

# NSW Trout Fisheries Annual Report Cards

2018/19 survey results



# Summary

This document includes the 2018/2019 report cards for the NSW trout fishery. The monitoring and associated report cards have been developed to provide information to anglers and managers on how the fishery is tracking across the Northern, Central, and Southern trout fishery regions. The first sampling took place between September 2018 and May 2019. For much of this period, large portions of NSW were experiencing drought conditions and this impacted stocking practices (i.e., less river stocking sites) in the state. Overall, the report cards indicate that the NSW trout fishery provides some areas in each region with good angling opportunities. However, angling opportunities would improve further in all regions with more favourable environmental conditions and improved survival of stocked fish.

## Background

NSW trout fisheries are challenged by a range of environmental impacts (e.g., drought, pest species and habitat degradation) and other factors such as access restrictions. Trout populations naturally vary from year to year due to a range of environmental and biological factors, and it is important to track these changes to appropriately manage the fishery. Surveying trout populations using a standardised backpack electrofishing program is a key tool used to track changes in trout fisheries throughout the world, and it can provide valuable information about the fishery to managers and anglers alike. As a result, NSW DPI Fisheries has developed a state-wide trout monitoring program as a critical component of the NSW Trout Strategy.

These surveys provide an indication of abundance (number of fish) and population structure (size) in each region. Completing surveys at several sites shows if there is any variation between locations and when repeated year to year, this gives an indication of any changes in the fishery over time. Importantly, survey methods such as electrofishing do not detect all fish in the system and are likely to underestimate the fish numbers, but these methods provide a repeatable way to obtain a representative sample of fish at a site. Overall, the monitoring program aims to determine how the NSW trout fisheries are tracking as well as determining the initial success of fish stocking events. This information will be available to managers and anglers in the form of report cards shared electronically (via web and social media) as well as through this document. This document will be prepared annually and report cards provided for the Northern and Central location before season opening each year. Due to later stocking events, the Southern report card and this document is likely to be provided later in the season (e.g., late summer).

## What we did

During the NSW Trout Strategy workshops in 2018, stakeholders were asked to indicate key streams for spawning, monitoring, and habitat rehabilitation. From these workshops, 45 stream monitoring sites were identified across the state (see Figure 1). This includes 15 rivers in each of the North, Central, and Southern NSW trout fisheries. These sites will be sampled annually to provide data on the long term trends in the river fisheries in each region. Sampling at each site occurs at least 6 weeks after the last stocking event in that area. The survey streams are designed to be indicators on how the fishery is tracking in each region (and across the state) and are less a report card on each specific river or to provide detailed information on each site.

Backpack electrofishing was used in all water ~1m deep or less at each site and included 8 x 150 second shots (typically ~500m of stream at each site). The length of stream covered by each electrofishing shot was measured to allow the number of fish per 100m to be calculated. All trout captured at each site are measured (fork length to the nearest mm) and released. This method of electrofishing for trout and reporting the number of fish per 100m is widely used to monitor stream trout populations throughout the world. Overall, monitoring of the NSW trout populations has adopted international best practice and scientifically rigorous techniques which will also allow comparison across years, to previous survey data from NSW streams and to surveys completed in other trout fisheries.

**How to read the NSW trout report cards:** The report cards provide an overall rating for the region with a rating summary provided in the top right (see key below) and more specific values in the lower left of the card. Key highlights from the region are presented in the top left of the report card and represent the rivers that performed best in each category.

<b>Abundance</b>	A = >10 fish/ 100m at 3 or more rivers B= At least 5 fish/ 100m at 3 or more rivers C= At least 2 fish / 100m at 3 or more rivers D= At least 0.5 fish/ 100m at 3 or more rivers F= 0 – 0.5 fish/ 100m at 3 or more rivers
<b>Recent recruitment/ stocking success</b>	A= Fish <12cm at 12 or more sites B= Fish <12cm at 8 to 11 sites C= Fish <12cm at 3 to 7 sites D= Fish <12cm at 1 to 2 sites F= no fish <12cm
<b>Mature fish</b>	A= Fish >25cm at 12 or more sites B= Fish >25cm at 8 to 11 sites C= Fish >25cm at 3 to 7 sites D= Fish >25cm at 1 to 2 sites F= no fish >25cm
<b>Multiple size classes</b>	A= various sized fish from 5 to >45cm B= various sized fish but few very large or few smaller fish C= various sized fish but no very large or very small fish D= very limited size range F= only one size range
<b>Distribution</b>	A= All sites contain trout B= 10-14 sites contain trout C= 6-9 sites contain trout D= 3-5 sites contain trout F= <3 sites contain trout
<b>Overall rating</b>	Excellent = A or B on all categories across both species Good = A, B or C on all categories for both species Moderate = Mostly A, B, C on all categories for both species Poor = Multiple D and F for both species Very poor= D and F on all categories across both species

