

PROJECT COORONG

Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin



Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin Update

Welcome to the May 2022 edition of the *Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin* (HCHB) Update. In this edition we discuss the *On Ground Works* project's work to improve regional bird refugia for migratory shore birds in the lower lakes, while supporting bird populations in the Coorong. We also receive an update from the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation regarding the Ngarrindjeri Research Project and the work involved in developing a bespoke cultural knowledge database.

If you would like more information on the HCHB Program or have questions on anything contained in this update, please contact the program team at projectcoorong@sa.gov.au.

The Coorong, connected waters and surrounding lands have sustained many unique First Nations cultures and economies since time immemorial. The Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin program acknowledges the range of First Nations rights, interests and obligations for the Coorong and connected waterways and the cultural connections that exist between Ngarrindjeri and First Nations of the South East peoples across the region and seeks to support their equitable engagement.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that the following document may contain images and names of people who have died.



On-Ground Works Project gaining momentum

The **On Ground Works (OGW)** Project aims to implement short to medium term on-ground works to help mitigate threats to key Coorong biota, while longer term management solutions are investigated and implemented.

Following [funding approval](#) in December 2021, implementation planning for on ground works at Tolderol, Teringie and Waltowa wetlands is underway, with construction due to start in summer 2022.

The works will include an upgrade to pumping infrastructure and tracks at Tolderol Game Reserve, to allow wetland managers to individually water each basin at the site. Construction of regulators at Teringie and Waltowa will improve water transfer between the Lakes Alexandrina and Albert and the relevant wetlands. These improvements are estimated to create an additional 114 hectares of preferred wader habitats across all three sites, increasing the amount of current available shorebird habitat by 76%.

The Department for Infrastructure and Transport has been engaged to manage construction, with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board also partnering in delivery. Relevant local stakeholders will be engaged ahead of construction commencing.



*Tolderol Game Reserve's inlet channel
(Photo credit: DEW)*



*Tim Hartman and Daniel Lloyd from the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation and Uncle Clyde Rigney from the Raukkan Community Council discuss the On-ground Works Project at Teringie with Project Officer Dave Hudson and First Nations Partnership Officer Tom Overall.
(Photo credit: DEW)*

The OGW team recently visited the sites to meet with stakeholders and walk through the areas for construction to gather information and local knowledge on the area.

Project officers met with First Nations representatives at Teringie and landowners at Waltowa to discuss the proposed construction works and logistical aspects of the project.

The OGW project is a \$10 million commitment from the Australian and State governments to improve regional bird refugia for migratory shore birds in the lower lakes, which supports bird populations in the Coorong.

Ngarrindjeri Research Project update

The Ngarrindjeri Research Project is underway with researchers from Flinders University and Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation (NAC) spending time On Country to meet with Ngarrindjeri Elders, Rangers and community representatives. The research project, part of the HCHB [Trials and Investigations Project](#), is an incredible opportunity for Ngarrindjeri to work with their partners and community to gain insights from a number of sources and grow an already vast knowledge system.

NAC Project Coordinator for the Ngarrindjeri Research Project, Candice Love, said *"Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation has led oral histories with Ngarrindjeri community, to provide a safe place for Ngarrindjeri people to share their stories about Ngarrindjeri culture. These oral histories have been vital in providing Ngarrindjeri people the opportunity to have their voices heard and stories shared."*

As part of the research project, Ngarrindjeri have been developing a bespoke cultural knowledge database with the capability to store not just the information from the research project, but also that of historical documentation and ongoing research. The database will be a valuable resource for Ngarrindjeri Nation now and into the future.

"The information collected will play a significant role in being used to further understand the significance of fresh water soaks along the Kurangk (Coorong), further understanding the No:ri (pelican) breeding islands and the importance of the Salt Creek/South Lagoon areas significance to Ngarrindjeri Ngartji (totems) breeding cycles, specifically the Jumping Mullet" said Candice Love.

Through the research project and HCHB's [First Nations Partnerships Project](#), NAC has worked to expand its partnerships with private companies, university and government agencies. These positive partnerships have been a key strategic goal for NAC with varied areas of influence and knowledge helping to build on critical knowledge gaps.

