 articles published in the Freshwater Fisher Newsletter</li> <li>• Signs erected at 4 key locations that promote the benefits of aquatic habitat rehabilitation</li> <li>• One article published in a major newspaper (eg. The Land, Sydney Morning Herald)</li> <li>• Paper presented at one Nationally recognised forum</li> </ul>
Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fish tagging</li> <li>• 7 on-farm aquatic habitat protection projects funded</li> <li>• 50km of river frontage managed for riparian improvement</li> <li>• Volunteer labor received for 3 on-farm projects</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• target 10 landholders to attend on-farm demonstration days</li> <li>• target 40 individuals, local and visiting, to attend on-site resnagging demonstrations</li> </ul>
Engagement and feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• target 30 individuals to attend community consultation forums</li> <li>• 10 calls fielded from community members interested in the project as a result of media releases</li> </ul>

## 10. ACCOUNTABILITIES

Achieving the objectives of the communication strategy is primarily the responsibility of the project manager, but overseen by the project leader and steering committee.

### **Reporting**

- Update on communications activities in milestone reports (and additional updates as requested) provided to the WCMA
- Updates provided to the steering committee at the meetings

## ATTACHMENT 1

### COMMUNICATIONS ACTION PLAN FOR WCMA BREWARRINA TO BOURKE DEMONSTRATION REACH PROJECT

Method	Description	Audience/s	Budget (Operating expenses only)	Deadline	Responsibility
Advisory Material	Tailor Fish Friendly Farms brochures and prepare other advisory brochures	Local residents, tourism operators, industry	\$2,250	April 2007	Project Leader, Project Manager, Communications Officer
Media Release	Commencement of works on the Barwon-Darling River	All Stakeholders	In Kind	Oct 2006	Project Leader, Project Manager
Media Release	Promote commencement of Freshwater Fish Tagging Program	All Stakeholders	In Kind	Dec 2006	Project Leader, Project Manager
Media Strategy	Develop and implement media strategy		In Kind	June 2007	Project Leader, Project Manager, Communications Officer
Fish Tagging Program	Flyers, business cards, advertising and prizes for tag returns	All Stakeholders (in particular Recreational Anglers)	\$2,150	Feb 2007	Project Leader, Project Manager, Steering Committee
Community Consultation forums	Community forums and workshops to consult stakeholders on priority sites and rehabilitation activities	All Stakeholders	\$1,850	April 2007/ September 2007	Project Manager and team, Steering Committee
Capacity Building Workshops/ training	Equip Stakeholders and volunteer working groups with appropriate skills to undertake on-ground Riparian works	Stakeholder Groups	\$1,700	June 2008	Project Manager and team, Steering Committee
Media release	For the commencement of the construction of Brewarrina fishway	All Stakeholders	In Kind	Aug 2007	Project Manager and team, Steering Committee,
Media release	For the commencement of riparian zone works with inkind assistance from community groups (Fishing Clubs, Indigenous groups, Corrective Services)	Local and regional communities, Government departments, community groups	In Kind	Sept/Oct 2007	Project Manager and team, Steering Committee
Western Division Newsletter – Initial article	Publishing a project outline in a brief article.	Landholders, Local residents, tourism operators, industry, Government	In Kind	Aug 2007	Project Manager, Communications Officer

		Department Staff, local councils			
Western Division Newsletter – subsequent articles	Publishing project related articles aimed at providing specific information on the completion of any major on-ground works and project achievements.	Landholders, Local residents, tourism operators, industry, Government Department Staff, local councils	In Kind	Oct 2008	Project Manager, Communications Officer
Articles in other e-newsletters	Publish at least one article in widely distributed, publicly available e-newsletters such as the Freshwater Fisher Newsletter	Recreational Fishermen, Government Departments	In Kind	June 2008	Project Manager, Communications Officer
Signage at select locations	Signs providing various project related information such as the types of on-ground works undertaken at the site and the impact on native fish populations, list and description of endangered native fish species etc.	Tourists, local residents, recreational anglers tourists	\$3,500	July 2007	Project Manager, Communications Officer, WCMA, Steering Committee
On-Farm Demonstration Day	Demonstration of the types of on-farm activities can be implemented to enhance native fish habitat	Riparian Landholders, community groups Local councils	\$1,150	March 2008	Project Manager and team
On-Site re-snagging demonstrations	Conduct 2 demonstrations of re-snagging works, one near Bourke, one near Brewarrina	All Stakeholders	\$1,400	Sept 2008	Project Manager and team
Progress Reporting	Required progress reports	Western CMA, Steering Committee	In Kind	6 Monthly	Project Manager
Final Reporting	Final report	Western CMA, Steering Committee, MDBC	In Kind	Dec 2008	Project Manager, Project Leader, Communications Officer
Media Campaign to notify project completion	Media Release, radio interview, story in local and regional print media	All Stakeholders	In Kind	Dec 2008	Project Manager and team, Steering Committee, Communications Officer, WCMA
Presentation at one Nationally recognised forum	Communicate project methods and outcomes to industry leaders through presentation at professional conference/forum	State and Commonwealth Government, Scientists, researchers	\$5,000	Dec 2008	Project team