**How to interpret length frequencies diagrams:** length frequency diagrams are a standard tool used in fisheries science and management to understand fish populations. The length frequency data provides a snapshot into the dynamics of the population (e.g., recruitment, growth, and mortality). The diagrams show the percentage of the population which is in each size category and these can be found in this document after the report cards. For trout population in NSW we can expect to see a large percentage of the population as small juveniles as they enter the fishery (via spawning and stocking) and another peak or two in the graph which would indicate the last few years of recruitment. A broad size range of fish with a larger proportion of smaller fish compared to larger fish is considered normal.

# Areas Mapped

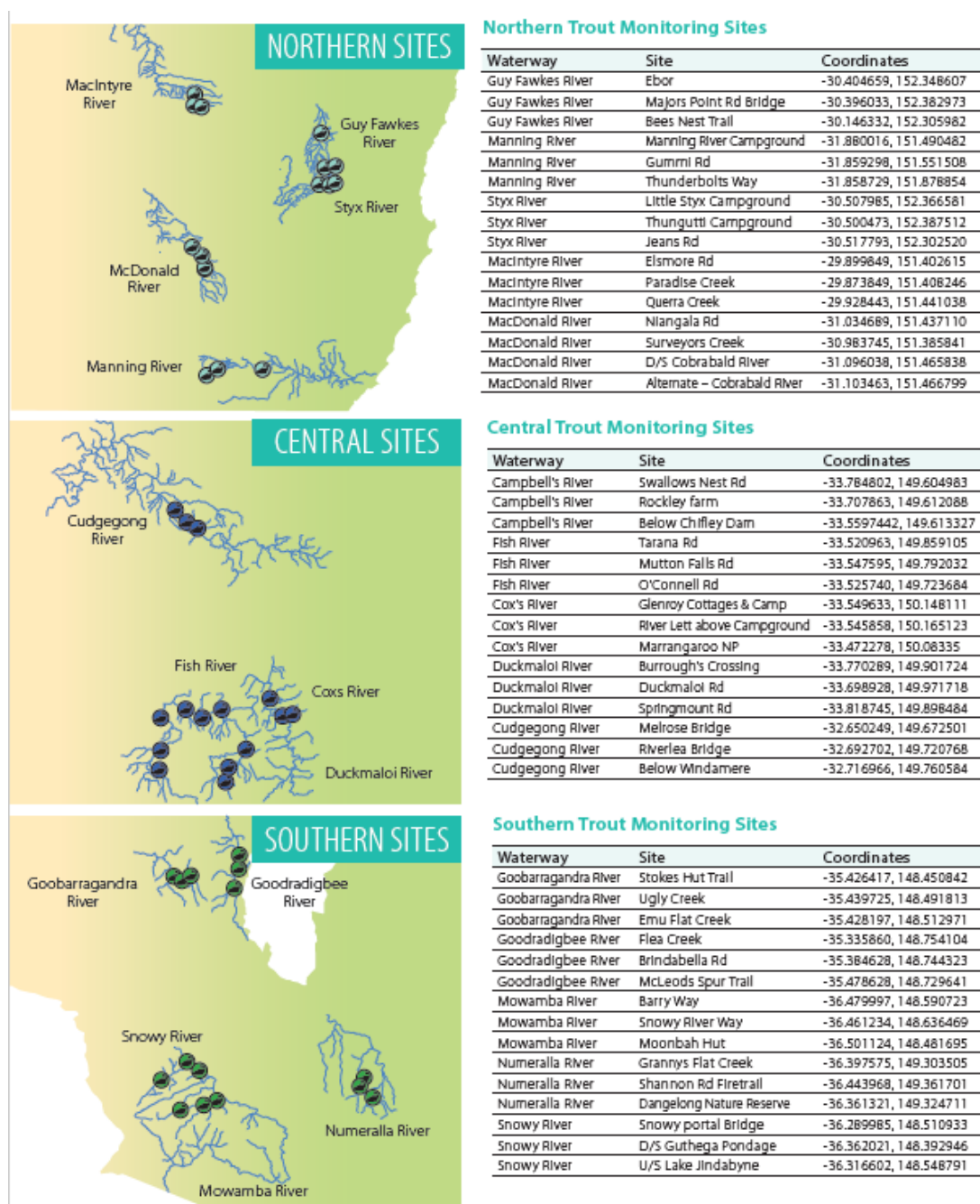


Figure 1. Monitoring sites in the Northern, Central, and Southern NSW trout fisheries.



## Northern Region

### REGION HIGHLIGHTS

FISH PER 100M	Guy Fawkes River
CATCHABLE FISH PER 100M	Manning River
LARGEST CAUGHT	Guy Fawkes River
AVERAGE SIZE OF CATCHABLE TROUT	Manning River
BEST FOR RAINBOW TROUT	Styx River
BEST FOR BROWN TROUT	Manning River

### LOOKING AHEAD

- » Streams around the MacIntyre River may need more stocking of brown trout and continued stocking of rainbow trout to ensure multiple size classes and an improved fishery
