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FACT SHEET 9

Lakes and Coorong Commercial Fishery Environmental Management Plan

What is the Environment Management Plan?

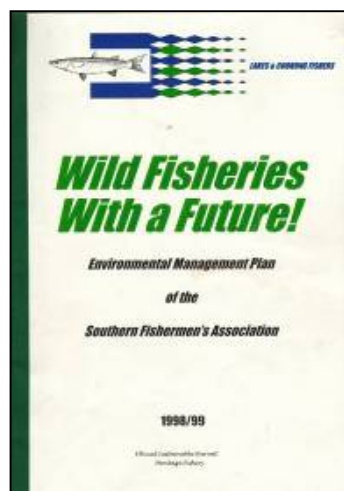
The Southern Fishermen's Association developed an Environment Management Plan to maintain the environmental integrity of the Lakes and Coorong region and to act in a manner that will enhance its environmental quality. Specifically the Southern Fisherman's Association and its members undertake to:

- conform to all legislative requirements and relevant codes of practice
- annually review all activities with the aim of continually improving environmental performance
- make every effort to prevent and reduce pollution
- develop, adopt and improve fishing methods that minimise the possibility of unnecessary waste of the natural resource
- develop, adopt and improve fishing methods that minimise fish stress and pain
- consider supporting any actions that will assist in the restoration of habitat
- encourage responsible environmental behaviour by other members of the community
- liaise with other interested parties on environmental issues

The Lakes and Coorong fishery was first documented in 1846 – during the early development of the paddle-steamers trade up and down the Murray River. The Lakes and Coorong fishery covers over 75,000 hectares near the mouth of the Murray River in South Australia.

It is by far Australia's largest estuarine fishery. The commercial fishery currently involves 35 family businesses and is Australia's largest European carp removal team. Those involved in the fishery are committed to the long-term future of this unique ecosystem through practices that continuously improve environmental performance in all phases of the industry's operation – administration, fishing, processing and packaging.

The Environmental Management Plan for the Lakes and Coorong Commercial Fishery is the first of its kind in the world. It led to the fishery undergoing full assessment for the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification as a sustainable fishery.



*The original
EMP Document*

Who were involved in the EMP?

All 37 families involved in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery voluntarily developed the plan. It built on activities carried out by the Fishery and was developed in consultation with senior fisheries scientists from the South Australian Research and Development Institute.

Why was the EMP developed?

The Southern Fishing Association is choosing to continuously improve their environmental roles – which benefits them, their customers, and the ecosystem they depend upon.

When was the first EMP implemented?

The written plan was really the tip of the iceberg and only documents the directions the fishers are already going to continually improve their environmental practices. The fishery already has many runs on the board and **achievements to-date include:**

- development of a voluntary environmental data collection form to allow fishers to contribute to monitoring the state of the environment they see daily
- trialling experimental gear to allow selective harvest of European carp without further impacting on native species of fish
- developing, publicising and motivating the “Coorong Barrages Fish Passage Proposal” – a means of cost effectively overcoming Australia’s largest fish passage barrier and increasing abundance of native fish such as Mulloway
- production of Best Practice Document for Bycatch Minimisation
- developing a Fisher Induction Program to assist new entrants into the fishery
- supporting a moratorium on fish which appear to be becoming threatened such as silver perch and freshwater catfish
- adopting a “Code of Conduct” for the Fishery which assists in protecting and improving our environment
- voluntarily collecting litter and assisting others in difficulty
- Pursuit of full assessment of MSC certification



Every year the fishermen voluntarily participate in Coorong bird counts using their boats and intimate knowledge of the Region to assist the bird counters get to areas they cannot reach by foot.

Birds are an indicator of environmental health.

How was the EMP was implemented?

The Southern Fishermen's Association plan focuses on all six areas of defined activity within the Fishery.

1. **Fishing:** The activity at the heart of the business and the people - the actual process of catching fish. Targets include:
 - Minimising by-catch
 - Minimising fish pain
 - Keeping exotic fish to a minimum
 - Ensuring the impact of disease and pollution on native fish is kept to a minimum or entirely removed
 - Use of outboard motors with the least impact on the environment
 - Zero pollution from the industry
2. **Processing:** Conversion of fish into "product" for sale. The activities which take place once fish are caught ranging from icing and gutting through to more intensive value adding processing. Targets include:
 - Minimising any adverse environmental impact
 - Minimising all forms of waste
 - Disposal of waste products in an environmentally sensitive manner
 - Minimising fish pain or stress
3. **Travel and storage:** The transportation and storage of individuals, equipment, supplies and catch. Since each owner/operator must travel to and from the site of operation; some a considerable distance, these activities have the potential to have environmental impacts. Targets include:
 - Minimising the potential for adverse environmental impact
 - Use of the most environmentally-friendly fuel
 - Maintenance of all vehicles to minimise any adverse environmental impacts
4. **Marketing and sales:** The promotion and sales of the products of the Southern Fishermen's Association both on an individual owner/operator basis and a collective one. Targets include:
 - Production of fish and fish products of the highest quality possible
 - Use of recycled and/or recyclable packaging
 - Environmental branding of all products
 - Promotion of environmentally responsible behaviour

5. **Administration:** The day to day running of a business (finances, correspondence, purchases, management). This applies both to the industry as a whole, through the Southern Fishermen's Association, and each individual owner/operator. For most owner/operators, the home is also the office. Targets include:
- Use of recycled products
 - Sorting of waste for most efficient recycling
 - Minimal use of energy and resources possible
 - Promotion of community recycling
6. **Community:** This includes the commitment of the Southern Fishermen's Association to play a positive and active role in the future of the community and region. Targets include:
- Ongoing voluntary monitoring of environmental factors in the region
 - Membership of relevant community groups
 - Restoration of the Lakes and Coorong region to something approaching its natural state
 - Educating the local community and visitors about the unique and vulnerable aspects of the region – Goolwa Interpretive Centre
 - Playing an integral role in emergency response procedures for the region (fire, rescue, pollution prevention)



SFA is heavily involved in community education

Above - giving talks and demonstrations to the public,

Above right –Members attend shows, food and wine festivals and farmers markets to spread the word

Right – involved in promotions with schools, regional development boards and community groups

