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Trout season closes after June Long Weekend

The annual trout season in NSW will close in streams and rivers at midnight on Monday, June 8 to allow brown, rainbow and brook trout a chance to breed on their annual spawning run. Designated trout streams will be closed to recreational fishing after the June long weekend and will reopen on the October long weekend on Saturday, October 3, enabling trout fishers to fish during both long weekends. NSW Department of Primary Industries in conjunction with the acclimatisation society have stocked about three million trout in the last 12 months. Recreational fishers are also advised that Murray crayfish cannot be taken from trout waters at any time and an on the spot penalty of \$500 can be issued to anglers found fishing in notified trout waters during closed season.

New Reef for Merimbula Lake

The installation of the new artificial reef in Merimbula Lake was recently completed. NSW DPI staff have spent the past few weeks at Merimbula, carefully overseeing the placement of 400 Reef Balls. Reef Balls are patented modules constructed of modified concrete aggregate, which encourages colonisation by marine plants and animals. The reefs were deployed in areas lacking reef habitat, providing places for fish to live and shelter. The largest reef balls are around 1.2 metres wide, 0.9 metres high and weigh up to 800 kilograms. Due to current cold temperatures of the lake, it will take up to 18 months for the Reef Balls to resemble a natural reef. NSW DPI will begin a quarterly monitoring program of the Merimbula Lake artificial reef in August, using baited underwater video, photographic surveys and diver census. Other reefs in Lake Conjola, Lake Macquarie, Botany Bay and St Georges Basin have created habitat for a high diversity and abundance of recreationally important species and similar results are expected at Merimbula Lake. The reefs are part of a five year fisheries enhancement program by the NSW State Government and are funded by the NSW Saltwater Fishing Trust which is a great example of recreational fishing license fees being put back into the water, to improve recreational fishing in NSW.

Zero bag limit for Australian bass and estuary perch from 1 June 2009

A ban on taking Australian bass and estuary perch from all rivers and estuaries is in place from 1 June, for three months, to protect these important recreational species. Both Australian bass and estuary perch form schools and migrate to parts of estuaries with the correct salinity to trigger spawning. These great native sports fish can be vulnerable to fishing when they are in large groups. The zero bag limit does not close any waters to fishing and does not affect anglers fishing for other estuary species such as bream or flathead. The zero bag limit is in place till August 31. The zero bag limit does not apply to Australian bass in freshwater impoundments and dams, as bass will not breed in these areas. All fish in freshwater impoundments, such as Glenbawn Dam and Glennies Creek Dam in the Hunter valley, Brogo Dam near Bega and Clarrie Hall and Toonumbar Dam in the northeast of the state are stocked fish, and anglers may continue to fish under the normal bag limit of two fish per day.

Heavy Fines for Illegal fishing

- Three men have been charged with illegal fishing and abusing a fisheries officer and been fined a combined total of more than \$16,000. NSW DPI Fisheries Officers from Batemans Bay conducted a search of a licensed fishing boat in Ulladulla harbour. The offenders were apprehended and charged with a range of offences, including unlawful use of traps, possession of fish taken illegally, possession of fish taken in contravention of a closure and unlicensed fishing.
- Two men are facing individual fines totalling up to \$140,000 for allegedly using illegal fishing gear in the waters of the Bermagui River Recreational Fishing Haven. DPI Fisheries Officers apprehended the men who were allegedly using a fish trap for the purposes of collecting bait for a commercial fishing business. The fishing trap was found to contain a total of 62 Silver Trevally of which 42 were of prohibited size, and 3 Luderick, all of a prohibited size.
- A repeat abalone offender has been sentenced to two months imprisonment and fined \$2000 for illegal abalone fishing on the South Coast. When fisheries officers stopped the man, 202 shucked blacklip abalone, were found. The possession limit for recreational fishers in waters open to the taking of abalone in NSW is two per person.

Illegal fishing threatens the sustainability of fish stocks. Information on illegal fishing should be reported to the Fishers' Watch Phone Line on 1800 043 536.

Fishers for Fish Habitat

Recreational anglers spend many hours standing or sitting on river banks, on beaches, wading in the shallows, sitting in boats or kayaks and generally taking in the aquatic environment. As such, they are the eyes and ears of our river systems – if something isn't quite right they are regularly the first to realise it. Fishers for Fish Habitat is a new project which recognises the involvement of recreational anglers in habitat improvement initiatives and aims to inspire anglers to do what they can to protect and enhance these vital areas that our native fish need to survive and thrive. The project is culminating in the first ever Fishers for Fish Habitat forum in Ballina June 18-19. The forum is free for recreational fishers and registration is now open. Join other like minded fishers and guest speaker Steve "Starlo" Starling at the forum and find out how you can be involved. To register go to www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/habitat or ring Charlotte Jenkins on 02 66261107.

Tagging update

Two exceptional recaptures have recently been reported to the NSW DPI Game Fish Tagging Program. The first was a yellowtail kingfish tagged near Eden, NSW, in the winter of 2006. It was recaptured 1170 NM (straight line distance) and 873 days later off Mangawhai Heads Beach on New Zealand's north east coast. The second was a blue marlin tagged in the Huon Gulf, PNG which was recaptured 7 years and 71 days later by an artisanal fishing boat near a Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) near Pulau Fani, Indonesia. The fish had travelled a minimum of 1076 NM. The Program continues to issue tags free of charge to participants and is funded by the NSW Recreational Fishing Trust. More information on the program is available at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au. If you would like to participate in the program please contact NSW DPI on (02) 9527 8411 or email gamefish.tagging@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

Agent enquiries or for changing contact details: 02 9527 8589, Fax 02 9527 8409 or visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/recreational