MEDIA RELEASE
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Fish Fightback: 14 New Reefs for Noosa!

A network of oyster reefs has been created in the Noosa River system as part of the 'Bring Back the Fish' project - an important step towards remediating the system and its marine stocks to its once abundant past.

After a century of decline, re-establishment of the reefs marks an historic turning point in Noosa's regard for the system's past rich diversity and the values this natural wealth delivered.

"Today is only possible because of an unprecedented partnership - of 'big ideas' generated by the Noosa community and the modern science of fish ecology - enabling this important step to be taken," said Noosa mayor Tony Wellington.

The reefs were conceived by the Noosa Parks Association (NPA) and the Thomas Foundation (TTF), following an expert workshop convened by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), who had initiated similar projects in the USA. Construction of the reefs is funded by the Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation (NBRF), the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), NPA and TTF.

The project was further motivated by landmark research by Dr Ruth Thurstan, then of University of Queensland, which found fish catches had declined and oysters were functionally extinct.

"We're committed to bring back opportunities for locals to catch or buy a wide range of delicious seafood - part of Noosa's way of life not so long ago," said NPA spokesperson Bryan Walsh.

"TTF initiated similar projects with TNC in Victoria, South and Western Australia – projects embraced by their local State governments, communities, corporates and philanthropists. We hope the reefs gain similar support as Noosa broadens its conservation action to its waterways," TTF Director Rowland Hill said.

"Today is a great day for Noosa – a major milestone towards a 3-to-1 return on community ideas and funds," said Clare Cartwright, Deputy Chair of the NBRF.

"The reefs are a world-leading restoration application by using the latest in landscape and fish ecology to achieve the best biodiversity pay-off locations," said USC's Dr Ben Gilby.

"The reefs are the missing piece in Noosa's jigsaw of fish habitats – we have mangroves, sandflats, seagrass, deeper channel and, crucially, improved water quality," said Dr Gilby.

"We have submerged a unique design in 135 hessian 'sausages' with thousands of recycled oyster shells kindly donated by Kooringal Oysters and Mooloolah River Fisheries," Dr Gilby said.

"The new reefs are designed to provide fish with complex and diverse habitats – benefiting fish stocks in Noosa for years to come," Ms Cartwright said.

The partners wish to thank Noosa Shire Council, TNC and Ecological Service Professionals for their support in reaching today's exciting milestone.

Images available upon request (see next page)

Image caption: University of the Sunshine Coast researchers install oyster reefs in the Noosa River.

About Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation

The Noosa Shire as a region is distinct from other, more developed urban areas on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland and elsewhere in Australia, and has achieved global recognition for the high values of its natural environment. In 2007, this exceptionalism was internationally recognised with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) consenting to the designation of our Shire as the Noosa Biosphere Reserve under its Man and the Biosphere program (MaB). The Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation is entrusted by UNESCO and Noosa Council to protect our global status as a biosphere reserve. www.noosabiosphere.org.au.