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MURRAY FUTURE

Lower Lakes & Coorong Recovery

Community update

February 2011

This email newsletter is published by the [Department of Environment and Natural Resources](#) (DENR) to update the community about work being done to secure the future of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth region as a healthy, productive and resilient wetland of international importance.

Highlights

- Hazards in lakes
- Latest water quality results for Lower Lakes
- Coorong update
- Listening to Ngarrindjeri speaking
- Friends of Meningie

Keeping people and wildlife safe

Hazards in the lakes

Submerged fence posts, star droppers and other obstacles placed on previously exposed lakebeds are causing hazards for wildlife, boats and other lake users.

DENR has been working closely with Transport Safety Compliance Officers to identify the highest risk hazards which will be marked with a buoy until they can be removed.

Land owners are urged to make sure any items that are partially or fully covered by water are removed for the safety of everyone using the lakes – this is the legal responsibility of landowners and lessees.



DENR staff will be speaking with landholders and Crown Land lessees to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities to remove the obstacles. Any hazards that can not be removed should be marked with a buoy. This is an interim measure, however, and does not remove the ultimate responsibility and public liability from the person placing the object in the lake.

DENR staff are working with key community members to investigate ways to address difficult to remove obstacles.

Maps showing the location of known hazards are available in the Lakes Hubs at:

- Shop 2, 10 Daranda Tce, Milang
- 79 Princes Highway, Meningie

Online maps showing [structures](#) and [other hazards](#) that could be submerged are also available on the [Water Matters](#) and [Department for Transport](#) websites.

For further information, contact Gemma Cunningham, Lower Lakes and Coorong Recovery Community Engagement Officer, via [email](#), or on 8204 9453.

Temporary closure of cockle fishing

A temporary closure is currently in place for recreational Pipi (Goolwa cockle) fishing on Goolwa Beach. This is due to concerns over high E. coli levels in the waters and local Pipi stocks.

The closure is in place until 4 March 2011 pending further testing.

Visit the [PIRSA website](#) for more information.



Native plants and animals

Restoring habitat at Meningie

The first stage of work to restore habitat along Meningie's lakefront has begun in Lions Park.

It includes weed control, tree removal and pruning, vegetation planting, and naturalising the concrete drain in the culvert area with rocks.

An interpretive trail featuring a textured path, seating, signage and viewing platforms is also planned for the lakefront.



The project is being implemented in stages, depending on water levels. Some of the proposed elements of the project, including bank stabilisation and lakebed plantings, can only take place when water levels are lower.

For more information, contact Meningie Lakes Hub via [email](#) or call 8575 1830.

Congolli success

Action to save the Congolli from extinction in the region has been a great success, with potentially [hundreds of thousands of baby fish](#) spawned this season.

The species had not been able to breed for four years because record low water levels had left the Lower Lakes and the Coorong disconnected and the males and females separated.

Female Congolli need to migrate from the lakes and Goolwa Channel into the Coorong to breed, so a plan to use the boat lock in the Goolwa Barrage as a temporary fish passage for the Congolli was developed.



Photo: Congolli, courtesy of Mike Hammer

Thanks to the collaborative effort to save the species, juvenile Congolli have been monitored upstream as far as Currency Creek and the Finniss River, and throughout the broader lakes system.

DENR, SARDI, SA Water the Department for Water and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority worked closely together to research the Congolli breeding cycle and develop the successful plan.

Protecting vegetation from livestock

Thank you to everyone who took part in last years fencing program. Native plants are now naturally regenerating in the fenced off areas, providing habitat and food for a range of birds, fish and other animals.

The fencing now protects about 130 kilometers of Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert shoreline. It was put in place to keep stock off the lakebed, allow reeds and rushes to grow to bind soil, reduce erosion and prevent pollutants (particularly from livestock) from entering the lakes.



Landholders are reminded to make sure their livestock remain off the lakes so the vegetation can continue to provide habitat, and also reduce the risk of acid events due to changing water levels.

The EPA will be enforcing the Environmental Protection Act that states no animal waste can be deposited in, or be likely to enter, the lakes.

This initiative is part of the \$10 million Bioremediation and Revegetation Project.

Monitoring and research

Soil and water research

The Coorong and Lower Lakes Recovery team is continuing its acid sulfate soil research program, with Southern Cross University heading into the region again in February.

This project will determine how effective the vegetation program and natural plant growth have been in mitigating the risk of, and helping the environment recover from, acidification.