- » Brown trout stocking is required in many areas as few small fish were recorded. Stocking of brown trout in Autumn 2019 will likely improve this result for 2019 surveys

### OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

RAINBOW	BROWN	
9.3	1.2	FISH PER 100M
0.1	0.7	CATCHABLE FISH PER 100M
43cm	43cm	LARGEST CAUGHT
26	26	AVERAGE SIZE OF CATCHABLE TROUT

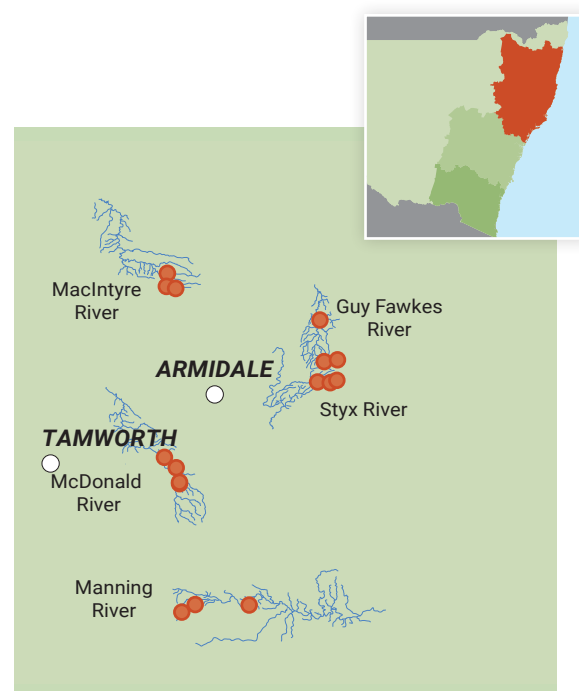
### OTHER SPECIES RECORDED

- » River blackfish, mountain galaxias, shortfin eel & mosquitofish

*Last Surveyed September 2018*

### Report Card

	RAINBOW	BROWN
ABUNDANCE	C	D
RECENT RECRUITMENT	B	F
MATURE FISH	D	C
MULTIPLE CLASS SIZES	D	B
DISTRIBUTION	B	D
OVERALL RATING	Moderate	





## Central Region

### REGION HIGHLIGHTS

FISH PER 100M	Duckmaloi River
CATCHABLE FISH PER 100M	Fish River
LARGEST CAUGHT	Fish River
AVERAGE SIZE OF CATCHABLE TROUT	Fish River
BEST FOR RAINBOW TROUT	Fish River
BEST FOR BROWN TROUT	Fish River

### LOOKING AHEAD

- » Although the Fish River performed the best during this monitoring, a number of streams also contained good angling opportunities. Consulting the stocking website will aid further in finding a range of angling opportunities in the central region.
- » Many sites had strong survival and good numbers of small rainbow trout. Monitoring in later 2019 will hopefully show these entering the fishery for the 2019/2020 season.

### OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

RAINBOW	BROWN	
3.4	0.6	FISH PER 100M
0.1	0.18	CATCHABLE FISH PER 100M
35cm	45cm	LARGEST CAUGHT
28	31	AVERAGE SIZE OF CATCHABLE TROUT

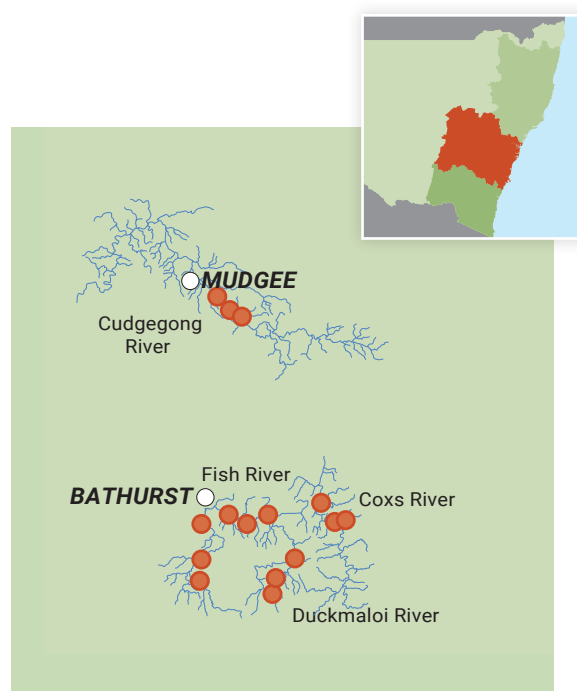
### OTHER SPECIES RECORDED

- » Mountain galaxias, flathead gudgeon, redfin, mosquitofish, & European carp

*Last Surveyed September 2018*

### Report Card

	RAINBOW	BROWN
ABUNDANCE	C	D
RECENT RECRUITMENT	B	C
MATURE FISH	D	C
MULTIPLE CLASS SIZES	B	A
DISTRIBUTION	B	C
OVERALL RATING	Moderate	





## Southern Region

### REGION HIGHLIGHTS

FISH PER 100M	Snowy River
CATCHABLE FISH PER 100M	Snowy River
LARGEST CAUGHT	Goobarragandra River
AVERAGE SIZE OF CATCHABLE TROUT	Snowy River
BEST FOR RAINBOW TROUT	Goodradigbee or Snowy River
BEST FOR BROWN TROUT	Mowamba or Snow River

### LOOKING AHEAD

- » This report focuses on resident stream fish in the Snowy Mountain rivers and does not reflect span run fisheries or those supplemented by lakes. Keep an eye out for spawn run monitoring data to better understand how those populations are tracking.
- » Locations such as Goobarragandra River might benefit from improved stocking protocols. For example, stocking smaller numbers of fish at a range of locations throughout the catchment and in particular in the upper reaches. Look for improvements here due to these updated stocking protocols.
- » Tailrace rivers and tailrace fisheries may provide further angling opportunities in this region. These are not included in this sampling due to the size and higher flows which make surveys more complex.

### OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

RAINBOW	BROWN	
2.5	1.8	FISH PER 100M
0.1	0.5	CATCHABLE FISH PER 100M
21cm	30cm	LARGEST CAUGHT
21	26	AVERAGE SIZE OF CATCHABLE TROUT

