

MONARO ACCLIMATISATION SOCIETY INC

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2022 AGM

If this year was a Covid normal one, then I would take it every time just for the fishing. The excellent fishing reports that have come from a few of our Monaro streams, our main lakes and higher altitude mountain streams have been flushed with quality fish, quality fishing and abundant water. We can all thank La Nina for the big wet this season as it has nearly wiped away the horrors of the fire year and the subsequent drought. Yes, it would be great if this were normal, but I fear El Nino has his eyes on us just as the next Covid variant has.

While the fishing has been great, the work has kept me as busy as a one-armed caster in a termite hatch. Many of this year's issues will have significant impact on anglers so it is important to keep on top of a plethora of matters to ensure our angling is preserved.

During this AGM year members of MAS installed water temperature loggers in a number of our more important trout streams. After banging in star pickets and dealing with activating the loggers through a mobile phone app we successfully installed the lot. A midyear inspection identified one was swept away in a flood, but the others seem to have held up. We will finally know tomorrow when Rod Whiteway and I will remove them to download the first year's data. This data will be forwarded to NSW Fisheries where it will be amalgamated with data from other loggers across the State. Eventually this data will be available to anglers via the DPI website. Monitoring water temperatures will allow us to get a better handle on our trout's environment.

On the Snowy Hydro 2.0 front I was able to meet with Mr. Lachlan Barnes who has been employed as the consultant to develop the Trout Grow-out Facility Plan. The Plan has now been submitted to the Government Departments and while DPI and I have been appraised of the contents of the Plan no detail will be released until the Ministers have examined it. Having said that I am very comfortable with the details, and we are now another step closer to seeing the facility commissioned.

In May the MAS and the Alpine Angler Store organized volunteers to stock the first trial of grown-out yearling rainbow trout into lakes Eucumbene and Jindabyne. What a successful event. Both lakes have produced excellent fishing. These yearlings have grown tremendously well and are now much bigger than when they were stocked in May. This proof-of-concept event proves that stocking bigger fish in our lakes results in strong healthy fish that are robust and sometimes just as hard to catch as their wild

brethren. A big thank you to Mitch Elkins and his staff at Gaden Hatchery for producing these wonderful yearlings.

Over this last year the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers have engaged with NSW Fisheries to review and re-develop the Angler Access Website. This has been a project that has been going for a very long time without a lot of real benefit to anglers. The injection of talent from the Council has seen the project move a long way forward. I would like to thank MAS member Bill Blair for playing a significant role with the Council in this project. Hopefully in a short time this website will be developed to a degree that anglers will find it useful rather than interesting.

Once again, the Buckenderra Holiday Village held their annual Buckenderra Trout Challenge. Again, the organisers have made a significant donation to the MAS from the proceeds. I would like to thank Josh Pedersen and Jana Bencek from Buckenderra for the generous \$1,000. No fish were harmed in the running of this competition.

I also received two private donations for the MAS from well-known anglers. Prof Bob Kearney, ex biologist from NSW Fisheries donated \$50 and Mr. Rodney Tonkin ex-President of the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers and long-standing member of Orange Trout Acclimatisation Society also donated \$50. Thanks to them all for helping the MAS in such a material way.

One of the bigger projects to confront us was the draft Jindabyne Special Activation Precinct Plan. The MAS made a lengthy submission with our major concerns being the lack of recognition of fishing as a tourist attraction, the proposed development at Hatchery Bay, East Jindabyne access issues, and proposed accommodation development at Island Bend Dam. Since submitting our concerns I have met with the Special Activation Precinct representatives and the Council. As a result of those meetings, I am hopeful that fishing will be recognized better in the final Plan. Also, the Planners were sympathetic to our concerns at East Jindabyne, and it looks like we have secured vehicle access with the details still to be finalized. At Hatchery Bay the planners advised me that the draft Plan did not display enough detail and the final plan will show that current access will not be affected. So, three satisfactory results are OK, but we hit a bit of a block for the proposed development at Island Bend Dam. Our main concern here is the threat of sewage outfall into the upper Snowy River. The best assurance I got here was that environmental laws might be strengthened to protect the river and surrounds. Law is no good without policing to ensure compliance. This one we will keep an eye on.

Another issue that raised its head was the proposed NSW Government's re-write of the animal welfare legislation. This was being proposed by Adam Marshall the then Minister for DPI. The main concern with the proposal was the concept of causing psychological harm to animals. Both the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers and NSW Recreational Fishing Alliance had significant concerns as to how this would

affect fishing. At the current time, the proposal is still before Government, and it is unclear if the new Minister, Dugald Saunders will persist with it in its current form. Another one to keep an eye on but we have a few allies here.

