

# Victorian Open Water Murray Cod Aquaculture Industry Development Plan

## Event Report

Location: Mildura, Victoria

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> December

Prepared by: Alex Cross

The following report is a summary of the Victorian Open Water Murray Cod Aquaculture Industry Development Plan Launch held on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009, attended by representatives of the Sunraysia Institute of TAFE including Alex Cross and Damien Heintze. The report includes an overview, a summary of the day's activities and potential opportunities for the Institute in the future. The information should be reviewed in conjunction with the documentation provided on the day including Industry Plan Overview and Murray Cod Industry Development Plan; additional material is also included in the appendix and links throughout the document.

### **Objectives**

To investigate and develop knowledge regarding the development of the Open Water Murray Cod in our region and the potential opportunity for the Institute. Understand sustainable practices and strategies in the industry. Network with local stakeholders and business and government organisations involved in the development Murray Cod Open Water aquaculture industry.

## Overview:

The purpose of the event was to launch the Industry Development Plan (IDP) for the Murray Cod Open Water (MCOW) Industry, held at DeLice Restaurant on the Mildura Sunraysia Institute of TAFE Campus, the launch was followed by a site visit to Thurla Farms to see a MCOW operation.

## Contents

The Murray Cod Industry .....	3
The Launch of the Industry Development Plan.....	3
Site Visit to Thurla Farms .....	5
Sustainable practices and strategies in the industry .....	5
Outcomes and Opportunities for SuniTAFE .....	6
Appendix: .....	7
Reference: .....	7

## The Murray Cod Industry

The modern Murray Cod Industry using open water systems is still in its infancy. Murray Cod breeding techniques were developed in the 1980's for enhancement programs, in the 1990's techniques were developed to farm the species for food markets.

Since the 1990's a few local farm operators have established their own operations including Col Beasley at Thurla Farms in Red Cliffs and Andrew Peace in Swan Hill.

Murray cod are bred in hatcheries, and then transferred to tank systems to be grown to the "advanced stocker" stage before again being transfer again to open water 'pens' for finishing and grow out to various saleable sizes depending on the market.

## The Launch of the Industry Development Plan

The launch was organized by Mildura Development Corporation and Swan Hill Council in conjunction with representatives from the Murray Cod Industry.

Two events were held for the 'launch' this being the second whilst the first was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November at Piangil near Swan Hill.

The event was attended by representatives from the Murray Cod Industry, local and state government, banking and finance, education and training organisations and rural counseling representatives along with individual farmers predominately from the vine and citrus industry.

Speeches were made by Cr John Arnold of MRCC, Anne Mansell from the Mildura Development Corporation, Col Beasley from Thurla Farms, a Department of Primary Industries Representative and Ayal Marek from Sustainability Ventures.



The IDP investigates the strengths and weaknesses of Open Murray Cod Aquaculture and the potential for industry development in our region. The document outlines key considerations that have been identified to ensure a steady industry development in the short, medium and long term.

A summary of the development plan can be downloaded [here](#) whilst the full version is also available using this [link](#).

Priority actions that the industry has developed for a long term sustainable business include:

- Securing scale and reliability in the supply of advanced stockers
- Attraction of additional open water grower industry participants
- Implementing sustainable increases in production volumes
- Formalising collaborative structures and agreements for industry participants at all levels in the supply chain
- Formulation of tailored nutrition/diet rations and improved feed manufacturing arrangements
- Investment in, or contracting of, processing facilities and value added product development
- Adoption of production and market targets for both export and domestic market development, with consequent investment in marketing activities
- Development of clear branding and corporate design support materials
- Documentation of risk mitigation guidelines
- Application of breeding technologies to extend seasonal availability of stock
- Continuing genetic improvement through selective breeding (ie commercialisation and ongoing development of the Our Rural Landscapes (ORL) selective breeding program)
- Product diversification to include portion control, longer shelf life packaging and other value adding
- Development of new markets at least 18 months in advance of intended supply.

## Site Visit to Thurla Farms

The site visit to Thurla farms was lead by Col Beasley, the tour include inspecting the advance stockers tanks, layout of the Cageway system on dry land and visitation to the dam to inspect the open water Cageways set up with stock



Thurla Farms Advanced Stocker System



Example of Advanced stocker system offered by Sustainability Ventures



CageWays Open Pen System @ Thurla Farm. Note the system is available in various sizes see [brochure](#) for details.

Additional information regarding the [Advanced Stocker System](#) from Sustainability Ventures and [Cageways Systems](#) are available by following the links.

## Sustainable practices and strategies in the industry

The industry development includes section 5.3 on page 27 – Sustainable Farming Practices and section 6.1 on page 32 – An Environmentally Sustainable Industry and includes summary risk analysis impacts on environmental water, wild stocks, wildlife and the health of water in dam systems.

One of the major benefits of this industry in our region is the ability to use water more than once. Traditionally horticulturists have used water to irrigate crops, by diversifying and introducing MCOW systems to their business, they can effectively use the water twice.

## Outcomes and Opportunities for SuniTAFE

The introduction and development of an Open Water Fish Industry in our region presents several opportunities requiring further investigation. For Sunraysia Institute of TAFE these opportunities included provision of Training for the Industry, Community Engagement and Direct Economic benefits.

Throughout the IDP the identification of training opportunities is evident including program development and delivery of. In particular sessions 5.3 to 5.9 all make reference to training programs, assessment, and competence, including the area of Market / Supply Chain Development and People Development.

Training opportunities, include, business, health and safety, food quality and safety, supply chain management, processing and people development. These functions are across the industry from the farmer, through to the processing and sales department.

Proposed Plan of Action - 2 Parts: Educational Training and Farm Diversification

- Engage with and develop relationship with industry stakeholders and representatives leading to medium to long term opportunities
- Seek representation in Industry Group as training and education partner
- Opportunities: With the support of the industry develop programs and appropriate forms of training and assessment
- Undertake further investigation and engagement with Industry to analyze the potential of establishing business as part of existing agricultural operations at the Cardross Farm to include the introduction of Advance Stocker and/ or Open Water Systems, increasing and diversifying farm income and providing training facilities

## Appendix:

Links to information:

<http://ncs.sunitafe.edu.au/Files/murray-cod/industry-development-launch/industry-plan-overview.pdf>

<http://ncs.sunitafe.edu.au/Files/murray-cod/industry-development-launch/murray-cod-open-water-industry-development-plan-summary.pdf>

<http://ncs.sunitafe.edu.au/Files/murray-cod/industry-development-launch/murray-cod-industry-development-plan.pdf>

<http://ncs.sunitafe.edu.au/Files/murray-cod/industry-development-launch/murray-cod-stocker-production-system.pdf>

<http://ncs.sunitafe.edu.au/Files/murray-cod/industry-development-launch/sustainability-ventures-sws-brochure.pdf>

<http://ncs.sunitafe.edu.au/Files/murray-cod/industry-development-launch/cageways-brochure.pdf>

## Reference:

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