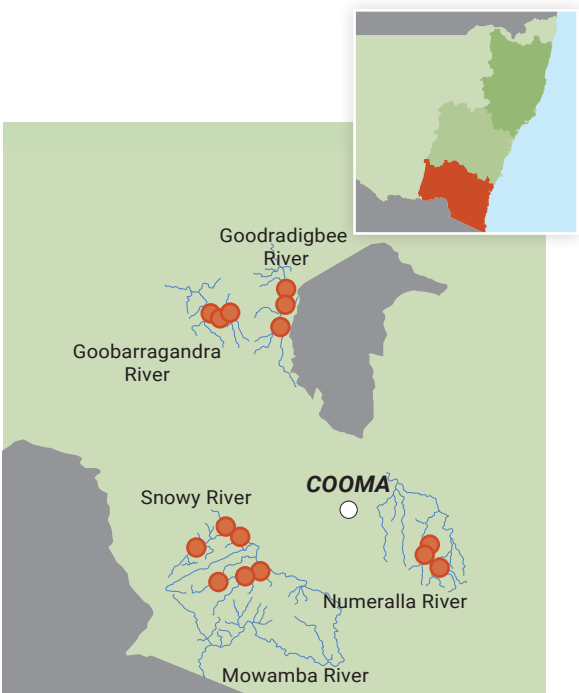
### OTHER SPECIES RECORDED

- » River blackfish, mountain galaxias, shortfin eel & European carp

Last Surveyed September 2018

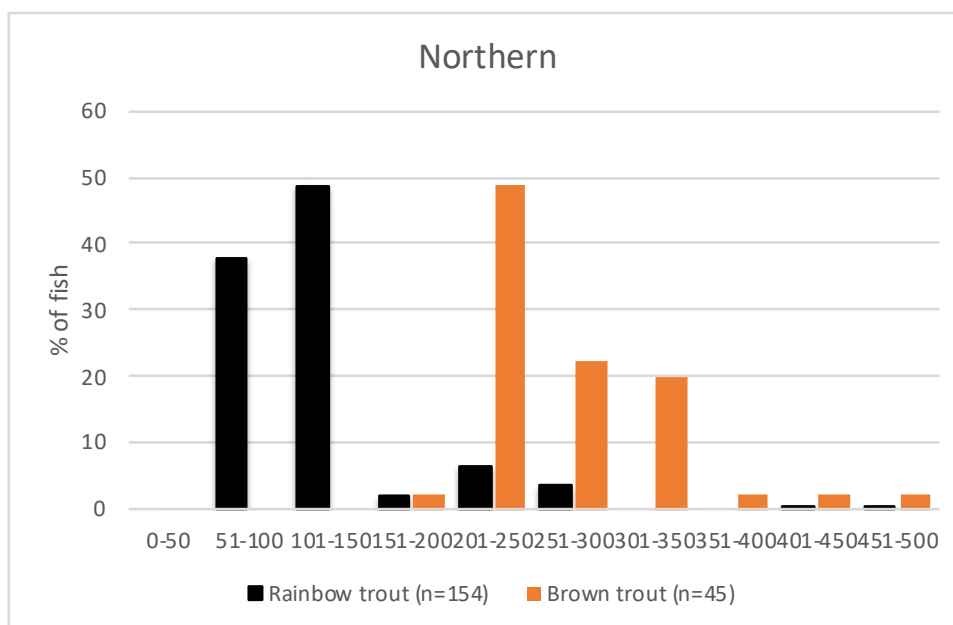
### Report Card

	RAINBOW	BROWN
ABUNDANCE	D	D
RECENT RECRUITMENT	B	B
MATURE FISH	F	C
MULTIPLE CLASS SIZES	D	C
DISTRIBUTION	C	B
OVERALL RATING	Poor/Moderate	

