

TROUT REMOVAL IN PIG ROOT & SIBERIA CREEKS

Project Update August 25

The Taieri Flathead Galaxias (Tfhg) fish is a small non-migratory native fish that is confined to small streams in catchments in Otago, including locally the Waikouaiti and Waihemo/Shag river catchments.

The Tfhg has a threat status of Nationally Vulnerable (Dunn 2017), which is the third highest ranking given to species facing extinction. The biggest greatest threat to the Tfhg is from brown trout.

The EOCG is working with the Otago Regional Council (ORC) Science team and local landowners on a Tfhg enhancement program and we have recently completed Year 2 work. The aim of the program is to eradicate Trout from Pig Root and Siberia Creeks which will in turn enhance the habitat for the Tfhg.

An earlier feasibility study of the 2 creeks found that that brown trout populations were high and self-sustaining. Concluding that without trout removal this population would follow the same pathway as many other non-migratory galaxiid populations within Otago and become locally extinct.

The EOCG has received funding from the ORC Ecofund for a 3 year program (\$7000 each year) to remove the brown trout in Pig Root and Siberia Creek, with the balance of funds to be paid by the ORC. We have recently completed Year Two.

Year One removal commenced in January 2024 and resulted in 2698 trout being removed from these two creeks. A really successful start to this work!

Year Two work began in Pig Root Creek in Dec 24 and after 14 visits 180 trout removed. Great to note that all 180 were less than 95mm in length which indicates that no spawning occurred.

Year Two work in Siberia Creek began in Jan 25. In the upper reaches of Siberia Creek the trout numbers were still abundant and 611 were removed, this is because no electric fishing had occurred in Year One of the program. However in the lower reaches where trout were removed in year one only 34 were found.

As well as the trout removal the ORC Science team are monitoring the Tfhg population across the 2 creeks which is showing promising results. In Year One prior to the Tfhg enhancement program starting 107 Tfhg were found across both creeks and in Year Two the number has increased to 358.

The operators will be back in 2025/2026 to continue the work to remove brown trout. As well as this the natural barrier/waterfall under SH85 will be assessed and potentially modifications made to prevent further access upstream into Pig Root and Siberia Creeks for trout.

We would like to thank the landowners Dave & Judy Andrew and Tony & Julie Kearney for their ongoing support with this project.

If you have any questions about this work or want to know more, please don't hesitate to contact the EOCG co-ordinator **Steph Scott** on 0274 387 875.

Year One

**2698 brown trout
removed**

**107 Taieri flathead
galaxiid recorded**

Year Two

**825 brown trout
removed**

**358 Taieri flathead
galaxiid recorded**