



New South Wales Council of Freshwater Anglers

Fostering a sustainable freshwater fishery

31 March 2011

MEDIA RELEASE

NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers condemns illegal releases of fish into NSW waters

Don Barton of the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers today referred to the abundant evidence that there are ongoing illegal releases of freshwater fish into many NSW streams and dams, and called on the perpetrators to wake up to themselves, before they are caught and prosecuted, and before any more harm is done to the NSW freshwater fishery.

“Fish such as English Perch (known as Redfin) have obviously been relocated by selfish and misguided fishermen, who have released them into waters in which they have not previously occurred.

“Redfin are well-described by NSW authorities as

‘... voracious predators of other fish and invertebrates, can destroy recreational fisheries in enclosed waters by building up large numbers of stunted fish and eliminating other species, and can devastate native fish populations by carrying the epizootic haematopoietic necrosis (EHN) virus’.

“While Redfin are obviously not to be released, having been listed as a Class 1 noxious species in NSW in December 2010, it is also illegal and inappropriate to relocate any other fish, including native fish, without proper authorisation.

“Unfortunately, some misguided religious groups which release living creatures, usually fish, into the wild as part of their traditional rituals, have remained blind to the nature and possible consequences of their actions in so releasing fish.

“We have direct evidence of a group of people claiming to be Buddhists attempting to illegally release silver perch into the Nepean River. Although silver perch are an Australian fish, they are not native to the waters of the eastern watershed. In such rivers, they are as foreign as any fish from overseas. Releasing them may have unknown consequences for native species of fish and other forms of aquatic life. Furthermore, the silver perch in question had been purchased from a supplier whose quality control is unknown. Such releases therefore entail the risk of introducing a disease into the waters which could wipe out fish such as Australian Bass which are native to the river in question.

“The NSW Freshwater Fish Stocking Fishery Management Strategy, prepared by the Department of Primary Industries, now the Department of Industry & Investment, makes specific provision for release of fish for religious and ceremonial purposes. Officers of the Department will assist religious bodies wishing to release fish for such purposes to comply with the law and mitigate the risk of any environmental harm which could otherwise result from their activities. I would urge all such persons to contact the Fisheries section of the NSW Department of Industry and Investment on 1300 550 474 to find out more.”

Contact Don Barton on 0417 298 731 or 02 4782 2093 for anything further on behalf NSW CFA or, Cameron Westaway of the Department of Industry & Investment at (02) 6042-4211.

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