Tim Hartman, CEO of the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation said *"The Ngarrindjeri Research Project, First Nations Partnership project between NAC and the Department for Environment and Water continues to build on the strong positive relationship with First Nations and DEW. NAC is engaging with Flinders University, Nature Glenelg Trust and Environmental Systems Solutions, to ensure the Ngarrindjeri people are able to have a strong voice and articulate cultural obligations while speaking for and caring for Ruwe (Country)."*

Over the coming months NAC, in partnership with DEW and Flinders University, will be finalising the research project with additional On Country visits and further improvements of the Ngarrindjeri Knowledge Database. The research project is an important part of ensuring Ngarrindjeri voice in the ongoing protection of their Country.

Weather Monitoring Station installed at Long Point

Building upon the [Water Resource Optimisation Project's](#) recent installation of four multi-parameter water monitoring sensors is the installation of a new multi-parameter weather monitoring station at Long Point on the Coorong. Located 16 kilometres south of the Murray Mouth, the new weather station aims to provide improved monitoring, data collection and integration of sites within the Coorong. It is hoped that this holistic approach to monitoring within the Coorong will enable water optimisation via more sophisticated forecasting and modelling tools, with the overall goal of restoring the Coorong's health, characterised by healthy vegetation with abundant and diverse populations of waterbirds, fish and plants.

After working with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Coorong District Council, a design was agreed upon that would provide sound data, but with minimal impacts on the aesthetics of the surrounding environment. The structure was engineered and constructed by local companies and then installed in late January 2022 by staff from the DEW Water Resource Monitoring Unit. The weather monitoring station will provide live telemetered data on wind velocity, wind direction, humidity, temperature and solar radiation. Combining these parameters with the existing water monitoring



Long Point's newly installed Weather Monitoring Station (Photo credit: DEW)

sensors, Long Point now provides live data for 16 various water/weather parameters which can be accessed via [Water Data SA](#). The weather station pole weighs less than 10 kilograms with all sensors attached and is designed to withstand the harsh wind conditions it will be exposed to. So far the site is providing sound data, which is consistent with Parnka Point weather station that was installed early last year.

Coorong Infrastructure Investigations - Draft Feasibility Assessment Consultation

Throughout February 2022, the community was invited to comment on the [Coorong Infrastructure Investigations Project's draft Feasibility Assessment Report](#). This consultation involved two online webinars where key findings of the feasibility investigations were presented to participants, as well as four online open house events, which gave community members the opportunity for one-on-one discussions about potential infrastructure options with subject matter experts.

Video recordings of the online webinars as well as an FAQ document detailing questions posed at the events can be found on the [HCHB publications webpage](#).

Community feedback was captured during the webinars and online open house sessions. For people unable to attend the online events, feedback was also able to be supplied via an online survey and/or email submission.

Community feedback is currently being considered (summary to be released in due course) alongside the feasibility assessment to inform a recommendation on which of the 13 concepts considered in the draft Feasibility Assessment Report will progress to the next phase of the HCHB program – and undergo further investigation, consultation, detailed design, environmental impact assessment and legislative approvals.

Coorong Partnership Communique

The 17th meeting of the [Coorong Partnership](#) was held on 7 April 2022 at the Langhorne Creek Hub.

DEW provided an update on the recent high Murray flows and the ecological response as well as the HCHB Restoration Roadmap. The partnership also heard presentations from the National Parks & Wildlife Service, as well as the Limestone Coast Landscapes Board's *Our Coorong | Our Coast* project.

The meeting was followed with Coorong Partnership members conducting a site visit to the Tolderol Game Reserve with HCHB staff members to discuss and view the locations for planned upcoming OGW infrastructure which aims to improve regional bird refugia for migratory shore birds in the lower lakes, which supports bird populations in the Coorong.

The Communique from this meeting and all other past Coorong Partnership meetings are available on the [Project Coorong Website](#).

If you have any questions on this update, or would like to request a presentation on the project to your stakeholder group, or anything else related to Project Coorong, please contact the project team at projectcoorong@sa.gov.au.

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