



MEDIA RELEASE

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Researchers find more migratory native fish in the River Murray

A surprising number of species of native fish migrate up and down the River Murray, according to Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) Chief Executive Dr Wendy Craik.

Commenting on early results from research being carried out by a NSW, South Australian and Victorian team monitoring the new vertical slot fishway at Lock 8 near the South Australian border, Dr Craik said she was encouraged by the numbers and habits of the River Murray's migrating native fish.

The fishway is the first of the new "fish ladders" that will allow a broader range of fish sizes to pass through.

It has been built under the umbrella of the Native Fish Strategy established by the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council and is part of an ambitious program to provide 2,300 kilometres of fish passage from the sea to Lake Hume.

According to Dr Craik, the structures will help declining or threatened native fish populations resume their natural migration patterns upstream to breed or feed.

"The fishway has been operating for only 15-months and is already producing a wealth of information on the numbers, species and habits of fish traveling through the river," Dr Craik said.

"For example, researchers have discovered that huge numbers of fish have been using the new structure. A total of 29,500 fish used the fishway in 55 days of monitoring since the fishway began operating," she said. "On average, over 500 fish a day have used the fishway despite no high flow events occurring since construction. This is about 200,000 fish a year or 15 million fish over the 80-year design life of the fishway" she said.

Fish ranging from tiny 30 mm Australian smelt to large 900 mm Murray cod have used the fishway. Over 2,000 golden perch have passed through and some tagged individuals have migrated more than 400 km upstream.

The early results have provided feedback into the design program to improve knowledge and ensure future success with better management of all Murray-Darling Basin fish.

"The success of the Lock 8 fishway is a clear demonstration that the MDBC's "sea to Lake Hume" program is delivering positive benefits to the River Murray and its aquatic life," Dr Craik said.

For more information on the Native Fish Strategy go to: www.mdbc.gov.au

For more background information on the Living Murray Environmental Works & Measures Program and fishway construction go to http://www.mdbc.gov.au/news_room/Fishway_backgrounder06-04-05.pdf

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