

**RESTRUCTURED RIVER FISHERY:
GUIDELINES FOR LICENSING & MANAGEMENT**

Description of new management regime

The *Fisheries (Scheme of Management - River Fishery) Regulations 1991* were amended in June 2003 to accommodate the restructure of the River Fishery and to implement the associated licensing regime.

The following changes were made:

- The species that are able to be taken pursuant to a licence were reduced to non-native species, bony bream and yabbies.
- A licence fee of \$200 is required for renewal of a licence. The fee is payable upon application for renewal and will be refunded if the application is refused.
- The transferability provisions have been removed from the Scheme of Management. The default position set out in the Fisheries Act is that all licences are non-transferable.
- The owner/operator requirement has been removed from the Scheme of Management. The Director retains the discretion to register a person as a master of a boat, as provided in the Fisheries Act.
- It has been specified within the Scheme of Management, to remove any doubt, that the Director may impose licence conditions limiting fishing operations to a part of the River Murray system within the area of the Fishery.

Application of Guidelines

These guidelines are to apply in conjunction with arrangements entered into between the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and licence holders in the River Fishery before it was restructured, as evidence in Deeds of Agreement between the parties. These guidelines replace previous versions of this document.

Pursuit of legislative objectives

Section 20 of the *Fisheries Act 1982* provides that the following objectives are the principal objectives in the administration of the Act:

- a) ensuring, through proper conservation, preservation and fisheries management measures, that the living resources of the waters to which the Act applies are not endangered or overexploited; and
- (b) achieving the optimum utilisation and equitable distribution of those resources; and
- (c) insofar as this Act applies to the River Murray, seeking to further the objects of the *River Murray Act 2003* and the *Objectives for a Healthy River Murray* under that Act.

In general terms, the restructured River Fishery will be managed in a way that is consistent with the pursuit of these objectives by:

- encouraging the commercial exploitation of carp and other non-native species in the area of the Fishery so as to continue to achieve the aims of the eradication strategy for those species; and
- ensuring that commercial access to the fishery is controlled so that economic returns from the fishery allow licence holders to conduct a viable business whilst the carp and other non-native species are available for harvest; and
- ensuring that incentives are not created for the maintenance or increase in abundance of carp or other non-native species; and
- minimising impacts on native species and habitat.

Assessment of licence applications

Biological considerations

The licensing regime should facilitate the targeting of carp and other exotic species, and should be consistent with eradication strategies that are in place for particular species.

By-catch of native species (other than bony bream and yabbies) is relevant to the consideration of the type of gears that will be permitted, and the amount of gear to be used.

Economic considerations

PIRSA, in consultation with industry, has determined that 6 River Fishery licences should be renewed to allow participation in the non-native fishery. At this point in time, it is considered that the non-native fishery can potentially sustain six (6) economically viable fishing operations, therefore 6 licences will be issued. These licences will be granted to previous licence holders who sign a Deed of Agreement with the Minister, with appropriate clauses in relation to the being able to participate in the fishery. Applications will be considered in the that they are received.

Nevertheless, it is noted that participation on the non-native fishery is an individual business decision.

Optimum utilisation

Applications for renewal of a River Fishery licence may not be approved if the licence holder has not submitted catch returns, in accordance with the Scheme of Management, that demonstrate that fishing activity pursuant to the licence was undertaken in the previous licensing year. The objective of this policy is to ensure that licences in the fishery are kept active, as a contribution to carp eradication objectives.

Social considerations

The government made a commitment to previous licence holders in the River Fishery that they would be given first preference to participate in the new non-native fishery. Should less than 6 licences be taken by previous licence holders, applications by other persons may be considered.

Compliance considerations

The factors that will be taken into account in managing and licensing the non-native fishery will include the implementation of cost-effective compliance arrangements.

For example, the number of registered boats and registered masters permitted to be used in relation to each licence will be determined with this objective in mind.

The efficiency of compliance arrangements is particularly important in the non-native fishery as licence fees no longer contribute to the management costs of the fishery.

Consistency with other relevant government policy

Licensing applications must be assessed to be consistent with the Native Fish Strategy for the Murray-Darling Basin 2003-2013.

Murray cod has recently been listed as 'vulnerable' under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Management arrangements will continue to be developed consistent with this listing.

Licence conditions

Licence conditions will be developed, implemented and varied to achieve the fishery objectives and provide consistency with the above considerations, as necessary.

Future licence renewals

Future renewals of licences in the River Fishery may also be based on criteria designed to ensure that licences are being actively fished. This is to ensure that the carp eradication objectives for the management of the River continue to be pursued.

The number of licences issued for the fishery may be increased or reduced in the future if the economic conditions of the fishery change, or if biological considerations require further management action.

Other arrangements

Exemptions will be granted under section 59 of the *Fisheries Act 1982* to allow the use of specified carp nets in conjunction with River Fishery licences. The use of these nets will be restricted to backwaters of the River, excluding areas closed to fishing for conservation or social reasons. An application fee of \$100 is payable in relation to an exemption.



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