RECREATIONAL FISHERS UNDERSTANDING FLOWS IN THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN

NATIVE FISH SWIMMING ALONG RIVERBED. AERIAL VIEW OF RIVER

PHILL BEASLEY: I started fishing in the early 60s when I was quite young. The conditions of the river were so clear. We used to dive in eight to ten foot of water.

GRAEME MAY: I can remember when I was a young bloke fishing you could see the bottom of the river. Well you can’t see that any more.

VISION OF FISH FOLLOWING LURE FOLLOWED BY UNDERWATER VIEW OF ANGLER

ANNE MICHIE: Fishing to me, it’s one of the earliest memories I have; is of going fishing with my Dad, so it’s something I’ve enjoyed for many many years, sitting on a riverbank, whiling away the hours.

PHILL, GRAEME AND ANNE ON RIVERBANK. SCROLLING TEXT reads: *Over the past 100 years, recreational anglers in the Murray-Darling Basin have seen the impact of river regulation on native fish.*

*The Basin’s recreational fishing community is worth over 1.35 billion dollars every year.*

*Right now anglers are working with governments to better understand how water for the environment is helping native fish in the Murray-Darling Basin.*

CLAYTON SHARPE: The impacts from river regulation have occurred over more than one hundred years and so the river system is highly highly stressed and our native fish populations are at less than 10 per cent and so we need really really targeted and conscious support and effort for us to use the environmental water that we’ve got and in the best possible way to achieve native fish recovery.

PHILL BEASLEY: Now until you have some sort of knowledge of what’s causing our problems, it’s extremely difficult to be able to see a solution down the track. There are numerous other things like carp and others but the change in the flows; well this is where it all started.

VISION OF AERIAL VIEW OF RIVER. SCROLLING TEXT reads: *Flows help fish to breed, feed and move.*

GRAEME MAY: Just massive amounts of knowledge that’s out there, research that’s going into it, that I never ever knew.

VISION OF ECOLOGISTS MONITORING RIVER. TEXT reads: *Fish respond to flows in different ways. Our knowledge of this has increased enormously over the past 10 years.*

CLAYTON SHARPE: Our understanding of the science of fish requirements for flows is really quite advanced; all of our native species have adapted their life histories; if you like, the way they breed and spawn and reproduce and maintain strong sustainable populations in response to different parts of the flow regime; so we’re starting to implement flows that are targeted at very particular parts of fishes’ life history.

GRAEME MAY: Environmental flows are a big thing. I was sort of against it, as soon as you get to know and understand what’s going on with environmental flows then you’ll understand what benefit they are doing to our river.

VISION OF CRANING VIEW OF A REED-LINED WATERHOLE.

CLAYTON SHARPE: Environmental flows are probably the only way that we’re going to see native fish recover, and there’s been some really important examples over the last decade or so of native fish population recovery, purely based on environmental flows. In the Darling River is a good example of an environmental flow restoring a river that naturally would have been running but was forced back to isolated water holes and the environmental flow was instated in October last year, 2016, and recovered the flow to the whole of the river.

PHILL BEASLEY: I had a lightbulb moment once I saw the importance of environmental flows on bringing back health not just to the river but to all of the areas surrounding the river. I do feel confident that there is a lot of things being done.

GRAEME MAY: I’ve learned a lot more to do with how blackwater is created and how we can stop it, I never knew this before but environmental flows is a big thing for getting rid of blackwater.

VISION OF TREE-LINED RIVER AND BANKS. TEXT reads: *Environmental flows can reduce the frequency of severe blackwater events, and also provide places for fish to escape to when severe blackwater events occur.*

PHILL BEASLEY: I think it’s imperative that rec fishers have a voice in this whole structure.

ANNE MICHIE: It is such a precious resource. We need to look after it a lot better. We need to take ownership of our rivers as recreational anglers.

GRAEME MAY: Getting involved with it, it’s really good, it’s opened my eyes up, if you can pass it on to other people so that all the fishermen know what’s going on with the environmental flows.

VISION OF RECREATIONAL ANGLERS TALKING. A SOLITARY ANGLER ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER.

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