

Tuesday, 22 September 2009

STRATEGY TO MINIMISE FISH DEATHS IN LAKE ALBERT

The State Government announced today that it would trial a two-week ‘fish down’ designed to reduce the effects of a likely fish kill in the European carp population of Lake Albert.

Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Paul Caica say that due to increasing salinity levels, all indications are that a fish kill is inevitable later this year and this poses a risk to the amenity value of Lake Albert and the surrounding communities.

Minister for the River Murray Karlene Maywald says that recent drought conditions have resulted in a steady decline in water levels and quality in Lake Albert.

“Salinity in the lake is increasing due mainly to natural evaporation and is predicted to increase further with the onset of warmer weather,” Minister Maywald said.

“Based on these predictions, the Government is looking to help support the local community which is already dealing with the negative impacts of the drought.

“This operation will diminish the impact on the community from what seems an inevitable fish kill.”

Minister Caica says the fish down will involve local fishers maximising their fishing effort to land as many carp as possible, removing them from the area before declining water levels and increased salinity put the fish at risk.

“Carp, in particular, are sensitive to increased salinity and predictions indicate they will succumb to salinity in the latter part of this year if we don’t do something about it,” Minister Caica says.

“The Meningie community has expressed concerns about the likelihood of an extensive fish kill and has sought the assistance of this Government to intervene.

“PIRSA has been working with the Lake Albert Community Reference Group and the Southern Fishermen’s Association to develop a plan which will help reduce the numbers of fish in the lake – and a fish down has been proposed.

“We are therefore seeking the assistance of all fishers in the Lakes and Coorong fishery to maximise their fishing effort in a bid to land as many fish as possible on a daily basis.

“A fish down like this is unprecedented in South Australia. It has never been attempted before and so we want to see just how effective an operation like this will be.

“We are therefore going to implement a two-week trial of the operation, which will allow for the collection of critical data needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the fishing effort in removing the carp.”

The State Government has committed \$500,000 toward this trial and will review its commitment after the trial has been completed and evaluated.