

Questions taken on notice and further information agreed to be supplied at the hearings

Portfolio:	Minister for Fishing and Boating
Witness:	Minister Jaala Pulford
Committee member:	Mr Danny O'Brien MP
Page/s of transcript:	6

Relevant text:

Mr D O'BRIEN: The issue of Target One Million and the discrepancy between the number of people fishing that you say there is versus the actual licence fees: will you commit to a new study to accurately reflect angler participation rates in this state?

Ms PULFORD: Yes, there is one underway at the moment.

Mr D O'BRIEN: It is underway? When will that report be?

Answer:

The Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) and Better Boating Victoria (BBV) have co-funded Ernst & Young (after going to open tender) to undertake a study into the economic and social value of recreational fishing and boating in Victoria.

The previous study into the value of recreational fishing and boating in Victoria is now over five years old and a more current, up-to-date assessment is required to support policy implementation, management planning, decision making and advocacy in these sectors.

The new study will provide current up-to-date estimates of:

- direct and indirect output;
- direct and indirect value added;
- direct and indirect full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs;
- total annual recreational fishing participation.

The study commenced in June 2019 and will deliver three publicly available reports in October 2019 – one for recreational fishing, one for boating and one for recreational fishing and boating combined.

All the reports will be publicly available.

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Committee member:	Mr Sam Hibbins MP
Page/s of transcript:	6-7

Relevant text: Can I ask if there are any new initiatives or anything new you are doing to measure the environmental impact of recreational fishing?

Answer:

Fish stocks have never been in better shape in Victoria and a large part of this is due to the increase in recreational fishing, which in turn is leading to increased expenditure of recreational fishing licence (RFL) proceeds.

In marine systems our comprehensive monitoring programs including boat ramp surveys, scientific surveys of juvenile abundance and citizen science diary angler programs have shown record high recruitment of King George Whiting and snapper numbers.

In 2017/18 over \$8.5 million was disbursed from the RFL trust account and this funding contributed to building fish stocks through a variety of measures including stocking over 5.9 million native fish per year, installing vital fish habitat, enforcing fishing regulations and monitoring fish stocks.

As a result, our freshwater fish population monitoring has shown a booming recovery in native fish abundance in lakes and rivers throughout Victoria for species including Murray cod, golden perch, silver perch, trout cod and catfish.

RFL funding contributes to the deployment of thirteen Fisheries Officers to enforce fishing regulations state-wide. Fisheries Officers enforce our strict bag and size limits, closed seasons and gear restrictions to protect stocks and allow them to breed.

Recreational fishers are also volunteering their own time and resources to restore fish habitat, such as through planting native vegetation along multiple streams in north east-Victoria and through constructing shellfish reefs in Port Phillip Bay.

Ultimately, recreational fishers are doing more to build and recover fish populations than ever before, and the Victorian Fisheries Authority's comprehensive monitoring programs demonstrate these benefits to the environment.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

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Relevant text: Can I just get on notice as well the specific line item in terms of size and habitat restoration in the Gippsland Lakes?

Answer:

The Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) works closely with the East Gippsland and West Gippsland Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) to improve fish habitat and the environmental health of the Gippsland Lakes.

A re-stocking program for species such as black bream is being considered by the VFA and is part of its work to restore fish stocks in the Lakes.

Management of the Lakes health is overseen by the two CMAs, who manage a \$12 million program of works funded by the Victorian Government. The CMAs host a ministerial committee (Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee) which recommends programs of work to the Minister for Water based on the Gippsland Lakes Priority Plan 2016-2021.

Over 40 agency and community groups are working together on priority projects on the Lakes and catchment, all designed to maintain and improve the health of the Lakes and catchment.

The priorities are identified in Table 1.

Table 1: Priorities

Theme	Priority actions / strategies
Maintaining and restoring habitats	Investigate the risk and potential mitigation strategies for climate change impacts to ecological character of the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar site.
	Investigate options for improving the ecological condition of Lake Wellington
	Fence and revegetate lake and estuary shoreline; including the silt jetties
	Protect and restore habitat at little tern and fairy tern nesting and post-breeding sites. Manage sea spurge at little tern and fairy tern nesting sites
	Actively manage priority pest plants (Implement the Pest Plant and Animal Strategy)
	Monitor and where possible control off-road vehicle use at priority locations within the Ramsar site
	Undertake research into the ecological consequences of algal blooms
Protecting fauna	Assess the distribution of heavy metals and other contaminants (including mercury) in the Gippsland Lakes and the level of risk (i.e. bioavailability).
	Investigate priority species and locations for waterbird breeding and migratory wader refuges within the Ramsar site.
	Control introduced predators in priority bird areas (Implement the Pest Plant and Animal Strategy)
	Investigate the risk posed by human disturbance to migratory waders develop and implement feasible actions to address the risks
	Develop and implement a public awareness campaign to reduce harassment and boating injuries to Burrunan dolphins
	Consolidate, refine and promote fisheries management arrangements to ensure a sustainable fishery
	Implement an introduced marine pest strategy for the Gippsland Lakes
Managing nutrients and sediments	Reduce nutrient and sediment loads to the Gippsland Lakes through riparian, in-stream and catchment works to improve water quality of river flows to the Gippsland Lakes.
	Investigate the impacts of altered freshwater inflows on nutrient cycling and productivity in the Deep Lakes, including thresholds for change
	Investigate the impact of high nutrient and sediment loads to fresh and variably saline wetlands following bushfires
Managing water regimes	Undertake regular planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the use of environmental water entitlements in the lower Latrobe wetlands (Sale Common, Heart Morass, Dowd Morass) and the Latrobe River estuary.
	Investigate and implement actions that facilitate effective management of the water and salt regimes of priority fringing wetlands, including Sale Common, Heart Morass, Dowd Morass, Lake Reeve and Macleod Morass.
	Maintain and where necessary improve hydrological connectivity and freshwater inflows to the Gippsland Lakes for fish migration and breeding.