

RECREATIONAL FISHING COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME - FISH RESTOCKING GUIDELINES

Guidelines for restocking native fish species under the Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme:

- Re-stocking must be with species using a genetic stock as appropriate as possible.
- The Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme does not encourage translocation of species into areas where they have not naturally occurred historically. Where possible the use of local genetic stocks with as wide a range of breeding adults (within that stock) as possible is encouraged to ensure local genetic integrity and avoid inbreeding.
- The overall aim of re-stocking must be a permanent increase in the sustainable population of that species. 'Put and take' fisheries, therefore, are ineligible, e.g., where species are re-stocked for the purpose of being caught later.

The Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme aims to increase the sustainable fishing stocks in Australia. This does not include fish-out ponds or re-stocking that does not result in a permanent increase in the sustainable population of the target. In regard to this, there should be no adverse impact on other local native species populations due to the increase of the re-stocked species. For example the re-stocking of a large predatory species should not endanger local native prey species. It may be desirable to re-stock any depleted prey species that may be adversely affected by increasing predation above historic levels.

- Prior determination of habitat requirements for the species should be investigated before re-stocking is undertaken.

If the species habitat requirements are not known, then the carrying capacity of the area can not be determined for that species, and no assessment of the sustainable population level can be achieved.

- The threatening process(es) must first be mitigated, or under mitigation.

If the cause of the decline in the population is still present then re-stocking will be of little use as the re-stocked fish will be subject to the same threatening process as the original stock, and so no increase in the species population will be achieved. The elimination or control of the threatening process that originally reduced stock abundance is one of the key methods of stock recovery.

- It should be ensured that the existing habitat for the species is capable of supporting the proposed stocking level (i.e., carrying capacity).

Basically there is no point in re-stocking a species into an area that does not have the habitat to support the new population level, as the lack of appropriate habitat will limit the population size to the pre re-stocked level.

- Re-stocking programs should also consider concurrent habitat restoration as part of increasing the overall ability of the area to sustain the proposed population level.

This is particularly appropriate where habitat degradation is the limiting factor for the fish

population. The increase in available habitat should enable a subsequent increase in the sustainable fish population.

- Re-stocking programs must be consistent with State fisheries and environmental management plans
 - where possible, they should be integrated with catchment management plans to accommodate a 'whole of environment' approach.
- There should be a program in place to monitor the results of the re-stocking.

The aim of restocking under the Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme is to induce a permanent increase in the sustainable fish population for the target species, to determine whether this has been achieved a method of monitoring the population of the species has to be put in place.

Thus the ideal restocking program would progress along the following stages:

1. Determine the habitat requirements of the target species.
2. Survey the current population and habitat for the species.
3. Identify threats for the target species.
4. Determine the cause of the original decline of the species population for the area.
5. Abate the cause for the population decline.
6. Re-stock to assist population recovery.
7. Monitor population to assess the effect of restocking and habitat restoration.