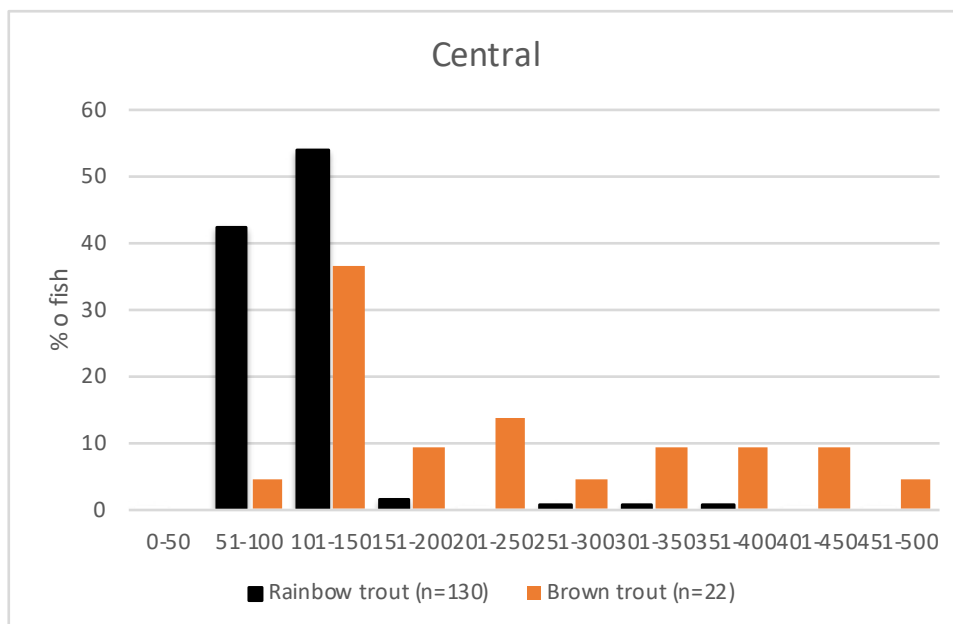


# Population size structure

**Northern:** The size structure for the trout fisheries in the Northern region varied between rainbow and brown trout. Rainbow trout displayed a high abundance of smaller fish but few fish in the middle and larger size classes. Brown trout had a high abundance of mid to larger sized fish but no smaller fish recorded. The lack of smaller fish was in part due to little or no stocking of brown trout in the Northern region in 2018/2019. Strong survival of smaller rainbow trout and successful stocking of brown trout in 2019/2020 would see improved opportunities for angling in this region over the next 2 years.

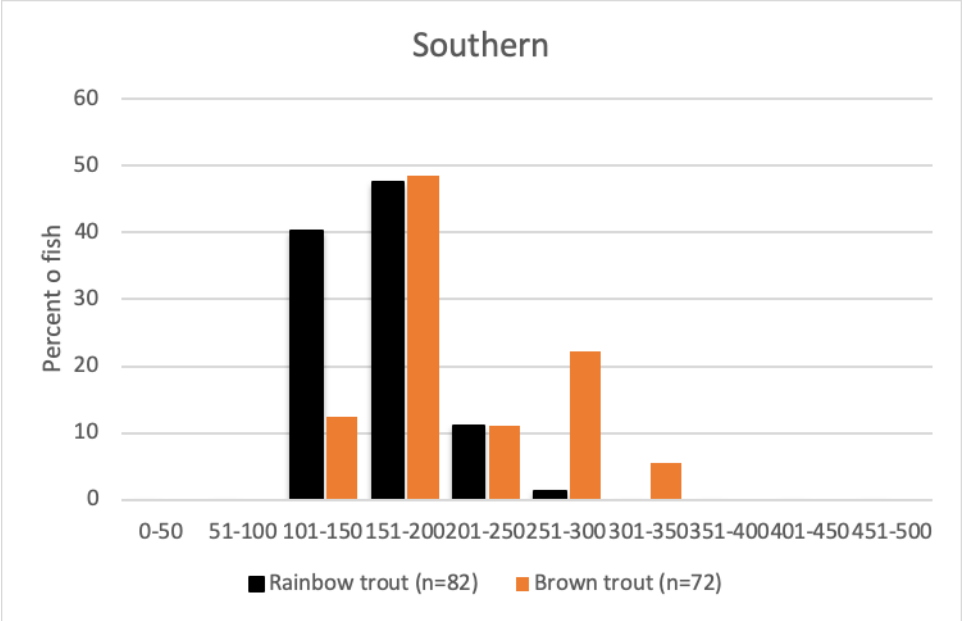


**Central:** The brown trout fishery in the Central region contained a variety of fish sizes and evidence of recent spawning/ successful stocking with a high percentage of fish below 15cm. Brown trout were also present in larger size categories, therefore providing good angling opportunity in the region. Rainbow trout also displayed evidence of successful stocking/ recruitment with a high percentage of fish <10cm. However, there are few larger rainbow trout in the fishery and improved survival is required to increase angling opportunities for rainbow trout in the region.





**Southern:** Resident rainbow and brown trout were confined to small-middle size categories in the Southern region. As sampling occurred late in the season this may account for few fish less than 10cm. However, the low numbers of large resident fish will hopefully improve with more favourable environmental conditions in 2019/2020. Optimising stocking practices and survival might also be required to improve angling opportunities for resident rainbow and brown trout in the region. Spawn run and tailrace fisheries will likely provide the best opportunities for larger trout in the Southern region.





# NSW Trout Fisheries Annual Report Cards

If you wish to provide feedback or have further questions about the Trout Strategy please email: **[fishstocking@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:fishstocking@dpi.nsw.gov.au)**



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Primary Industries



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