

Katarapko Floodplain

2026-27 proposed environmental water operations



Government
of South Australia

Department for
Environment and Water



*Australian pelicans feeding at
Piggy Creek Lagoon during inundation.*

Operation of the Katarapko Floodplain environmental watering infrastructure is planned between late July and December this year. The final timing and scale of operation will depend on approvals, River Murray flow and anabranch conditions, and availability of environmental water.

In 2025, Katarapko Floodplain experienced minimal rainfall and extremely hot conditions throughout the year.

Recent monitoring results show that managed operations in spring 2025, along with high rainfall in early 2026, provided much-needed relief to the floodplain.

Water received as part of spring 2025 managed operations supported an increase in frog, fish and waterbird diversity and abundances, with floodplain and wetland vegetation flourishing.

Despite these benefits, there are still signs of stress and decline in ecosystem condition across areas that could not be inundated.

In 2026, if only low river flows are present, a low-level operation of the Splash environmental regulator is planned in conjunction with a Lock 4 weir pool raising. This would involve raising water levels behind the regulator up to 2.1 metres (12.1 m AHD), along with a 30 cm raising of Lock 4. These actions will inundate up to 540 hectares of low-lying floodplain at Katarapko, encouraging the growth of instream reeds/rushes within permanent

creek areas, and replenish soil moisture for fringing trees, lignum and seedlings, and provide habitat for frogs, tadpoles and waterbirds.

Targeted pumping to Piggy Creek Lagoon will occur in conjunction with this lower-level inundation, increasing the availability of shallow and deep-water foraging habitats for wader birds and increasing frog breeding opportunities. Pumping to this site will also continue to support cohorts of eucalypt seedlings that established after the 2016 and 2022-23 floods.

If flow conditions improve, a medium to high-level managed inundation operation is planned, raising water levels behind the Splash environmental regulator between 12.6 and 13.0 m AHD, and raising weir pool 4 by up to 30 cm. This will inundate between 640 and 840 hectares of low-lying floodplain and lignum shrublands at Katarapko and along the weir pool, as well as connect anabranch creeks to large temporary wetlands (without the need for targeted pumping). This will increase habitat areas and breeding opportunities for waterbirds, frogs and macroinvertebrates.

If higher flows eventuate, levels at the Splash regulator could be raised further to 13.2 m AHD (3.2 metres above normal levels) to maximise connectivity and inundate up to 1,220 hectares, including floodplain woodlands and lignum shrublands.



*Common greenshank at Katarapko Floodplain.
Photo: Belinda Cale*

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Access to Katarapko Floodplain during environmental watering operations

When water for the environment is delivered to Katarapko Floodplain, the **Murray River National Park** will remain open for the public to enjoy where possible. However, there will be some restrictions in access to parts of the park.

Boating

Watercraft passage through the regulator will not be possible, but kayaks and canoes can be carried around the Splash regulator. Users will need to be prepared to carry vessels approximately 100 metres.

Access roads

The operation may result in the temporary closure of some public access tracks and roads on the Katarapko Floodplain. Further information will be available on the National Parks and Wildlife South Australia webpage at www.parks.sa.gov.au

Visitors to the Murray River National Park are reminded to stay on public access tracks and proceed with caution on tracks they are unfamiliar with. It is essential to adhere to park signage and not enter any flood waters. It is an offence to drive off-road or leave formed tracks in any South Australian park or reserve.

Campsites

Some campsites and day visit areas may be closed during the peak of the operation. Therefore, it is

essential you **remember to book before you go**. To confirm availability of campsites and purchase campsite permits, please visit National Parks and Wildlife South Australia at or call (08) 8595 2111.



Yellow-billed spoonbill. Photo: Belinda Cale

More information

Information about Katarapko Floodplain:
environment.sa.gov.au/katarapko-floodplain

Updates regarding water for the environment planning, including operations at Pike, Katarapko and Chowilla floodplains and weir pool manipulations are provided in the weekly SA River Murray Flow Report. To view the Flow Report or subscribe to receive it directly to your email, please visit www.environment.sa.gov.au/flow-report

If you have further queries about the proposed floodplain operations, please contact our Environmental Water Team at DEW.ewater@sa.gov.au



Emerald-spotted tree frog.