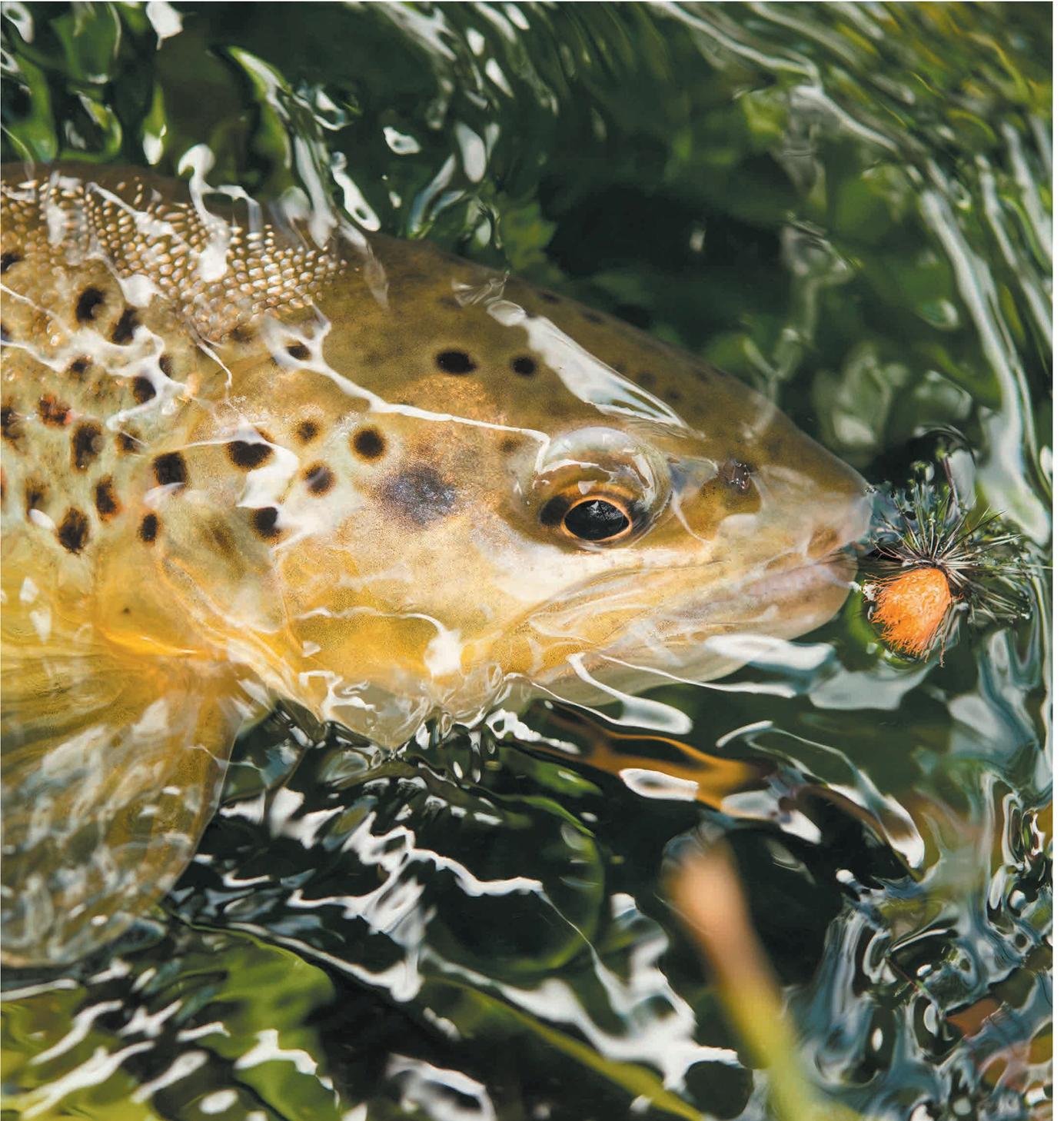


# Victorian Wild Trout Strategy





# Overview

Wild trout fisheries are highly valued socially and economically by anglers, regional communities and the Government in Victoria.

Over the past five years, through the *Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program*, we have learnt a lot more about our trout fisheries, their population health and opportunities to improve their management. As a result, significant work is underway to support our wild trout fisheries.

A strategy is now required to focus further investment in maintaining wild trout fishing opportunities into the future. This strategy, drafted by a steering committee of the Australian Trout Foundation (ATF), Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA), VRFish and other wild trout fisher partners will help guide the management of our precious wild trout fishery over the next 5 years.

## Vision

A healthy sustainable wild trout fishery for all Victorians.

