

April 8, 2010

Eels on wheels

A wheely-bin, Astro turf, and a miniature half pipe could be the secret to salvation of Townsville's eel population.

NQ Dry Tropics, the natural resource management group for the dry tropics, is thinking outside the box when it comes to developing fish passage devices like this one which help native fish bypass dams and weirs.

NQ Dry Tropics Project Manager, Diana O'Donnell, says the eel passage device helps baby eels return to their home because they can't climb over dam walls.

"Dams and weirs effectively create a road block for fish and prevent them from accessing important habitat."

"Many people don't realize that some of our favourite fish including barramundi and mangrove jack need to move upstream and downstream in order to survive and reproduce," she said.

The eel passage device, or the Green Mile as it would appear to fish, is intended to help baby eels return home from the ocean where they were born.

The eel trap, made from a wheely-bin, must be 'scented' with the smell of other eels before they will enter. The contraption is based on work by a New Zealand eel migration specialist who visited Townsville to look at the problem of eel migration.

The eels are triggered to start migration by flood events and so the window of opportunity to help them is narrow. NQ Dry Tropics is working with Sunwater and Traditional Owners to help eels move. We're helping eels move at Ross River Dam this week.

NQ Dry Tropics has removed barriers over 5,000 kilometres of waterways in the dry tropics region so far.

Media contact

For further information contact Katie Munkres or Kathy Cogo on (07) 4724 3544 or email kathy.cogo@nqdrytropics.com.au.