

World was once their oyster

WITH plans proceeding to try to revive oyster reefs in the Noosa River to help marine diversity rather than for commercial gain, a report to Noosa Council tells how the once-thriving shellfish industry went into decline in the 1930s.

Noosa's oyster sellers suffered from the general depression and never recovered despite the attempt of one 1960s venture in Lake Weyba.

An historical study of fishing activities, in 1960, said an oyster grower "transported approximately 400 sacks of culture from Weyba Lake to Weyba Creek, where it has been laid out in 650 trays".

"Discussions with a local resident who remembers the fisherman in question stated that this established bed was unsuccessful, (although clearly large quantities of oysters existed in Weyba Lake)," the study said.

"It is unclear why the Noosa oyster fishery ceased to exist, possible reasons could include: over exploitation, disease, removal of suitable substrate and/or declining water quality."

One source suggested the Lake Weyba failure was due to exploitation and a loss of substrate as the oysters and their



ROLL UP: An old trolley at the Noosa River that once was used to unload the large hauls.

PHOTOS: CONTRIBUTED



Fish by the boatload in Noosa's days of plenty.

shells were removed from the system, which young oysters require to settle successfully.

Recent assessments by The Nature Conservancy showed that "oysters recruited in moderate numbers at nearly all sites

where settlement tiles were deployed".

"Although conditions in the river are likely different to a century ago, this study indicates that oyster restoration in the Noosa River may be feasible," the study said.