

Proposed changes to Recreational Fishery Licence

Submission to Fisheries Victoria Regulatory Impact Statement



ABSTRACT

Mansfield Shire Council has prepared this submission in support of residents, ratepayers and visitors who value the access to our lakes and rivers and the contribution made by the fishing industry to our destination's sustainability.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
A destination approach.....	3
Improving our lakes and rivers	4
Lake Eildon	4
Response	5
Future Discussion.....	6

A destination approach

Tourism is the key economic driver in Mansfield Shire. Some 60% of the gross industry output of \$372.215m is attributed to tourism and visitors account for 50% of all local retail trade.

The vast tracts of public land – state forest, reserve, resort and Alpine National Park, when combined with our lakes and rivers, are at the heart of what makes us special and attractive to our visitors, residents, non resident ratepayers and the many visiting friends and relatives.

Mansfield is well known for its five high country fed rivers being Delatite, Howqua, Jamieson, Big and Goulburn. Lake Eildon is the jewel in the crown.

Recreational fishing is big business on the economic front and as an outdoor recreational activity contributes to wellbeing on the social and community front.

Visitors who undertook river, stream and lake's edge fishing in Mansfield Shire spent \$14.8 million in the Shire in 2012, with a combined total direct and indirect expenditure in Mansfield Shire of \$24 million. In addition 176 jobs are generated from the expenditure of river, stream and lake's edge fishing visitors in Mansfield Shire.¹

Lake Eildon is the gateway to the Victorian High Country and with over 500 kilometres of shoreline it rates as one of Victoria's most popular holiday destinations for fishing, high speed boating, canoeing/kayaking, houseboats and personal watercraft.

According to the Boating Industry of Australia, 50% of recreational boating is on inland waterways and in Victoria, Lake Eildon is the most popular inland waterway for recreational boating.

"The boating industry represents an industry worth \$ 4 Billion to the economy. And provides over 17,700 FTE jobs"²

On Lake Eildon, boating and fishing go hand in hand.

In relation to fishing, the long term vision for Lake Eildon is a high quality, mixed species fishery which will give anglers a range of opportunities and species from which to choose.³

¹ Economic Impact of Trout Fishing in Mansfield Shire 2014 Urban Enterprise

² Boating Industry Association of Victoria, Boating Industry Snapshot, Drivers of Growth in Victoria

³ Lake Eildon Land and On Water Management Plan

Improving our lakes and rivers

Mansfield Shire Council is acutely aware of the importance of our river systems and Lakes Eildon and Nillahcootie to the sustainability of our destination from an economic, social and environmental perspective.

To that end, Council has a long established record of working with Fisheries Victoria and other key stakeholders including Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA), Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP) and Goulburn Murray Water (GMW), for many years in the development and execution of management plans to improve the catchment and the fishery.

We worked with business and community to bring attention to the concerns around the decreasing populations of wild trout that saw the commencement of a recent local trout survey project. Council also partnered with Fisheries Victoria to deliver the inaugural Talk Wild Trout conference held in Mansfield late 2015 that attracted 174 delegates and will do so again for 2016.

Lake Eildon

Lake Eildon is the top destination driver of visitation in summer according to our Tourism Industry Survey⁴. Fishing is a key activity driver. Council understands the significance of this inland water storage and is a key player around the table in the development and execution of the Lake Eildon Land and On Water Management Plan.

One of the key priorities from the Plan was to improve the recreational boating facilities in a coordinated and strategic way. The Lake Eildon Recreational Boating Facilities Improvement Plan (LERBFIP) has been completed and endorsed by Mansfield and Murrindindi Shire Councils together with Goulburn Murray Water. It contains an audit of existing facilities, identification of main issues and opportunities and recommendations.

“The Lake Eildon Recreational Boating Facilities Improvement Plan once enacted will realise a future for Lake Eildon that boasts world class hubs for access, amenity, commercial investment and visitor experiences that are largely financed by a user pays system that delivers value.”⁵

LERBFIP identifies that Lake Eildon is underperforming from an economic return and user experience perspective. Funding of detailed development and design plans are the next step in a staged approach toward investment in three hubs to be the focus of improved facilities and recreational experience.

⁴ Mansfield Shire Accommodation Industry Quarterly Survey, Trend Results

⁵ Lake Eildon Recreational Boating Facilities Improvement Plan, p.7

Response

Council supports the proposed changes to recreational fishing licences as outlined in the Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) and that signal increases in the price for recreational fishing licences (RFLs) and discounts for 1 year and 3 years RFLs purchased online.

While increases in the cost of licences are rarely welcomed by the payer, Council notes the continuation of 'kids fish free' and a no fee for the over 70s. The change of the two day licence to three also makes sense for visitors to our destination who often want to take advantage of a 'long weekend'.

The provision of online purchasing is important for convenience and many visitors in destination may not have ready access to local businesses selling licences. The discount associated with the online purchase may serve to encourage uptake.

We also support the continuation of fishing licences being sold from local premises as this 'touchpoint' assists local business with potential sales of related equipment and provides an opportunity for local and expert knowledge and advice to be imparted. This is particularly important for visitors and infrequent fishers.

"Unlike many other fees that are set on a cost recovery basis, the primary purpose of charging a fee for a recreational fishing licence (RFL) in Victoria is to fund discretionary expenditure on recreational fishing facilities and programs."⁶

Council supports the continuation of the RFL Trust as an investment model for recreational fishing in Victoria.

Council has invested in strategic planning to inform the nature and priority of improvements sought for local recreational fishing facilities and programs. The Recreational Fishing Licence Trust is a key source of funds against which we have in the past and will in the future apply for improvements to benefit our residents, visitors and businesses.

According to our business community, key infrastructure projects needed include boat ramps and improvements to facilities around Lake Eildon and key advocacy issues include lake facilities and access, recreational water allocations and health of the fishery including fish stocks.⁷

⁶ Letter to Fisheries Victoria, from Commissioner for Better Regulation, Anna Cronin. As per the Regulatory Impact Statement

⁷ Mansfield Shire Annual Business Survey, 2014- 2015

Future Discussion

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Fisheries Victoria Regulatory Impact Statement.

We value the opportunity to work with Fisheries Victoria toward great outcomes for recreational fishing across our lakes and rivers.

Contact

Judy Dixon

judy.dixon@mansfield.vic.gov.au