



MEDIA RELEASE

Date: 18 January, 2008

Water released to save Millewa State Forest native fish

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission and Forests NSW have started releasing a small amount of water into a Millewa State Forest creek to save a threatened population of Southern Pygmy Perch.

MDBC Chief Executive, Dr Wendy Craik AM said the water - up to 0.5 GL – was being made available through The Living Murray program.

“It is part of the 12.8 GL carried over from last water year for environmental emergencies such as this. This water is not available for irrigation use and will not impact on the availability of water for other users,” Dr Craik said.

“The MDBC partner governments agree this is one of the highest priority sites for use of the very small volume of environmental water available in the River Murray system this season.

“If we can help to save this rare native fish and preserve it in its natural habitat it will contribute to the overall biodiversity of the River Murray system,” Dr Craik said.

Forests NSW Riverina ecologist Gary Miller said that the population of Southern Pygmy Perch was under threat.

“We have been monitoring this site closely since last September, and there has been a significant deterioration in water quality and available habitat since Christmas,” Mr Miller said.

“We are able to deliver water directly into the portion of the creek required, which allows us to use a very small volume of water to great effect.

“We have released 125 megalitres into part of Toupna Creek within Millewa State Forest, to ensure the survival of a population of Southern Pygmy Perch.

“Ongoing monitoring of the population will occur with the possibility of another release should water quality deteriorate.”

Department of Primary Industries research scientist for freshwater fish ecology Lee Baumgartner said that the Millewa population of Southern Pygmy Perch was one of only a small number in the Murray-Darling Basin and that this population was under threat from the severe drought conditions.

“Researchers are undertaking an assessment program to closely monitor fish conditions before and after the watering takes place,” Mr Baumgartner said.

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TRIM REF: 08/735