

Activities *Spotlight*



HEALTHY RIVERS TO
REEF PARTNERSHIP
MACKAY-WHITSUNDAY

Mackay Regional Council Fishways Project

Building important structures

Landing Road, Koumala

Mackay Whitsunday Isaac Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership founding member, Mackay Regional Council is working hard to deliver fishways that help maintain fish stocks in the region's waterways.

Recently, Council and Reef Catchments partnered to build a new fishway at Landing Road (Koumala) on a tributary that flows into Rocky Dam Creek, which is highly valued as a resource for recreational anglers as well as commercial operations.

The HR2RP regional report card includes a fish barrier indicator under the 'habitat and hydrology' index for the region's freshwater and estuarine systems. Including this indicator alongside fish health and water quality gives an overall picture of our region's river and estuarine health.

What's happening here...

Fishways are structures that allow upstream migration of many recreational and commercially important fish species such as barramundi, mangrove jack, sea mullet, and jungle perch into upstream freshwater "safe-haven" environments.

These species, known as diadromous, are born in the salt water, however the estuary is a very dangerous place for a 4-5cm juvenile fish so their instinct is to migrate upstream. These freshwater safe havens, such as the Gooseponds and Lagoon Creek at the Botanic Gardens, contain fewer predators as well and an abundance of food resources.

Fishways are often constructed where barriers inhibit or completely block upstream migration and passage. Barriers can include dams, weirs, culverts, causeways, bridges, rocks bars and even high flows. Australian native fish are relatively poor swimmers, so fishways are built to facilitate upstream migration.

Years ago, causeways were built across waterways leaving a drop from the headwater to the tailwater, creating a barrier. These days, fisheries legislation ensures all road crossing that are built facilitate fish passage. Anything over approximately 10cm in vertical drop is a potential barrier for Australian diadromous fish.

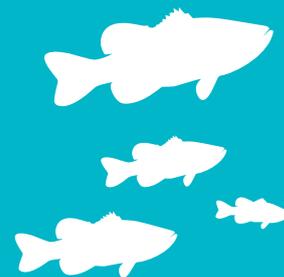
In 2018, Tens of thousands of fish were recorded flowing through constructed fishways in Mackay. Fisheries ecologists said the soaring numbers are proof the fishways are playing a vital role in providing clear passage through formerly disconnected aquatic ecosystems.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Constructed fishways and maintenance;

There are nearly 4000 barriers to fish migration in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region, and currently there are 21 fishways constructed across the local government area that are maintained biannually by waterways staff. Maintenance largely involves debris removal and de-silting but repair work may be required if significant damage occurs due to flow events.

The Mackay Regional Council, with occasional external partner contributions, look to either design and/or build a couple of fishways per year.



HEALTHY RIVERS TO REEF PARTNERSHIP

The Mackay-Whitsunday-Isaac Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership brings together diverse stakeholders and organisation to focus on the health of the five regional basins and adjacent coastal marine areas of the Great Barrier Reef.

For more information, visit www.healthyriverstoreef.org.au