

Ian Macdonald

Minister for Primary Industries
Minister for Mineral Resources
Minister for State Development



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\$33 million project helps fish migration in the Nepean River

Hundreds of migratory fish are being fitted with tags as the Nepean River undergoes one of the largest rehabilitation projects ever to be undertaken on a coastal stream in NSW, Minister for Primary Industries Ian Macdonald announced today.

“This massive \$33 million project is aimed at restoring fish migration and reinstating environmental flows,” Mr Macdonald said.

“It involves the building of 13 new fishways, which will be completed by the end of 2010.

“Ultimately, this work will help increase the number of fish species which are in decline, such as the iconic Australian bass and the threatened Australian grayling, by helping them complete essential freshwater migrations.

“It also aims to increase fish passage for many smaller native fish species to aid their migration along the river and increase their populations upstream of migration barriers.”

Mr Macdonald said Industry & Investment NSW Fisheries and Ecosystems researchers at Narrandera Fisheries Centre had been awarded a three-year contract to monitor fish responses to the construction program.

“Researchers will measure expected increases in migratory fish communities between Penrith and Maldon, by fitting fish with yellow external tags and individually-coded PIT tags (microchips).

“Staff are also performing electrofishing surveys of migratory fish in the river before and after fishway construction.

“Scientists will also be taking fin clips from fish to determine if the fishways are contributing to increased genetic diversity. This is the first time genetic work of this nature has ever been undertaken in Australia in response to fishway construction.

“The project, which includes construction and fish migration assessments, is being funded by the Sydney Catchment Authority.

“Previous investigations have identified that a vertical-slot fish way is the most suitable for the weirs on the Nepean River, because it is the only design capable of passing thousands of migrating fish, from a range of size classes.”

Member for Londonderry Allan Shearan said as well making better provision for fish passage in the Hawkesbury Nepean River system, the NSW Government has recognised the need to improve environmental flows.

“The *NSW Metropolitan Water Plan 2006* commits to releasing a new and variable environmental flow from the water supply dams and weirs in the Upper Nepean River, which will also improve fish passage,” Mr Shearan said.

“If people catch a legal sized fish with a tag they can keep them and report it to the hotline 1800 185 027 to collect a reward, but of course, for the benefit of our research we would prefer them to be returned to the water.”

Media note: Pictures of fish tagging are available

Further reading

[Fishways](#)
