

Small Changes Can Have a Big Impact

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4 March 2011

The death of thousands of juvenile barracouta in the Derwent River in Tasmania is a timely reminder that life in our waterways exists in fine balance. As one of Tasmania's top fishing spots, initial concern was that the deaths were linked to a chemical discharge or another form of waste-based pollution.

However, where a single species is affected, rather than a range of fauna, a change in the environmental conditions may well be the reason. While many focus on removing pollutants and chemicals from their discharge water, it is equally important that other water quality parameters are not too different to those in the receiving environment. Slight changes in conditions, such as temperature, light, or salinity, as suspected in the case of the Derwent River, can be all it takes.

How do you reduce the risk?

By understanding the receiving environment, through the collection of physical, chemical and biological baseline data, companies can work to ensure the water quality parameters of their discharge water are compatible with the waterway it is entering. When monitoring biological indicators, the more sensitive species present, such as barracouta, can be used to assess waterway health.

It is vital, and in many industries mandatory, to undertake monitoring assessing the level of impact on the natural environment. Small adjustments made to the quality of discharge water can be the difference between life and death for the sensitive aquatic species.

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