Early results are indicating that the vegetation program is adding carbon to the soil, resulting in higher soil pH.



There are plans for carrying out further research to:

- examine how effective different limestone dosing techniques are
- using computer modelling to predict acidification risk and learn how acidity moves from sediments into water under different rainfall and water levels.

Monitoring soils

The sixth round of the community acid sulfate soil monitoring was completed in January.

The quarterly monitoring program has made a great contribution to the knowledge of acid sulfate soils in the region and identification of potential acid sulfate soils hotspots.

Another round of soil monitoring will be completed in February by CSIRO, on behalf of DENR, with 57 sites to be revisited in the Lower Lakes and tributaries. CSIRO describes changes in the soils and takes samples for laboratory analyses.



Photo: example of acid sulfate soil

The results of this project are increasing our knowledge of how acid sulfate soils change under improved water levels.

Latest water quality results for Lower Lakes

In mid-February, the average water level in Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert was 0.7 metres above sea level.

The latest reports on water quality monitoring and River Murray water resources are now available.

- [River Murray Update – 15 February 2011](#) (PDF 185 KB)
- [EPA water quality monitoring](#)

The average salinity in Lake Alexandrina was 560 EC and the average salinity in Lake Albert was 6 610 EC¹. Sea water is approximately 60 000 EC units.

Water quality monitoring

The EPA have completed the latest round of fortnightly water quality monitoring, which shows salinity in Lake Alexandrina is continuing to fall. However, salinity in the Narrung Narrows is variable.

More frequent monitoring is continuing at sites with a high risk of water acidification, or where acidification hot spots have occurred.

Look out for staff from the EPA monitoring water quality in the Lower Lakes and tributaries. They are out nearly every day of the week on foot, in boats or even on kayaks!

Low levels of acidity have been detected in Hunters and Boggy Creeks on Hindmarsh Island and in Mundoo Channel since late December 2010. This is due to re-wet acid sulfate soils. Frequent monitoring will continue, to determine whether action is needed to protect water quality.



Managing salinity

Coorong update

Very high River Murray flows through the barrages have reduced salinity in the Coorong.

Now that conditions have improved, the most efficient and cost-effective ways of helping the Coorong's environment are being reviewed.

Three actions to manage salinity in the Coorong are included in the long-term plan for the region. They are:

- pumping hyper-saline water out of the Southern Lagoon
- redirecting flows from the South-East and returning them to the Coorong
- keeping the Murray Mouth open.

Dredging the Murray Mouth is currently not required as enough water is flowing through to keep it open naturally.

We are assessing the likely impact of current barrage flows on future salinity in the Coorong and reviewing our management actions accordingly.



¹ River Murray Update, 15 February 2011

Ngarrindjeri involvement

Listening to Ngarrindjeri Speaking

The Coorong and Lower Lakes Recovery team works closely with the Ngarrindjeri to make sure their traditions and cultural beliefs are considered before projects are carried out in the region.

To consolidate and formalise the partnership, the SA Government and the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority entered the Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan (listening to Ngarrindjeri people speaking) Agreement.

The Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority represents a range of Ngarrindjeri community organisations and aims to improve economic and development opportunities for the Ngarrindjeri people.

The Coorong and Lower Lakes Recovery team has a lead role on behalf of the South Australian Government to implement the agreement, which commits the state to, amongst other things:

- supporting Ngarrindjeri participation in natural and cultural resource management
- seek appropriate ways of integrating Ngarrindjeri cultural values into planning and management activities.

KNYA Taskforce

A taskforce was formed to make sure the Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement is followed. It includes representatives from the NRA and South Australian Government agencies that work in the Coorong and Lower Lakes region.

The Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Taskforce held a planning workshop on 24 February to review the work they have done since they formed in 2009, consider ways to improve the way they do business and plan for 2011.

Dermot Smyth who worked with the Ngarrindjeri in developing the [Ngarrindjeri Nation Sea Country \(Yarluwar-Ruwe\) Plan](#) facilitated the planning workshop.

If you have any questions about the Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement or the planning workshop, contact Lachlan Sutherland, CLLMM Program Aboriginal Policy and Programs Coordinator, via [email](#) or call 8204 1138.

Get involved

Join us at the Goolwa Wooden Boat Festival!

Join the Lower Lakes and Coorong Recovery team at the Wooden Boat Festival in Goolwa Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 February.