Crown Lands implemented a review into the legislation and procedures for dealing with Crown Land across the State. The MAS made a submission detailing our concerns, but as usual with such things the final process has not altered much. We still can use Crown Lands, but the real potential exists for much of it to be sold off or disposed of with little recourse from the public.

Alongside the Jindabyne Special Activation Precinct Plan I mentioned earlier, the Kosciuszko National Park Precinct Plan was also produced. The over-riding focus of this plan was allowing the Park to become more commercial with more development. Our solution was to suggest keeping the Park as a wild place and doing all the development within the Jindabyne precinct. I fear that this will fall on deaf ears.

The KNP also distributed plans to update and reconfigure Currango Homestead at Lake Tantangara. The plans looked quite sensible, and we held no objection, but we still wonder how the managers will keep up with removing the piles of horse dung that now surround the homestead.

On the wild horses' front, not much has changed. With John Barilaro packing up his swag and sauntering into the sunset we have seen some small maneuverings. Perhaps Minister Matt Keen will stand up on this matter, in politicians we trust – at our peril.

Following a number of complaints from various sources I became aware that the Providence Portal Outlet was eroding the clay banks and causing the Eucumbene River and Eucumbene Lake downstream to become stained with fine clay sediment. Following a meeting with Mr. Charlie Litchfield from Snowy Hydro and Col Sinclair from the MAS Adaminaby Branch, Snowy Hydro agreed to conduct remediation works on the outlet to provide a permanent solution to the problem. This was a first-class outcome and is a credit to the engineers and workers. This was a commitment of over \$1 million by Snowy Hydro and after the works were completed, I sent a thank you letter to Mr. Paul Broad CEO. This is a very good outcome for our trout, especially at spawning time.

During discussions over the East Jindabyne Special Activation Precinct Plan I had an opportunity to discuss the matter of an additional boat ramp for Lake Jindabyne. Following consultation with Jindabyne Branch members the MAS has recommended to NSW Fisheries that they pursue a boat ramp at Waste Point opposite the current Waste Point ramp which requires KNP fees to access. This project is just at the beginning but Council seems keen to pursue an additional ramp so this might happen.

Over the year we supported two applications for Angler Trust Fund grants. One to rehabilitate Cooma Creek by the local Landcare groups and another to install large wooden structures in the Murrumbidgee River at the Upper Murrumbidgee Demonstration Reach site. These applications are still being processed.

Now it is time for a few thank you's.

First to Mr. Jim Harnwell who, earlier this year, took over the management role for freshwater recreational fishing. The relationship between Jim and the MAS is very strong and we have worked together on a number of projects. While I have outlined what the MAS has done, I would like to point out that Jim played a leading role with us on the East Jindabyne access matter, the proposed boat ramp for opposite Waste Point, and the upgrading of the Angler Access Website. Jim is also proposing to review and update the NSW Trout Strategy to strengthen it and to make it a workable blueprint for the future. He has committed to work closely with anglers on this and I am confident the plan can be improved to a point where it will truly guide the development of our trout fisheries.

A thank you to Mr. Charlie Litchfield from Snowy Hydro. Charlie and I have developed a strong and professional working relationship based on mutual respect. He has continued to guide the Trout Grow-out Facility Project and his work at Providence Portal was inspiring.

Next to Bill Blair. Bill has taken on a number of roles that have required his great grasp of technology. Bill not only represents us at NSW CFA meetings, but he often coordinates the hosting through Zoom. His work on the Angler Access Website has resulted in many improvements and recommendations which will result in a better product. Bill was also instrumental in helping us old crocks get our heads around the water temperature monitors we have installed. He made the path easier for us.

Next to Kerry Pfeiffer. Kerry keeps a keen watch over the wild horses' issue and while it has been a tough year personally his big fish earlier this year was a cracker.

Thanks to John Killip for keeping the website going. Over the last few years city as a member of Cooma Branch has assisted me in making entry into the MAS via Cooma an easy process for those who wish to join the MAS.

Thanks to Noel Buckland for keeping the books. Noel has provided many years of excellent service in keeping our financials in order.

Last is to Rod Whiteway. Rod has become my sounding board over the years. I often turn to Rod to make sure I am on track and not over-stepping the mark. I thank him for his counsel and his dedication as our Secretary.

So that is it for the year. I am sure I have missed stuff, but it has been so busy it has been hard to keep track of everything.

In summing up I would like to thank all the members of the MAS for their membership and participation in our organization. While many may feel that their contribution is small, I can assure you all that every membership is valuable. The MAS will only ever be as strong as its membership and that is our bottom line.

Thank you, have a great fishing season, and stay safe.

Steve Samuels
President
Monaro Acclimatisation Society Inc
5 February 2022