



press clip

DAY OF RECKONING: ANGLERS HOPE BARRAMUNDI WILL ERADICATE TILAPIA

Waterways pest attack

'Fish army' on patrol in Mackay

Ross Irby

ross.irby@dailymercury.com.au

ONE thousand hungry barramundi are just a phone call away from making a splash in The Gooseponds and putting the bite on the pest tilapia.

For Reef Catchments biologist Tim Marsden, the day of reckoning for the ponds' tilapia menace is likely to be Saturday, when the first barramundi are released.

Donations by recreational anglers and others have allowed the purchase of 1000 barramundi of 300mm in length. The barra will be transported by truck from a fish farm south of Mackay.

Mr Marsden said one phone call needed to be made for the barra to be released on Saturday. The barra are bigger than the tilapia and would not be fed before their release to make them hungry.

B-Day won't come too soon for Lance Murray, president of the Mackay Recreational Fishers Alliance.

"What we are doing will be a hand grenade with the pin pulled," he said.

Mr Marsden said experienced volunteers from some of the groups involved would help with the release.

"We have a fish army," he said. "We are moving forward and it is now all sorted. Before their release by hand they will be placed in a salt bath to kill any bugs."

"We don't want them

anywhere," Mackay Area Fish Stocking Group's Keith Day said during yesterday's forum on stopping the spread of tilapia within the Mackay-Whitsunday region.

"Mackay has been so successful in its fish stocking program it has created one of the best stocked freshwater fisheries in Australia," he said.

"So successful, people tow their boats from Tasmania to fish here.

"I found out at the forum that in the Burdekin in just four years, tilapia spread from isolated outbreaks to over 1900km."

The forum involved key stakeholders who form part of ongoing work to stop or slow the tilapia spread.

Mackay is a focus after tilapia were found in The Gooseponds. It's hoped the barra release will eradicate them.

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PLAN OF ATTACK: Reef Catchments biologist Tim Marsden and Tackleworld Mackay owner Neil Elworthy discuss the tilapia pest at The Gooseponds.

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