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Murray on world endangered list

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THE Murray-Darling River Basin is one of the world's top 10 rivers at risk of dying, a new WWF report says.

The report, released ahead of World Water Day on March 22, outlines the major rivers in the world, which already suffer from threats such as the over-extraction of water, pollution or the construction of dams.

The Murray-Darling basin – the only Australian river system on the list – was included because of the large amount of invasive species living in the river.

Carp was the worst introduced species and it has since destroyed the habitat for native fish.

The lock and weir system also prevented native fish from migrating through the river.

Irrigation, which uses 95 per cent of the water diverted from the river, was also a major offender, as it took water away from the ecology.

WWF Living Waters program director Jaime Pittock said the organisation wanted business and government leaders to take notice of the emergency facing freshwater supplies.

"All the rivers in the report symbolise the freshwater crisis, signalled for years, but the alarm is falling on deaf ears," he said.

"Conservation of rivers and wetlands must be seen as part and parcel of national security, health and economic success. Emphasis must be given to exploring ways of using water for crops and products that do not use more water than necessary."

The report found native fish populations in the Murray-Darling were now 10 per cent of their pre-European levels.

Two of the 35 fish species in the basin are critically endangered, nine have been declared as threatened nationally and 16 on a state level.

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1. This story focuses on the losses and threats for native fish species. These factors include introduced species, heavy irrigation, and lock and weir systems.
2. The habitat for native fish is being destroyed, threatening the future of many fish species.
3. The main human players seem to be the farmers irrigating too heavily in dry conditions. Non-human players seem to be carp and other introduced species taking over.
4. The socioeconomic issues in this story seem to be that farms need this water to ensure adequate crop. Also, this basin is the strongest agricultural area in Australia.
5. This article seems fairly unbiased, more concern with the endangered fish if any. Carp was frowned upon.
6. A fish ecologist would be able to explain preferred habitats by these native fish species and find how competition can be lessened.
7. I believe the first goal would be to place a limit on the amount of water used for irrigation and find the adequate amount of water needed for the fish to persevere. Also, I'd want to look at better ways to allow fish through lock and weir systems. I would also take samples to make sure excess nutrients are not building up between the ^{lock &}weirs.