



Monaro Acclimatisation Society Inc
9 Thompson Drive
Tathra NSW 2550

Sustainable future fishing for trout and native fish

9 April 2024

Mr Luke Pope
General Manager
South East Local Land Services
P.O. Box 10
Yass NSW 2582

Dear Luke,

On 25 March 2023, the Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), pursuant to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act* (Cth) issued a Conservation Advice relating to *Galaxias terenasus* (Roundsnout galaxias) in which they advised that the fish was to be listed as endangered in New South Wales. This advice has led to stocking bans for trout within the Snowy River Catchment below Jindabyne Dam.

The reason for the trout stocking bans is because trout, through their supposed predation, have been listed as one of the threatening processes. The Monaro Acclimatisation Society (MAS) is an organisation that works with DPI Fisheries to provide fishing experiences for anglers along Monaro and Snowy Mountains streams and montane impoundments. We stock the streams with trout; we monitor fish populations, and we report problems and breaches in regulation. We also strongly support the concept of an integrated fishery where native fish and introduced trout can co-exist.

The MAS is deeply concerned that the act of banning trout stocking within the Snowy River catchment will not in itself ensure the survival of the Roundsnout galaxias. The conservation advice lists a number of other threatening processes that are impacting the survival of these fish. These other threatening processes include climate change (including increased incidence of wildfire), water quality issues usually associated with livestock in streams, sediment events within streams through erosion from cultivation, loss of vegetation and shading and predation from other animals and birds.

I have spent some time looking at the South East Region Natural Resource Management Evidence Plan and I note the LLS's support for the *Galaxias tantangara* (Stocky galaxias) recovery plan. I would like to think that a similar recovery plan which includes the MAS and local landowners as partners could be developed for the Roundsnout galaxias.

Below is the MAS' investigation of the advice we have received from DCCEEW, which I am afraid to say does not fill us with optimism that *Galaxias terenasus* is being taken seriously as an endangered species.

MAS sought advice from the DCCEEW in respect to Federal actions in relation to the recent classification of *Galaxias Terenasus* as endangered. The response (attached for your information) is the letter MC24-005209 – undated, but attached to email “MC24-005209_Pfeiffer concerning the listing of *Galaxias terenasus* (roundsnout galaxias)” dated 25 Mar 2024.

The DCCEEW letter combined two threads of our concerns in respect to *Galaxias terenasus*. This letter seeks further discussion with one aspect only – that related to habitat rehabilitation – as we understand this is likely to be undertaken by NSW. The other matter, examining the assessment process itself, will be the subject of separate correspondence to DCCEEW.

In part, the DEECCW letter states:

“The Australian Government is committed to protect the environment for future generations. From 2019 to 2023, \$100 million was invested on projects, including habitat restoration and protection, through the Environment Restoration Fund (ERF). The ERF built on the government’s \$1.1 billion, 6-year investment in the National Landcare Program (now the Natural Heritage Trust). More information is available on the department’s website:

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/conservatin/environment-restoration-fund.”>

The DEECCW response fails to address the specific question we asked about what the Federal government is planning to undertake in order to support *Galaxias terenasus*, now that it has been declared endangered particularly in relation to habitat loss in accordance with the Conservation Advice.

When we followed the website advised, we find that “The Environment Restoration Fund is a four-year initiative from 2019-20 to 2022-23.” It seems to us that, while a laudable effort, the Environment Restoration Fund is now complete and moreover there didn't appear to be any projects within the range of *Galaxias terenasus*.

It seems the future opportunity is the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT – apparently a new name for National Landcare Program) at

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/land/natural-heritage-trust> where we see “The

government continues to invest in these priorities through a \$1.1 billion commitment to the next phase of the NHT. The next phase will run over the 5 years, until the end of the 2027-28 financial year.” Given that many of the NHT and the previous National Landcare Program were implemented by state governments, we are now addressing the question to you (as well as DEECCW).

Our reading is that the NHT employs the Threatened Species Action Plan to identify the priority efforts:

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/threatened/publications/action-plan-2022-2032>

The Stocky galaxia is one of 9 fish receiving effort but of course, this Action Plan pre-dated the recent classification of *Galaxias terenassus*. Are there any plans, or is it even possible, to fold *Galaxias terenassus* into the Action Plan? We are of the view that the respective ranges of Stocky Galaxia and *Galaxias terenassus* are distinctly different.

The Threatened Species Action Plan makes much about reducing the threat of feral cats. This is relevant to land-based mammals, but what scope is there to examine the impact of cormorants on fish – which seems not to be contemplated by the Action Plan?

What programs are being undertaken by the NSW Government in support of *Galaxias terenassus* – other than the current restrictions in trout stocking that are the subject of separate correspondence and discussion?

We hope that a partnership between the MAS and the South East Local Land Services, through the South East Region Natural Resource Management Evidence Plan, can evolve and that *Terenassus* and the significant economic and social contribution that trout fishing makes to the Monaro Region can survive and flourish together.

Yours Sincerely

Kerry Pfeiffer
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