

23 March, 2010

## Rocky detour gives fish smooth journey

Creating a rocky detour has helped smooth the journey of fish in Amity Creek near Marlborough.

A rock ramp fishway was installed in the creek by the Fitzroy Basin Association Inc (FBA) in partnership with Fisheries Queensland, and the landholders Ron and Beverley White.

Fisheries Queensland Fisheries Biologists Matthew Moore and Darren Jennings helped design and construct the fishway, which was needed to help fish avoid a weir and move upstream in Amity Creek.

“Blockages like weirs and roads impede the movement of fish between fresh and salt water in the wet season – which means breeding is impacted and numbers are reduced,” Mr Moore said.

“A fishway is usually a sloping channel with a series of ridges in either rock or roughened concrete which slows down the flow of water past barriers. The fishway provides a safe route for fish to pass the weir, especially juvenile fish.”

Fisheries Queensland and FBA staff recently sampled the site and found more than 150 fish from 10 different species are using the fishway including juveniles of migratory species such as Barramundi, Tarpon and spotted scats.

FBA Coastal Coordinator Shane Westley said the project began in late 2008 after a prioritization process identified a barrier within the White’s property as a good spot to construct a fishway.

“FBA had done a study looking at what barriers to fish migration existed across the region and the Amity Creek site was seen as a priority location that would make a big difference to the movement of fish species through the catchment,” Mr Westley said.

“Funding the installation of fishways on farms is helping improve the quantity and diversity of fish stocks in our regional waterways, which makes our fishery more sustainable in the long-term.”

Ron White said removing the weir was not an option as it was the only way to access some paddocks on his property, but the decision to allow a fishway to be installed was simple because he “doesn’t mind a fish.”

Ron and Bev run Brahman cattle that are mainly sold to the Japanese market, as well as a stud and commercial cattle operation.

“We’ve had this area for a long time and we’ve looked after it. If this fishway makes it better – well it serves a purpose, and it’s doing no harm,” he said. “We see it as doing our bit and putting something back into the landscape.”

To make the Amity Creek fishway, a channel was dug out alongside the weir. The channel was then filled with large and small rocks arranged carefully to create the right slope.

Fisheries Queensland’s Matt Moore said the fishway had significantly improved accessibility for fish as well as increased the time available for fish to get over the weir.

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“Fish could only get over the weir during big flow events, and even then they only have a tiny window of a couple of days when it’s drowned out - we should be able extend this by months,” he said.

“The advantage of rock ramp fishway is there is always somewhere for the fish to swim through with less velocity, which helps young fish that aren’t as strong swimmers.”

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