



# TOOLAMBA FISHING CLUB BACKS RE-SNAGGING OF GOULBURN RIVER

In 2014 the Toolamba Fishing Club hosted its 8th Annual Catch and Release Fishing Classic over the Easter long weekend. With 161 entries the competition would be fierce and when local recreational fisherman Steve Adams hauled in a 61cm Murray cod he knew it would be hard to beat.

Although Steve's catch was well shy of the 78cm monster cod caught during the 2012 Fishing Classic, it suggested that recent re-snagging by the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (CMA) to enhance native fish habitat in the Goulburn River between Murchison and Shepparton was proving to be successful.

According to Trevor Anderson, past President of the Toolamba Fishing Club and one of the organisers of

the annual competition, the most recent season was the best cod fishing for 20 years.

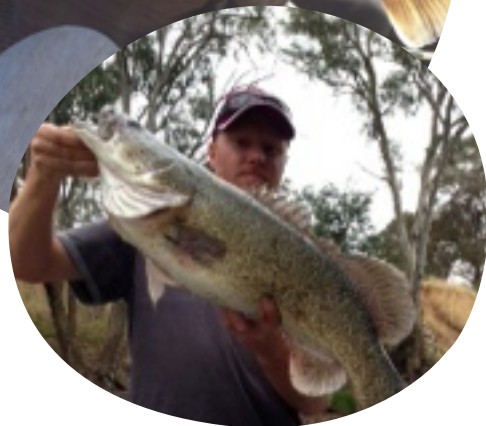
Trevor says, "Although the cod have been eluding me personally, outside the competition weekend the guys have been catching and releasing plenty of good size cod – and of course we have the photos to prove it.

"Although we all share a passion for recreational fishing, one of the key drivers that keeps the fishing club thriving is the social opportunity that it provides. We have about 150 members from 100 memberships. The annual competition is extremely well supported by recreational fishers and sponsors. This allows the Toolamba Fishing Club to put back an enormous amount into the local community.

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More than 1200 cubic metres of hardwood stumps and logs (equating to 604 snags including 50 upstream of Toolamba) have been placed along almost 2.5km of the Goulburn River.

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Goulburn Broken CMA River Health Manager Jim Castles says, “the snags have no net impact on water flow and enhance native fish habitat, leading to a more sustainable native fish community, resulting in huge benefits for recreational fishers in our region.”

Snags in waterways result from trees on the river bank either falling in or dropping their branches. Snags occur through the natural processes of flooding, bank erosion, wind or limb shedding. This has been occurring for thousands of years.

Jim says, “Snags are the inland equivalent of coastal reefs and provide habitat for native fish and other animals such as tortoises and native water rats. Native fish use them to shelter from fast currents and sunlight and take refuge from predation. Native fish also use snags as feeding and spawning sites, and as nursery areas for juvenile fish.

“Electrofishing studies carried out over a seven-year period in the Goulburn River near Shepparton found almost twice as many fish at sites with a high density of snags compared to a site with a low density of snags.

Other fish surveys within the Murray-Darling Basin have found that 80 per cent of Murray Cod are found within one metre of a snag.

“In the past snags were removed from our river systems for boating safety, improved navigation reasons and to reduce the incidence of localised flooding. This has been identified as a major reason for the loss of in-stream habitat in waterways, resulting in the decline of native fish populations. Removal of timber has been shown to increase the rates of erosion in many stretches of river, causing impacts on public assets and loss of both private and public land.

“Re-snagging on its own, however, is unlikely to be the sole driver in native fish recovery in the Goulburn River. The key is to better manage our riparian zones by fencing to restrict stock access and protect native vegetation, and then revegetating degraded areas so there will be a constant natural supply of snags in the future.”

The fallen trees used for the re-snagging project were sourced from a number of nearby locations, including the Nagambie Bypass and a public reserve in Seymour.

The sites where the Goulburn Broken CMA carried out re-snagging in the Goulburn River were selected based on priority zones identified by Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) via in-stream habitat mapping in 2011.

**The Toolamba re-snagging project was part of the Goulburn Broken CMA's Goulburn River Large Scale River Restoration Project funded by the Victorian Government.**