



Swan River Trust
Government of Western Australia

Tuesday, 20 November 2007

Media Statement

Fish focus in new joint research into river health

Fish will take centre stage in a new \$430,000 research project on the health of the Swan River.

The Swan River Trust has joined forces with Murdoch University, Department of Fisheries and the Department of Water in funding the study, which will use fish communities as the main indicators of environmental health in the river.

This study was identified as part of the Swan River Trust's Healthy Rivers Program.

Swan River Trust Principal Scientist Dr Luke Twomey said the study would use the extensive archive of fish abundance data, collected during the past 30 years by the Centre for Fish and Fisheries Research at Murdoch University, as well as new research to be carried out during the next three years.

"The study will determine how fish communities in the Swan River have changed since the late 1970s and whether any such changes can be directly related to the variation in the water quality," Dr Twomey said.

"It will then focus on using various characteristics of the fish communities to compile a database to reflect and monitor the system's environmental health.

"It will involve investigation as to whether changes to the amounts and types of food available to fish in the river had impacted their ability to survive.

"The study will also focus on determining how large algal blooms may affect the movement of fish within the river and their survival rates."

Dr Twomey said initial investigations into sudden fish deaths would be undertaken in the river.

"We will still aim to remove dead fish as quickly as possible but some extra time will be taken to map their distribution and to take measurements," he said.

The study, supervised by Dr Fiona Valesini and Professor Ian Potter at the Centre for Fish and Fisheries Research at Murdoch University, started in July this year and is due to finish in July 2010.

The Department of Water is working in partnership with the Swan Catchment Council.

(Ends)

Contact: Swan River Trust Media Officer Fiona Bell 9278 0953 or 0434 603 684