



Community Advisory Panel

Meeting #4 – 20/09/2012

The Wine Centre, Langhorne Creek

Communiqué

Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder - Simon Banks, CEWH:

The CEWH was established under the Commonwealth *Water Act 2007*, and is responsible for managing the Commonwealth's environmental water holdings. It has \$1.8 billion in assets, and aims for maximum efficiency and to get the best environmental outcomes.

Last year, the Murray-Darling Basin used 53% of the allocated environmental water. 328 GL was delivered to South Australia during 2011/12. Water availability for 2012/13 is 1030 GL in the southern connected basin. The CEWH welcomes feedback and interaction with the CAP and other stakeholder groups.

Coorong salinity regimes & barrage operating strategies - Gary Hera-Singh:

Gary emphasised the need to look at the levels of degradation in the Coorong during the past 70 to 80 years, and address why this degradation is happening. The recommended Coorong upper level for salinity for the South Lagoon is 120g/l (138,000EC's) – Gary does not agree with this. He believes the upper limit is too high, and if another drought hits, the system has no buffer. The South Lagoon should be the barometer of the health of the whole Coorong.

Previously, the barrage opening would start at Tauwitchere, and then move on down the barrages towards Goolwa. Now all staff and operations are based at Goolwa and the water is generally released from there and much less than historically from Tauwitchere. Salinities at the bottom of the water column are much higher than the surface in the south lagoon, and not mixing. Fish don't breed or grow in high salinities. ie. >75,000EC's

Gary supported four of the steps in the 5-point plan for Lake Albert & the Coorong – removing the remainder of the bund, removal of the silt build up, and dredging the Narrows. He is a strong advocate for increasing flows from the South East of the state through Salt Creek into the Coorong. Gary believes that cycling of the lake levels is futile with the current

restrictions impeding flow through the Narrows. Reed beds in the Narrung Narrows are choking the system, and there needs to be the restoration of stronger flows into and out of Lake Albert. Addressing the siltation issues, a restrictive causeway and removing the phragmites needs serious consideration.

Barrage management – Chris Bagley:

Concerns were raised by Mike South about back flow events causing a sudden spike in salinity in the Goolwa/Clayton area. Chris expressed concern over fishers picking up fish with filmy growth over their eyes, presumably caused by salinity, and that many people feel divorced from a perspective of barrage management. The Community should be involved in some of the decisions to be made, possibly through the barrage steering committee. The barrages should not only be managed to operate the lakes, but to maximise the benefits for the Coorong.

Allepo pine removal – Trevor Harden:

Trevor supported the weed control and revegetation works the CLLMM Program is implementing in the region, but argued that Allepo pines have environmental benefits too. He was appalled that the large pines were removed in the Clayton public amenity. Trevor observed that the Clayton Aleppo pines were not showing any signs of infestation in that area, and that there was no consideration given to the social aspect of the trees. While Trevor said there are two views in the community, some want the trees removed, and others don't, he thinks that it is important that all of the relevant information is available to the public before decisions are made by the Government. Hafiz Stewart, the CLLMM Program's Coorong and Lower Lakes Restoration Manager, will discuss the Aleppo Pines issues with CAP members at a future meeting.

Naming of the CLLMM Program plantings – Anne Hartnett:

There are five different NatureLinks programs in SA, and the CLLMM Program vegetation work is at the heart of one of those corridors. However, the large-scale CLLMM planting hasn't been incorporated into the NatureLinks plan. The CLLMM planting needs an inspirational name given its prominence and connectivity. This also provides an opportunity to increase community links, enabling and enhancing networks across the region. The CLLMM revegetation site could potentially be the start of a much larger change around the lakes.

Anne suggested a school naming competition, with the Lakes Hubs involved, to come up with an inspirational name, which would help to educate and connect the community to the project. Currently there's no sense of being part of something bigger. Naming the site gives it landscape scale status. The CLLMM Program will work with Anne on this issue.

Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority (NRA) – Grant Rigney, NRA:

The NRA continues to meet monthly with the CLLMM Program through the KNYA Taskforce meetings, which has been in operation for 3-and-a-half years. The NRA is working to improve cohesiveness with the CLLMM vegetation programs, and with monitoring and research involvement. The NRA is also working with various groups across Australia and overseas on the issue of cultural waters. Indigenous people have a *priori* customary right to water for cultural purposes.

The NRA has recently employed a new Chief Operating Officer, is in the process of recruiting 3 new cultural rangers to operate in Coorong National Park in partnership with DEWNR, and other officers to undertake wetland planning. The Harvard University has picked Ngarrindjeri as one of the best governance structures in the world. The NRA consider their agreement making model of engagement and partnership should be promoted across the state.

CLLMM Director's update – Janice Goodwins, CLLMM Program, DEWNR:

Consultation will be undertaken on the new alignment for the proposed SE Flows Restoration Project. The decision point for this project may be pushed out to November. Salinities in the Coorong South Lagoon continue to be monitored, in the context of the proposed South Lagoon Pumping Project.

Update provided (to 20/9/12) on the work to remove the final remains of the Clayton regulator and the Narrung bund. Plans to remove the Currency Creek regulator remain 'work in progress'. New staff will begin soon in the CLLMM Program, including five in the revegetation project.

MDB Plan update – Jason Higham, CLLMM Program, DEWNR:

Update provided on the continuing negotiations about the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, including the latest 3,200 GL modelling from the MDBA. More water results in better outcomes.

Community Resilience Project – Russell Seaman, CLLMM Program, DEWNR:

The CLLMM Program is currently scoping a community resilience project, which will look at the best benefits for the community, not just the biodiversity. There is a Long-Term Plan commitment to build resilience into the CLLMM community – how do we ensure that the Program truly reflects this during the next few years? How do we define the community, its capacity, and its relationship with the environment? What kind of legacy will the CLLMM program leave? How should the community be charged and championed to make decisions after the CLLMM Program? All of these questions and a range of others will be considered as part of this proposed project. A small CAP working group will be established to flesh out this project, and it will be put on the KNYA agenda.

River operations update – Richard Brown, DEWNR:

Inflows to the Murray-Darling Basin this year are tracking close to a median/wet water availability scenario, with all storages almost full. Flows have been managed at 44-45 GL/d across the SA border for the past few weeks. The Bureau of Meteorology has indicated the likelihood of getting a significant rainfall event is moderate to low in the coming months. Flows will taper to 25-30 GL/d in the near future.

The Living Murray update – Adrienne Frears, DEWNR:

Adrienne was joined by Heather Hill, Principal Policy Officer, from DEWNR's e-Water Policy Team. The MDBA is currently reviewing funding for joint programs such as TLM, in line with recent funding reductions.

250 GL of TLM e-water has been allocated to the CLLMM region during summer to manage Coorong salinities and allow for barrage flows to continue. The TLM and e-water policy teams are currently looking at strategies and modelling for CEWH e-water, at what time of the year, and how much water is needed. A Scientific Advisory Group provides input into how lake levels and barrage releases are managed – the CAP could link into this and provide similar input. CAP members supported the idea of having a World Wetlands Day community event in the CLLMM region, in association with the Lakes Hubs.

SE Flows Restoration Project – Scott Donner, DEWNR:

More water (60-90 GL per year) from the SE will help to decrease ongoing salinity issues in the Coorong South Lagoon. 100 GL of water per year goes out to sea since the diversions. To deliver the water there is a lot to do, and there is a need to deliver environmental outcomes along the way. No huge infrastructure for the proposed project is required. Concerns have been expressed about eutrophication of the Coorong and high alkalinity levels. Approvals for the project would be expected in late 2013, with construction until early 2015. The Business Case for the project will be delivered to the Commonwealth in the next few months.

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