Visit our stand between 9 am and 5 pm to find out more about plans to secure a sustainable healthy future for the region.

Staff will be on hand to answer questions and provide information on work underway to tackle environmental issues such as salinity and acid sulfate soils.



Working together to make sure culturally important sites are considered in our projects



Friends of Meningie

The first meeting of the Friends of Meningie is taking place on Friday, 25 February.

Come to the Meningie Lakes Hub at 6 pm to find out how you can get involved in environmental projects supported and managed by the group.

The Friends Group will work closely with the Coorong and Lower Lakes Recovery team to restore habitat along the town's lakefront, carry out environmental monitoring and lead other local projects.

The meeting will begin with a barbeque dinner, followed by presentations on what would be involved in joining the Friends of Meningie.

For more information contact Meningie Lakes Hub via [email](#) or call 8575 1830.



World Wetlands Family Fun Day success!

Coorong and Lower Lakes Recovery's World Wetlands family fun day was a huge success – despite the 40 degree temperatures at Goolwa on the day.

About 200 people attended the event - mostly in the cool of the morning.

There was a range of fun activities for all ages, which helped raise awareness about our precious wetlands, particularly the Lower Lakes and Coorong.

A highlight of the day was the Ngarrindjeri crafts, where people learnt how to weave using local reeds, and make traditional feather flowers. The Animals Anonymous snakes and birds were also a huge hit, with children and adults alike.

Thank you to all the organisations and everyone who helped make this such a fantastic event! Special thanks to the South Coast SES Unit who provided sandbags for the day, and the Lions Club of Goolwa, who supplied a barbeque for everyone who attended.



Celebrating World Wetlands Day with the Lakes Hubs

Hundreds of local people joined the Lakes Hubs in a range of activities celebrating World Wetlands Day on 2 February 2011.

The day included:

- canoe trips, wetland tours, cultural information sessions and frog surveys on Hindmarsh Island
- a wetland cultural bus tour, starting with breakfast with the birds in Milang and Meningie, followed by information at Narrung wetlands, presentations from the Ngarrindjeri community at Raukkan, learning about fishways at Tauwitchere barrage, ending with afternoon tea at the historic Campbell House.
- Visits from Red the red-tailed black cockatoo at the breakfasts and Raukkan school.



The day was a great success with over 70 people taking part in the bus tour.

The joint effort between DENR, Murray-Darling Basin Authority Natural Resource Management Board, Goolwa to Wellington Local Action Planning Association, Coorong/Tatiara Local Action Planning Association, Milang and District Community Association, Meningie and District Hospital, Lakes Hub and community volunteers ensured this special wetland was recognised for its importance on World Wetlands Day.

Free workshop – Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

Conservation Volunteers Australia and Toyota are holding a free community group workshop in Murray Bridge on Thursday, 24 February.

It includes an organisation self review and explores volunteers' needs and motivation to be part of your organisation. You will learn a range of ways to get more people involved in your community organisations and activities.

What: Volunteer Recruitment and Retention community workshop
When: 24 February 2011, 9:15am – 12:30pm
Where: Murray Bridge Toyota Boardroom, 169 Adelaide Road
How: Register [online](#), or email training@conservationvolunteers.com.au

For more information visit the [Conservation Volunteers Australia website](#).

More information

Funding

Developing and implementing the long-term plan is part of the South Australian Government's \$610 million [Murray Futures](#) program, funded by the Australian Government's [Water for the Future](#) program and the South Australian Government.

The \$10 million [Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project](#) is funded by the Australian Government and supported by the [South Australian Department of Environment and Natural Resources](#). The [Lakes Hubs](#) have been funded through the \$220 000 grant made to the Milang and Districts Community Association as part of the Bioremediation and Revegetation Project.

Partners

DENR acknowledges that many projects in the region are delivered in partnership with other organisations. We will do our best to acknowledge our partners in this publication.

Find out more

For more information about Murray Futures, visit www.murrayfutures.sa.gov.au.

To find out about the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' work in the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth region visit www.environment.sa.gov.au/cllmm or contact us at:

Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Projects Team
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Email: cllmm@deh.sa.gov.au
Phone: 8204 1910
Post: Reply Paid 1047 ADELAIDE SA 5001

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Your details may be disclosed to partner agencies such as the Department for Water and Murray Futures for the sole purpose of providing further information on related projects in the region.

Apologies for cross postings.