

Full stream ahead for baffled fish

By ELLEN WHINNETT
Chief Reporter

TASMANIA'S native fish are getting a helping hand, thanks to an invention that makes it easier for them to swim upstream through pipes and culverts.

Designed by Hobart consultancy firm Freshwater Systems, the Biobaffle creates eddies and backwaters, making it easier for fish to travel upstream.

Biobaffle developer Peter Davies said culverts were significant barriers for fish, as water often travelled through them so fast the fish were unable to make it upstream.

"Our native freshwater fish have lost much of their river habitats due to the presence of man-made barriers," he said.

"These fish need to move up and down the lengths of rivers and streams in order to reproduce.

"These migrations are necessary for their survival. Put a barrier across a stream and populations die out."

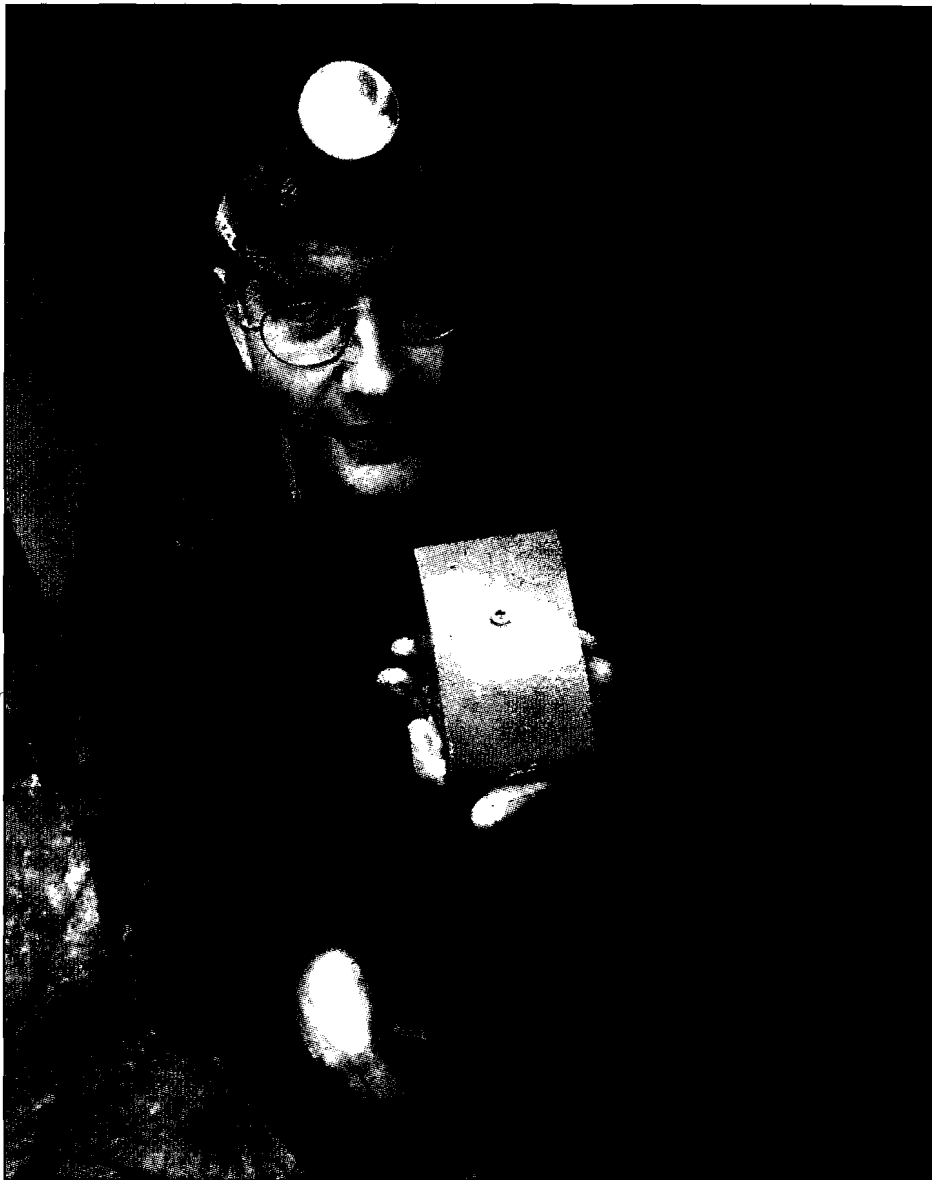
Dr Davies, a biologist, said the Biobaffle was a small, curved structure that could be added to the base of a culvert and create an eddy, slowing water flow and creating places for fish to rest.

The baffles can also be built into culverts during construction.

Dr Davies yesterday demonstrated the baffles to 30 road engineers at a test site in the Picton Valley near the Tahune AirWalk. He said he was hopeful the baffles might be used on a larger scale.

"The environmental aspects of the design and maintenance of roads, both generally and in forestry management, are becoming increasingly important," he said.

"The issue of fish migration is a major aspect of this, as well as in native fish conservation."



EDDY, SET, GO: Peter Davies with a Biobaffle. Picture: RAOUL KOCHANOWSKI