## Mission

To protect, build and promote Victoria's wild trout fishery.

## Partnership Approach

To better understand and respond to threats to the wild trout fishery, a partnerships approach is needed. Key partners in our wild trout fishery include:



Top two photos: Thousands of trees and shrubs have been planted on stream-sides in "hands-on" exercises organised by the Australian Trout Foundation, CMA's, Angling Clubs and Landcare Groups

Bottom photo: Wild brown trout



Wild Trout Fisher Reference Group, Victorian Freshwater Fish Habitat & Flows Forum and Angling Clubs throughout Victoria.



*Top photo:  
Trout fisher, Ovens River*

*Bottom photo:  
Buckland volunteer group*

*Photo on following page:  
Wild Trout Fishery workshop group*

## Wild Trout Learnings to Date

Wild trout are self-sustaining populations that typically occur in the higher reaches of our trout streams. Wild trout are revered for their beautiful colouration, natural breeding origin and for the remote undisturbed alpine rivers in which they are found.

The Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program (WTFMP) commenced in 2014 and is the largest collective investment in trout fisheries in Victoria. The WTFMP has led to significant benefits both in angler support and engagement and on-ground improvements.

Key findings from WTFMP include:

- Trout are adaptive and resilient, but their populations and 'catchability' are dynamic and, can fluctuate with changing environmental and climatic conditions,
- Water temperature and river flow rates are important to survival rates, growth rates and natural recruitment of wild trout,
- Hot summers and resulting high-water temperatures can severely impact trout,
- Streamside (riparian) habitat is critical for trout to buffer against changes to water temperatures, create in-stream habitat (fallen timber) and, to encourage production of terrestrial food sources,
- In-stream habitat of rocks, wood and structural complexity provide enhanced habitat for trout,
- Stocking of yearling brown trout has been shown to be ineffective in boosting populations,
- Angler engagement (and participation) is important in managing the wild trout fishery,
- There is evidence trout move upstream to cooler and or shaded reaches in hot summers.

These findings have been shared at four Talk Wild Trout Conferences between 2015-2018, with over 1000 anglers attending, sharing and networking their wild trout fishing experiences.

# Priority actions, measures and outcomes

Theme	Priority actions	Measures	Outcomes
<b>Communication and engagement</b>	1. VFA to continue hosting the annual Talk Wild Trout Conference with annual review and input from the Wild Trout Fisher Reference Group.	At least 200 participants attend each annual Talk Trout Conference.	Trout fishers have a clear understanding about what drives the performance of the wild trout fishery, based on applied research and monitoring.
	2. VFA and ATF to showcase Victoria's wild trout fisheries and promote responsible fishing practices, highlighting their vulnerability to the effects of climate change.	ATF to develop an information pamphlet and social media campaign, to promote responsible trout fishing and handling practices, in the context of climate change.	Anglers appreciate the value of the wild trout fishery and adopt more responsible fishing and handling practices when they fish for trout.
	3. ATF to work with Fish Care to promote responsible fishing practices at public events and school education programs.	ATF to work with Fish Care to assist in preparation of age appropriate information and participate in six public events / year to promote responsible fishing practices.	The next generation of fishers learn and adopt responsible fishing when fishing for trout.
	4. VFA and ATF to increase angler engagement in protecting Victoria's wild trout fisheries and promote the associated health, social and economic benefits of recreational fishing.	VFA to profile and promote the value of wild trout fisheries as part of its Fishing Destination Strategy.  Expand and leverage current networks (e.g. Women in Recreational Fishing Network) to be advocates for and participate in initiatives to support healthy sustainable wild trout fisheries.	Trout fishers encouraged to fish Victoria's premier wild trout streams and lakes  The community recognise the strong social and economic values of wild trout fishing.  More women (and their families) participating in fishing, joining angling clubs and associations, and participating in wild trout habitat initiatives.
	5. Collect and disseminate, trout population and water temperature data on priority trout streams and lakes to trout fishers.	VFA and ATF to review Victorian water temperature data collection arrangements, and prepare options for displaying temperature data via the ATF webpage for the benefit of trout fishers.	Trout fishers have a deeper understanding of the population health of key trout streams and lakes.  Trout fishers with increased awareness of, and adaption to, climate change by collecting and sharing stream temperature data.





