

New regulator and fishway making a positive impact

Native fish are back with a fighting chance within the Katarapko and Eckert Creek system with the completion of the new Log Crossing regulator and fishway.

Log Crossing has been a significant barrier to the flow of water and movement of native fish in the upper reaches of the system for many years.

The original crossing was constructed in the early 1900s out of large hollow tree logs placed across Eckert Creek and covered with dirt and gravel.

This provided vehicle access across the creek to the stone weir and Katarapko Creek, but at the same time blocked the creek from flowing freely.

Katarapko and Eckert Creek system has some of the most diverse habitat for medium-to-large bodied native fish, such as Murray cod, golden perch and freshwater catfish however through river regulation (locks and weirs) native fish have been unable to follow their natural cues to move into the upper reaches to breed and spawn.

Natural Resources South Australian Murray-Darling Basin (Natural Resources SAMDB) Katfish Reach Wetland Ecologist, Lara Suitor said native fish need the flow of water to cue their natural instinct to breed.

"If water does not flow, fish don't breed," Ms Suitor said.

"We have the perfect habitat for fish, we just need to remove barriers to help improve water flow which will then benefit fish numbers and diversity."

By removing barriers within the creeks, the system can become re-connected with fresh water regularly providing many benefits to other plants and animals within the surrounding wetlands and floodplains.

Natural Resources SAMDB Katfish Reach Project Manager Benita Dillon said the construction of Log Crossing regulator and fishway had improved access for national park visitors, as the structure was safer and could still be driven over to reach the stone weir and Katarapko Creek.

"A fishway has been installed within the regulator structure, which will allow native fish to move through," Ms Dillon said.

"The fishway will provide native fish with the right flow, velocity and light conditions.

"This will be a great improvement compared to the long hollow logs."

The new Log Crossing regulator and fishway will be open to park visitors on 1 August 2015.

Annual fish surveys are conducted in the Katarapko and Eckert Creek system, and the results to date show that native fish are present but in low numbers.

Media contact

Sandy Gunter

Team Leader Communications and Engagement

Natural Resources
SA Murray-Darling Basin

Department of Environment,
Water and Natural Resources

Phone (08) 8532 9100

Mobile 0407 600 613

Email sandy.gunter@sa.gov.au

www.environment.sa.gov.au

www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/samurraydarlingbasin



News release

Continued monitoring will see how effective the new Log Crossing regulator and fishway has been in improving native fish breeding and diversity.

The new Log Crossing regulator and fishway was developed through the Katfish Reach Project and Natural Resources SAMDB.

Katfish Reach is a community environmental rehabilitation group working in partnership with government to achieve a healthier and more productive aquatic and floodplain ecosystem that everyone can enjoy.

On-ground works are continuing through the project to achieve this aim, and the area will see many more environmental improvements over time, creating a productive and thriving national park for the Riverland.

The Australian Government invested funding for the new Log Crossing regulator and fishway through the South Australian Government's Riverine Recovery Project.

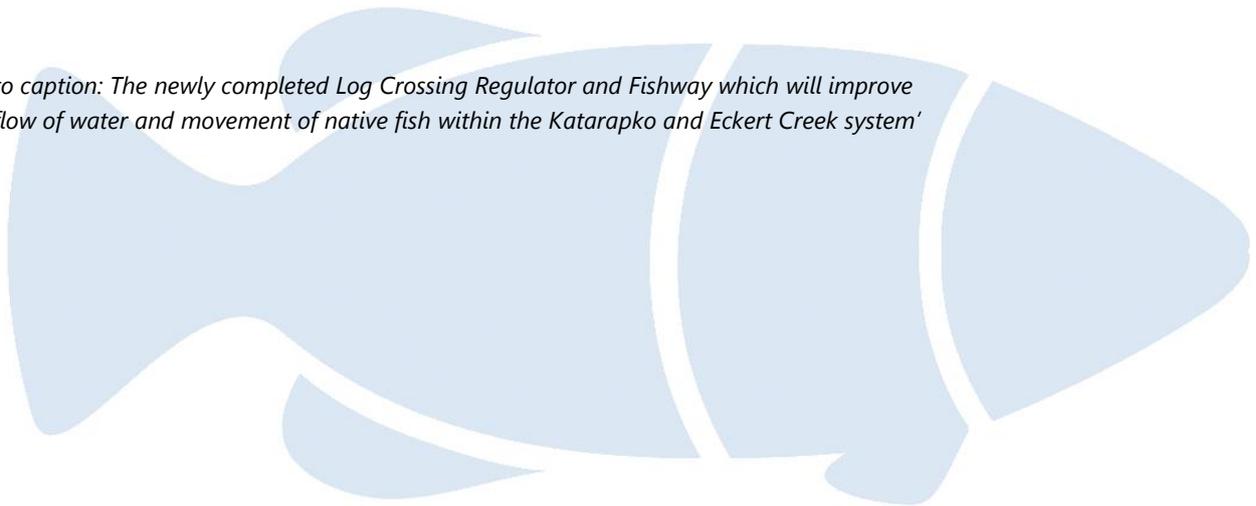


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Photo caption: The newly completed Log Crossing Regulator and Fishway which will improve the flow of water and movement of native fish within the Katarapko and Eckert Creek system'



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