

Coorong Partnership

Communique No. 19

6 October 2022



The nineteenth meeting of the [Coorong Partnership](#) was held on 6 October 2022 at Coorong District Council, Tailm Bend.

The [National Parks and Wildlife Service](#) (NPWS) provided an update on the draft Coorong Visitor Experience Plan. The aim of the Plan is to articulate the vision for sustainable visitor experiences in the Coorong. The Plan considers consultation feedback from over 800 contributions from the community and stakeholders, and importantly Ngarrindjeri representatives. The three main themes borne out of the engagement were; creation of new or improved tourism opportunities; curation of experiences that allow visitors to connect with First Nations people and culture; and high-quality visitor experiences and infrastructure. The Plan is currently with Council partners and Ngarrindjeri partners for review. It is expected to be publicly released by the end of 2022.

With Phase 1 of the [Healthy Coorong. Healthy Basin](#) (HCHB) program complete, the Partnership was provided with an overview of the future HCHB Program. The Program is currently funded until 30 June 2023 with an additional 2-2.5 years subject to funding approval. The Commonwealth is undertaking a due diligence assessment of Phase 2. As the Program transitions from Phase 1 to Phase 2 over 2022/23, this transition period (Phase 1B), will see continued planning for the possible implementation of large-scale infrastructure; continue community and First Nations partnerships; and further science integration, restoration and monitoring activities (SIRM). Planning works for regional bird habitat on-ground works (OGW) is progressing, with works at Teringie Wetland likely to be the first to begin.

The [Coorong Infrastructure Investigations Feasibility and Future Directions](#) document was released in September 2022 and summarises the journey to feasibility assessment for the Coorong Infrastructure Investigations Project (CIIP). This document outlines which concepts will be progressed through to the next stage of further investigations, design and approvals. The [Coorong Restoration Roadmap](#) document, which builds on the [Desired State of the Coorong](#) paper and the [Coorong Infrastructure Investigations Feasibility and Future Directions](#) document, is currently with the Commonwealth for review and approval. It is expected to be publicly released by the end of 2022. The draft Ramsar Management Plan is also with the Commonwealth for review.

The Partnership heard from Principal Scientists from the [Healthy Coorong. Healthy Basin](#) program who presented key outcomes from the Scientific Trials & Investigations (T&I) project including the Coorong Dynamics Model (CDM) and ecological investigations. Phase 1B will focus on refining the CDM, model validation, and application of infrastructure scenarios. SIRM activities will focus on synthesising technical investigation results, integrating new datasets to the Desired State of the Coorong, and using this information to inform Phase 2.

The Partnership noted that the Coorong is a dynamic environment and enquired as to how sediment sampling reflected seasonal changes. The Partnership also queried how expected upstream high flows in 2022/23 would impact nutrient levels in the Southern Lagoon. The current indication is that nutrient levels will stay the same or potentially increase. It was noted that the latest T&I reports are available via [DEW](#) and the [Goyder Institute](#).

The HCHB Program provided a summary of the First Nations Partnerships. Phase 1 of the program was focussed on forming partnerships and understanding the key interests of each group. The HCHB Aboriginal Partnership Officers acknowledged the significant contributions that Ngarrindjeri and the First Nations of the South East (FNSE) have made to the Program to date. Phase 1B will focus on maintaining these strong relationships, and the co-design and development of CIIP and OGW into future phases.

The [Limestone Coast Landscape Board](#) provided an update on the [Our Coorong | Our Coast](#) project, which aims to restore and protect the habitat of beach nesting and migratory shorebirds throughout the Coorong and Limestone Coast. Significant revegetation has taken place on Cattle Island, and weed control conducted at Snipe, Seagull and Wild Dog Islands. Educational activities with schools in the region have continued, with a focus on spreading awareness of migratory shorebirds. Feral animal control continues at Coorong National Park with deer and fox programs across September and October. Promotional events with Birdlife Australia will be held in the upcoming months.

The Partnership discussed the proposed extension of the Partnership until the end of June 2023, and agreed that this should continue. DEW will provide this advice to the DEW Executive Director, Water and River Murray, and to the Minister. The Partnership discussed the potential approval of Phase 2 funding and the need to consider the future function and priorities of the Partnership, should this funding be approved.

The HCHB Program Leader noted that an \$8M research hub at Goolwa had been [announced](#) by The Hon Tanya Plibersek, Minister for the Environment and Water, who was visiting the region that day.

The Chair thanked the outgoing HCHB Program Leader, Angus MacGregor, for his outstanding leadership and positive contribution to the Partnership.

A member of the Partnership put forward their resignation. The Chair thanked the outgoing member for their contribution and input to the Partnership.

The Chair thanked all members and presenters for their attendance and ongoing participation and contribution.

The next meeting of the Partnership is scheduled for 1 December 2022 at Coorong District Council, Tailem Bend.

Further Information

If you would like to receive regular updates about [Project Coorong](#) please email: project.coorong@sa.gov.au