

MAS Position on Protecting Endangered Species from Salmonid Extirpation

Preamble

Founded in 1937, the Monaro Acclimatisation Society Incorporated (MAS) is a voluntary organization primarily concerned with the development and maintenance of freshwater fisheries in south-eastern New South Wales in the Snowy Monaro region. Because this region contains mostly trout water, the MAS has a focus on trout, but it also makes significant contributions to the native fish program throughout the region. The MAS is a primary stakeholder with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries) and is recognized as such under the *Fisheries Act 1935*. MAS participates with NSW Fisheries in the stocking of freshwater lakes and rivers, maintenance of habitat, contribution to policy and legislation affecting freshwater fishing in NSW. The MAS is a member of the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers. MAS is a Crown Reserve Trustee and is working with the Recreational Fishing Alliance of NSW on the NSW Angler Access Project which aims to secure Crown Reserves and Crown Roads for the purpose of angler access in NSW.

The MAS has a long and proud history of angler representation. Since inception, the MAS has worked to improve fishing and the aquatic environment in the region.

The MAS is affiliated to the [NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers](#) – a peak body designed to represent the interests of all freshwater anglers in NSW. The MAS is also represented on the following NSW Fisheries consultative bodies:

- NSW Fisheries Trout Allocation Committee
- Snowy Mountain Lakes Working Group
- Gaden Trout Hatchery Management Committee

Protecting Endangered Species from Salmonid Extirpation

1. MAS has always been (and will continue to be) concerned about the environmental and ecological health of river systems and impoundments within its region of interest and will take all actions consistent with our legal remit to ensure such outcomes are achieved.
2. This includes ensuring that salmonid stocking does not compromise the viability of **any** species that **independent, validated science** has concluded is endangered by the presence of salmonids.
3. MAS will continue to work closely with NSW Fisheries to ensure that points (1) and (2) above are realized.
4. Point (3) requires a very transparent and mutually respectful relationship between MAS and NSW Fisheries, including the sharing and consultation on scientific papers that may have implications for salmonid stocking arrangements. Recent events have highlighted that this relationship has broken down and MAS will do whatever it can on its side to ensure viable working arrangements between the two organizations going forward. We are also very concerned about the apparent breakdown in communication between the Recreational Fishing Unit and the Threatened Species Unit within NSW Fisheries.

5. MAS has not been privy to any of the science underpinning the recent decision by NSW Fisheries to cease salmonid stocking in some river systems within its area of interest:
 - a. In the case of *Galaxias terenusus* or round-snout galaxias, NSW Fisheries has decided to cease trout stocking in the middle section of the Maclaughlin River, about half of the Cambalong Creek, a significant section of the Snowy River, which includes the reach that runs through Dalgety township, and most of the Delegate River, which also includes the reach that runs through the Delegate township. The surveys that were undertaken that led to this decision appear to have been so minimal that it is impossible to know whether the species is in fact “endangered”.
 - b. In the case of Macquarie Perch, NSW has taken the decision to cease trout stocking of the Murrumbidgee River upstream from the Numeralla River to Tantangara Dam and beyond. There is also a ban on the Adjungbilly Creek near Tumut. MAS has previously supported a ban on the stocking of brown trout in the Murrumbidgee River, but we have had no advice as to why the ban has now been extended to rainbow trout stocking.
6. In the absence of being able to assess the scientific advice, MAS raises the counterfactual observation that trout (both brown trout and rainbow trout) and the endangered species appear to have co-existed in the nominated streams for upwards of 130 years.
7. Subject to being satisfied with the underlying science, MAS will agree with the recent curtailments of salmonid stocking in the nominated streams and will work with NSW Fisheries to agree on alternative stocking sites.
8. MAS notes the scientific observation that there are many factors beyond salmonid presence that are putting pressure on endangered species. Indeed, it may well be the case that the other factors (climate change, poor riparian river management, etc.) are far more significant threats to endangered species. Focusing solely on salmonid stocking restrictions will **not** provide the full protections that any endangered species require.
9. MAS notes that trout angling is deeply embedded in the historical, cultural, social and – to a not insignificant extent – economic fabrics of the Monaro region. MAS is deeply concerned about the secrecy that has pervaded the latest trout stocking restrictions and calls on NSW Fisheries to be fully transparent with the public about its intentions and the science that has underpinned its decisions. *It should not be MAS’s responsibility to be the first to inform the public about the recent stocking decisions that have been made.* (In the absence of complete public transparency on the part of NSW Fisheries, there is deep concern that an anti-trout bias, rather than objective science, is driving recent decisions to restrict trout stocking.)
10. Further, MAS observes that if the public presentation of the stocking bans is not handled in a sensitive way, fringe elements of society may decide to take actions that could be very detrimental to the environmental and ecological health of the nominated streams and to the endangered species. In this regard, MAS notes that the absence of trout in some of the nominated streams will mean that there is no viable fishing alternative; it would be disastrous if there were to be an illegal stocking of, for example, redfin or indeed, carp, in these streams to compensate for the lack of trout. The experience at Lake

Oberon arising out of the illegal stocking of that impoundment with redfin perch is an instructive example.

11. NSW Fisheries appears to be oblivious to the potential economic consequences of its stocking decisions. In the late 1990s, NSW Fisheries commissioned Dominion Consulting Pty Ltd to determine the economic expenditure on fishing in the Monaro region. This survey determined that in 1989-99 about \$70 million was spent annually in the region. (*Dominion Consulting Pty Ltd, An Economic Survey of the Snowy Mountains Recreational Trout Fishery: A Report to NSW Fisheries, Dominion Consulting Pty Ltd, February 2001*).
12. In today's terms, this figure would be well over the \$100 million mark: a significant contribution to the region. Further, this expenditure would mainly occur in the warmer months of the year, supporting tourism in the region beyond the peak snow season. That the government wishes to enhance the non-winter attraction and amenity of the Snowy Mountains and neighbouring areas is beyond doubt. A vibrant recreational fishery is an important aspect of that.

5 February 2024