



MEDIA RELEASE

For release 20th May 2024

SMALL BODIED FISH NURSERY AT BARHAM LAKE

Western Murray Land Improvement Group (WMLIG) are working in collaboration with the North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA) via funding from the Tri-State Murray NRM Regional Alliance to establish a small-bodied fish nursery at Barham Lake. This initiative aims to support local biodiversity and engage the community in education.

Project Objectives

1. **Control Structure Installation:** Implement a control structure with a fish screen at the lake's entry point to ensure a closed system for optimal fish habitat management.
2. **Lake Restoration:** Undertake comprehensive restoration of Lake 3, including the removal of invasive species, bank stabilisation, and aquatic revegetation.
3. **Fish Release:** Introduce small-bodied fish species, such as the Southern Pygmy Perch, Southern Purple-Spotted Gudgeon, and Olive Perchlet, into the lake system.
4. **Engagement with Traditional Owners:** Collaborate with traditional owner groups to conduct on-ground works.
5. **Educational Infrastructure:** Create a purpose-built learning area with an outdoor classroom to foster environmental education.
6. **Bush Tucker Garden:** Establish a bush tucker garden to preserve local Barapa knowledge of productive food sources and enhance the local seed bank.
7. **Educational Signage:** Develop and install signage featuring totemic species to educate the wider community on Barapa cultural knowledge.
8. **Post-Release Fish Survey:** Conduct a survey to monitor the fish population and the success of the release program.

This week marked a significant milestone with the release of Southern Purple-Spotted Gudgeon fingerlings into one of the ponds, after extensive preparations at the lake. These fingerlings, sourced by the Tri-State Murray NRM Regional Alliance from Middle Creek Farm, represent a crucial step in restoring the species, which has faced severe decline in the Murray-Darling Basin due to alien species predation, habitat alteration, and flow changes.

Local Fish Ecologist Dr John Conallin, said it was a momentous occasion, he had been waiting years for Purple Spotted Gudgeon to be released in this area.



Western Murray Land Improvement Group

The Southern Purple-Spotted Gudgeon, which grows up to 120mm, inhabits rivers, creeks, and billabongs, preferring quiet or slow-flowing sections and was actually declared extinct in Victoria in 1998. In late 2019, two of them were captured during a survey of Third Reedy Lake near Kerang. The release of these fish at the Barham Lake is a pivotal moment in efforts to increase local biodiversity and rehabilitate native fish populations.

Next steps for WMLIG include planting aquatic vegetation and installing educational signage at the lake. Ultimately, as these fish mature, they will be introduced into local waterways, contributing to the health and diversity of the ecosystem.

WMLIG would like to thank all those involved, a special mention to CluBarham who have allowed this project to happen at the lake and to Barham Landcare group who volunteered many hours of labour to get the condition of the lake ready for the fish.

About WMLIG Western Murray Land Improvement Group is dedicated to promoting sustainable land management practices and enhancing the natural environment in the West Murray region through community-driven projects and partnerships.

About NCCMA The North Central Catchment Management Authority works to protect and enhance the integrity of rivers, wetlands, and natural landscapes in north-central Victoria through effective management and community collaboration.

About Tri-State Allowance The Tri-State Alliance spans Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, with government and non-government organisations coming together to work at scales relevant to the fish needing recovery.

IMAGE 1 – Members of Tri-State Murray NRM Regional Alliance, Middle Creek Farm & WMLIG

IMAGE 2 – Preparing the fish for release

IMAGE 3 – Tahlia Stewart and Roger Knight of WMLIG releasing the fish

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