



Department of
Primary Industries

NSW Native Fish Drought Response 2019/20

TO REPORT A FISH DEATH OR OBSERVATION, PLEASE
CALL THE FISHERS WATCH PHONE LINE ON 1800 043 536



NSW DPI STAFF UNDERTAKING A FISH RESCUE
OPERATION, IMAGE © ALISTAIR MCBURNIE, NSW DPI



What is the government doing?

The NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is preparing for widespread fish death events in the NSW Murray-Darling Basin as dry and very low flow conditions persist.

The NSW Native Fish Drought Response (NFDR) Framework is the government's strategic, proactive response to protect native fish during the current drought. This includes assessing all potential response options, such as flow delivery, aeration, fish rescue and relocation, compliance, and communication to guide our drought response and native fish recovery.

This document provides a detailed update to the public on what the government is doing to support native fish in the current drought conditions.



Conditions and habitat

The Murray-Darling Basin is experiencing the lowest period of rainfall on record, with this drought worse than the great Federation Drought of 1901-1903. Most Murray-Darling river systems in NSW are classified as being in emerging, severe, or critical drought stages.

DPI Fisheries holds significant concern for native fish communities across the Murray-Darling Basin given low flows and the potential for extreme temperatures to create a major risk for fish within refuge pools.

Identifying priority sites and fish populations

DPI Fisheries is identifying and prioritising sites across the NSW Murray-Darling Basin that are key to the long-term maintenance of fish populations locally, regionally, and across the Basin. Each location is assessed for risks of fish deaths and potential response options available.

We have used a range of resources to assist in identifying high risk reaches to focus protection and recovery activities, including:

- Analysing existing data to determine native fish community status
- Determining the presence of threatened species and their distribution



- Assessing water quality conditions in collaboration with NSW government agencies
- Using satellite imagery and site assessments of the location, area, and depth of refuge pools and their associated habitat condition.

Response options

DPI Fisheries is exploring all possible response options to protect and maximise survival of native fish during the drought. This includes, but is not limited to:



■ Planning ■ Actions

Community engagement and public participation

DPI Fisheries understands that communities across the NSW and particularly in the Murray-Darling Basin have a stake in the survival of our native fish. We remain committed to protecting and conserving native fish stocks for future generations. That is why we are involving local communities, recreational fishers, and Aboriginal communities in this important work.

DPI Fisheries will continue to keep all stakeholders up-to-date on fish survival and clean-up activities and, where appropriate, will involve stakeholders in intervention actions for native fish. This could be anything from fish rescues and relocations, to monitoring the condition of priority sites.

Stakeholders can expect to be updated through a range of engagement activities involving the DPI website, social media, fact sheets, and community events in key affected areas.

This summer, we will be counting on the support and assistance of NSW's recreational fishers as we undertake these vital intervention actions. Your local knowledge and experience can help us save and protect our native fish species, ensuring recovery when conditions get better.

All rescue actions must be appropriately planned for and covered under permits that meet relevant legislation under the *NSW Fisheries Management Act 1994* and the *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015*. This ensures that approved operations have the capacity to suitably house and/or release fish over the spring and summer period.



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Simple things you can do:

Be on the lookout for any changes to water quality (i.e. changes to the colour or odour of your local waterway) and report them to us via the Fishers Watch phone line on **1800 043 536**

Contact us on the phone line if you observe fish starting to gasp at water surfaces or are displaying unusual behaviour

If you have concerns about native fish in your area, please contact us on **0427 842 940**
or **fish.rescues@dpi.nsw.gov.au**

Take photos and location details to submit to DPI Fisheries via our dedicated email address **fish.rescues@dpi.nsw.gov.au**
or via the DPI Fisheries Facebook page