

Bass Sydney and River Stocking

When Bass Sydney was first formed many years ago its prime function was to protect Australian Bass and its habitat. Many high profile fishermen were the founding members of this club, Ian Miller & Steve Starling were just 2 and the patron was Sir Roden Cutler V.C.

The membership decided early on that river stocking needed to be done only in the most extreme cases. Their reasoning was that a lack of fish was a symptom of poor river health and /or lack of fish passage pre and post spawning. They realised that the only real way to improve fish stocks in the long term was to resolve these issues. After all, if you owned an aquarium and found all the fish dead you would not restock it before you worked out what had killed the fish in the first place and then rectified the problem.

Unfortunately, fish stocking has gained popularity over the years and particularly so since NSW Fisheries introduced the Dollar for Dollar scheme. This scheme has been a real political winner for Fisheries because it's easy to do and easy to sell.

This popularity has seen some particularly ill-advised stockings like efforts to stock fish into the Hawkesbury Nepean system. We say ill advised because the introduction of hatchery reared fish will do nothing to solve the real issues in the system and it does risk the introduction of disease and damage to the genetic integrity of the wild population.

There are plenty of fish in the Hawkesbury Nepean. If they are hard to find in some reaches it's because we have not addressed some issues in the system. Mainly the fish need a hand to move up and down the river when necessary (fishways). They would also benefit from better water quality (improved sewerage treatment and replacement of riparian vegetation would help a lot with this) and improved flows. Bass Sydney believes that these are the real issues, not lack of fish.

We know that there are many who think that if they just keep throwing fish into the system all will be good. Some of those people are in Fisheries management, and stocking to them is much easier than having to address the real problems.

Bass Sydney will oppose stocking of rivers where the application is not based on good scientific reasoning for doing so.

On the other hand Bass Sydney will support stockings where we feel this is the last resort. For example, we are involved in the efforts to place fishways on the Parramatta River where Bass stocks are seriously depleted. If the Bass population does not show early signs of recovery after the fishways are in place then we will recommend stocking.

If we take this path then we will be looking to find brood stock from the nearest possible system, not from somewhere up the north. We strongly disagree with the DPI Fisheries policy of having wide geographic zones for sourcing brood stock. Our belief is that the fish in each system have had thousands of years to acclimatise to that particular system and its variations in water flow etc.

The members of Bass Sydney today, still believe in the original charter set up all those years ago and will continue to try and improve the plight of Australian Bass wherever possible.

Bass Sydney's vision for the Bass Fishery is:

- Improved fish passage.
- Better water quality and flows
- Replacement of riparian vegetation.
- Healthy populations of wild native fish.

This is why you will see us working for the establishment of fishways and out in the field planting trees. If you really want to help the Australian Bass then get into some of these things and work on your local member about sewerage treatment and water flows, improving these will achieve long-term results.