

## **MAS President's Report February 2021**

Welcome to another Annual General meeting and to another opportunity for me to update members on what has been happening across our fishery. Due to Covid 19 we did not hold our 2020 AGM until August last year, so this report covers a shortened period from August last until now.

Last year we suffered a drought and bushfire catastrophe that damaged many of our fisheries. Thankfully, the rainfall since then has given us some relief, however we need more rain to replenish the water table. So far, we are seeing worrying low flows on many of our Monaro streams while some others are coping well.

With many fish losses last year, we realised that most streams needed re-stocking, but our plans for re-stocking have been compromised somewhat by an unexpected loss of brown trout fry at Gaden early in the season. While brown trout are recognised as a difficult fish to raise in a hatchery setting, and we often lose a few each year, this season's losses were much higher and had a substantial impact on our stocking activities. I would like to acknowledge our Stocking Officer, Rod Whiteway's efforts in contacting all branches and advising them of the situation and explaining the contingency we negotiated with the hatchery, which will see unavailable browns substituted with rainbows where possible.

While some of our blue-ribbon streams struggle, the bright spots remain Tantangara and Lake Eucumbene. Tantangara continues as a reliable totally wild fishery despite the vagaries of the water level. Tantangara just goes to show that fluctuating water levels are not necessarily a deterrent to trout survival.

Lake Eucumbene has bounced back from the relatively poor season two years ago. While last season promised some excellent fishing on that lake we were thwarted by the bushfires and then the Covid lock-down. Thankfully, this year has seen the fish continue to put on excellent condition and they have provided some inspiring angling.

This report would not be complete without mention of the ongoing feral horse campaign within Kosciuszko National Park. I was somewhat surprised but pleased when the Sydney Morning Herald reported that there had been a

change of heart from Deputy Premier John Barilaro. He has confirmed the urgent need to reduce feral horse numbers to protect the park from their damaging impact. The post bushfire recovery effort so far has not set any records with a piddling 340 horses removed to date. Of course, we have heard a heap of spin from Barilaro on this and other matters before so it will be interesting to see if this is another off-hand statement designed to ease pressure on his office or if it is a genuine commitment to action. I would like to thank Kerry Pfeiffer for his continuing efforts in representing our interests in this matter.

Snowy Hydro 2.0 continues on its merry way. The construction of the project is now well underway as are our negotiations to construct the trout grow-out facility within the Gaden Trout Hatchery. On 10 December 2020 the first tri-party meeting between MAS, DPI and Snowy Hydro was held. At this meeting it was agreed to progress the MAS plan. The MAS plan was also discussed at a Heads of Department meeting hosted by Snowy Hydro and involving DPI and the Planning Authorities, and no objection was raised to the plan. Feedback from Snowy Hydro is that the plan is therefore proceeding as agreed. It is my expectation that we will see the draft of this plan within the first half of this year.

The MAS Executive has become aware of rumours relating to the construction of an illegal dam on the head waters of Bobundara Creek. Bobundara is short-listed as one of the best trout fishing waterways in Australia and the MAS remains committed to ensuring that it stays this way. The MAS and the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers have contacted the relevant authorities to determine the truth of the matter and to have it resolved in favour of the creek should the rumours prove to be correct. Again, I would like to thank Rod Whiteway for his efforts on this matter.

In closing I would like to thank the Executive. Rod Whiteway for his secretarial services, Kerry Pfeiffer for his ongoing support in editing and assistance, Bill Blair for the sounding board he is and providing additional representation for us at the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers, and our Treasurer, Noel Buckland, for keeping the financials in order. Thank you all very much and thank you to the countless others who have assisted me over the years.

So, while it has not been a long report, I think you will agree that it has more than enough in it for just 6 months. I wish you all the best for the coming year and let us all hope that our waterways get the rain they deserve.

Steve Samuels

President MAS