Theme	Priority actions	Measures	Outcomes
River health and fish habitat	6. VFA, ATF and CMA's to introduce a pilot program that enables angling clubs and associations to manage crown land river frontage licences.	VFA, ATF and CMA's to engage DELWP to facilitate 4 pilot licence agreements with angling clubs and associations for the management of crown land frontage.  ATF to encourage anglers to participate in the Angler Riparian Partnership Program.	Anglers in action, taking more responsibility in repairing and managing riparian land at priority river reaches to improve fishing outcomes.  Local native shade trees planted to allay rising stream temperatures.
	7. VFA, ATF, CMA's, Victorian Fish Habitat and Flows Forum and DELWP to identify and deliver river health restoration projects at priority trout rivers that benefit wild trout fisheries.	Working together, the ATF and CMA's identify and deliver 5 priority river restoration projects targeted on priority trout streams or lakes that will most benefit wild trout fishing outcomes.	Prioritised trout locations targeted for larger-scale habitat restoration projects to improve trout fishing. Actions include: tree planting, installation of instream habitat, stock exclusion, weed control and ongoing maintenance.
Fishery interventions	8. VFA and ATF to continue Jordan Scotty incubator and/or fry stocking trials for 3 years to evaluate their effectiveness as a potential trout recovery tools.'	VFA to work with the ATF to support the continuation of Jordan Scotty incubator and/or fry stocking trials for 3 more years and review the outcomes of this work.	The effectiveness of Jordan Scotty incubators and fry stocking as trout population recovery tools will be evaluated.
	9. VFA to prepare a brown trout broodstock management plan to ensure hatchery stocked trout retain wide genetic fitness.	VFA to complete a broodstock management plan for Victorian brown trout bred at Snobs Creek to ensure wild genetic fitness for stocking.	Wild brown trout strains incorporated into Snobs Creek brown trout populations.  Genetic diversity of trout eggs, used for Jordon Scotty trials, is maximised.
	10. ATF and the VFA encourage trout fishers to provide regular feedback on the performance and condition of wild trout fisheries and stream/lake condition.	Trout fishers use VFA's GoFishVic App to build a data base of fishing performance on popular streams and lakes.	Trout fishers sharing information to track the performance of wild trout fisheries and improve fishing opportunities.
	11. ATF & VFA to monitor the effect on the fishery, of the varying bag & size limits now applicable to sections of Nariel Creek, Ovens River, Mitta Mitta River, and the Rubicon River.	ATF and VFA to ensure appropriate signage is displayed on selected access points of these streams, alerting anglers of the applicable bag & size limits, and the penalties that can be incurred.	Fishing information acquired from fisheries officers, angling clubs and anglers to be reviewed by VFA and ATF and considered in future regulation reviews.
Angler access	12. VFA to work with recreational fishers, land managers and landholders to identify, and improve access to priority trout streams and lakes.	VFA to work with the ATF and other fishers to improve fishing access to priority trout streams and lakes, with an initial focus on the Goulburn River and its tributaries.	Trout fishing opportunities improved by removing barriers to stream and lake fishing access.
Partnerships and Co-management	13. VFA, DELWP and ATF to investigate ways to expand government support for volunteers who undertake river health restoration initiatives.	VFA to review the RFL grants program and facilitate more funding support for recreational fishing volunteer efforts involved in river health restoration projects.	Fishing organisations are better supported through their volunteer efforts in river health restoration projects.
	14. ATF to seek private sector funding support for river health restoration and management projects.	ATF to secure charitable status recognition, prepare a prospectus and, secure private sector funding support for river health restoration initiatives.	ATF resource base and capacity strengthened in order to undertake more work to support sustainable wild trout fisheries
	15. VFA to work with the ATF and other trout fishers to apply for RFL funding for a third Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program.	Recreational Fishing Licence (RFL) grant application lodged for extension of Wild Trout Fishery Management Program.	Resources to continue the partnership approach to managing the wild trout fishery



## Strategy Development

The Wild Trout Strategy was developed with 30 wild trout fishers through a two-day workshop on 4-5 October 2019 and a seven person steering committee consisting of representatives from ATF (two representatives), VFA (two representatives), VRFish (one representative) and two unaffiliated wild trout anglers. The Draft Strategy was presented at the 2019 Talk Wild Trout Conference commencing a 3-month public consultation period whereby submissions were received and incorporated into the finalised Strategy.

## Want to get involved or learn more?

To get involved as a habitat volunteer, please email your contact details to [habitat@atfonline.com.au](mailto:habitat@atfonline.com.au)

To learn more about the Wild Trout Strategy, please visit [www.atfonline.com.au](http://www.atfonline.com.au)

To learn more about the Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program, please visit <https://vfa.vic.gov.au/recreational-fishing/wild-trout-fisheries-management-program>



*Top photo:  
Fishing in the Rubicon River*

*Bottom photo:  
A completed rehabilitation project showing in-stream habitat creation and stream-side re-vegetation plantings*

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David Anderson / twigwater.com

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