

## **MAS President's Report August 2020**

Welcome to my annual report and it seems that this past year has taken a toll on our environment and has adversely affected many Australians.

The first matter I would like to mention today is the devastating fires that have affected much of this brilliant country. The toll on human lives and the natural environment has been very sobering and only goes to reinforce in my mind the devastation that human induced climate change will impose on us in the future. We all owe a significant debt to the brave fire-fighters who stood in the path of fires to protect our lives and communities.

Very closely linked to the fires has been the devastating drought that has whittled away at the water resources of the continent. Here on Monaro we have been hit hard. Nearly all our highly valued Monaro streams have dried or heated to a point where we have probably lost most, if not all, of our trout. Thankfully, the higher altitude streams have held up better, but bush fire has taken a toll on some streams where fish kills have been reported. We should not forget that drought also spells doom for platypus and all the other water dependant creatures that inhabit our streams. While we will be able to re-stock our streams with fish when the rains come it is more difficult for platypus. To that end Rod Whiteway has been having discussions with other groups to see what the MAS can do to help conserve drought affected platypus stocks in our region.

Due to the drought and high-water temperatures in the Thredbo River along with the threat of bush fire in that valley many fish were released early and mainly into the larger water bodies. Once again, we are faced with the fragility of our hatcheries water supply. One bright spot is that Mitch Elkins has been appointed as manager of Gaden. I congratulate Mitch on his appointment, and I know we will continue to have a productive relationship with the hatchery under Mitch's leadership.

Then came this Covid 19. All of us know how devastating this has been. While it may have taken a toll on our capacity to go fishing, far more serious is the death and illness as well as the psychological impact it has on our fellow citizens.

I am indebted to Kerry Pfeiffer and congratulate him on his leadership role in resolving the horse problem in Kosciuszko National Park. It is good to see that

removal of horses has started and the previous farcical situation where over 20,000 horses roam freely – free to destroy the natural vegetation, free to trample the streams into mud holes, free to pulverise the fragile soils and mosses into dust, looks like being addressed. This will still be a long battle and I thank Kerry for his efforts.

Towards the end of last year Snowy Hydro released its draft 2.0 Environmental Impact Statement for comment. As a result of our consistent and persistent negotiations with Snowy Hydro over the last two years it was pleasing to see that the MAS has been recognised in the EIS and our request for a recreational fishing offset included in the EIS. Mention in the EIS is no small thing as it put the concept of a trout grow-out facility firmly on the agenda to the point where NSW Planning Department have now mandated that Snowy Hydro must spend \$5 million on a plan to protect the fishery.

To ensure the concept of a grow out facility moved forward the MAS Executive developed a Concept Plan which we put to NSW DPI. The result here is that DPI have asked MAS to enter into a Statement of Intent and we are currently negotiating that with the Department. I also put the Concept Plan to Snowy Hydro, and it was acknowledged that it was a sensible and achievable Plan. Snowy Hydro are now looking to hold a meeting with DPI and MAS to discuss our plan and begin formalising it.

There is much work to do, because under the rules set down by the Planning Department, the Plan must be developed within 12 months of work starting on Snowy 2.0. It is anticipated that work will officially start in August with the first earthworks associated with drilling. More detail on our Plan can be found on the MAS website at [monarofishsociety.org](http://monarofishsociety.org)

I also note that NSW Fisheries has a new Deputy Director General. I have had the pleasure of meeting Sean Sloan and I can only hope that new leadership in the Department fosters new enthusiasm for anglers.

I also note that the NSW Trout Strategy, which I was successful in having implemented is now starting to bear fruit. While some of our lake fisheries remain in the doldrums, some significant scientific research has been undertaken. For those who have not done so you can jump on the Department's website and

see the development of score cards for some fisheries, sonic surveys of Lakes Jindabyne and Eucumbene, video monitoring of fish movements in some of our spawning creeks and more work at the hatchery on growing larger trout for stocking.

The MAS will be contributing to this effort through water temperature monitoring of some of our better trout streams. The Department has decided to purchase 10 temperature monitors, and these will be placed in our streams to monitor water temperatures.

So, another year approaches and the issues that affect our fishing seem to always fall on the negative side of the ledger. We are facing more challenges, some the same and others new, but I believe that the MAS is in a strong position to continue to lead the fight for our Snowy Mountains trout fishery.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to the Executive who have stepped up to take a lot of the burden. To Rod Whiteway as always for his stocking and now potential platypus work, to Kerry Pfeiffer for his lead on the brumby issue, Noel Buckland for keeping the books in order and Bill Blair for representing us at the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers meetings.

Please stay safe in this Covid world and I look forward to a closer to normal year ahead.

Steve Samuels  
President  
Monaro Acclimatisation Society Inc  
1 August 2020