

# Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Recovery

## Community update

December 2015

This email newsletter is published by the [Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources](#) (DEWNR) to update the community about work being done to secure the future of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) region as a healthy, productive and resilient wetland of international importance. The CLLMM Recovery Project is part of the South Australian Government's Murray Futures program, funded by the South Australian and Australian Governments.

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*Ben Shepherd, Project Officer, Minister Ian Hunter and Hafiz Stewart, Manager Vegetation Program*



## Minister Hunter visits grass roots involvement behind vegetation success

Minister Hunter teamed up with a group of school students at Currency Creek to add to the more than 1.39 million trees, shrubs and grasses planted in the region since 2010.

The event was to celebrate the success of the 700 hectares of revegetation works at the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth, the result of years of hard work by locals and community groups.

“The many volunteer hours that locals and community groups have contributed to making it a success show what can be achieved when there is a real need, good planning and grass roots involvement,” Minister Hunter said.

“At the time the revegetation began, South Australia was mired in drought – and as they did when helping us fight for a fair deal for the River Murray in the Basin Plan, the community has played a central role in improving health of the Murray through this project.”

DEWNR Vegetation Program manager Hafiz Stewart said this year’s planting season had seen more than 13,000 community volunteers involved in the revegetation activities.

“The community has also propagated all the plants for the project through a Community Nurseries Network, which has been a shared effort between seven local community nurseries,” Hafiz said.

## Ngarrindjeri and DEWNR win Australian RiverPrize

The Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority (NRA) has won the prestigious Australian *RiverPrize*. The prize was awarded at the 2015 International River Symposium in Brisbane and recognises the ground breaking work of the NRA’s Caring for Country program called Ngarrindjeri Yarluwar-Ruwe (NYR) and innovative partnerships in river management in South Australia.

The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) was a key partner in the NRA entry and the win highlights the importance of the relationship the Department has developed with the Ngarrindjeri in delivering the Murray Futures and The Living Murray programs.



Left to Right: Clyde Rigney Jnr. (NRA), Daryle Rigney (NRA and Flinders University), Steven Hemming (NRA and Flinders University), Tim Hartman, Chair of NRA, Luke Trevorrow (NRA)



Professor Daryle Rigney, member of the Ngarrindjeri Nation and Dean of Indigenous Strategy and Engagement at Flinders University said “the award acknowledges the Ngarrindjeri Nation’s efforts at building a healthy future from the Ngarrindjeri philosophy of all things being connected”.

The award brings further vindication of the Nation building work and investment in good governance that characterises the Ngarrindjeri approach’, said Professor Rigney.

The NYR Program was established in 2008 to provide a strategic and culturally appropriate mechanism for Ngarrindjeri engagement in natural resource management. As a result, the history, values and objectives of the Ngarrindjeri are now being incorporated into river and wetland management, and Ngarrindjeri voices are now being heard, their interests are being recognised, and their contribution and knowledge valued.

The Program has established a range of innovative partnerships for Ngarrindjeri engagement in river management, and is playing a significant role in securing a healthy Murray River for all Australians.

Government partnerships are underpinned by the Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement (KNYA) making process – that established a new and equitable relationship between the Ngarrindjeri and the South Australian Government in 2009 at the height of the drought.

The Agreement has resulted in a range of strategic, innovative and on ground outcomes, including a Water Resource Planning Statement of Commitment between the NRA, DEWNR and the SA Murray-Darling Basin and South East Natural Resources Management Boards to guide the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. This new partnership is supported by a Cultural Knowledge agreement that will protect Ngarrindjeri’s unique knowledge and manage the way it is applied.

In accepting the award, Tim Hartman, Chair of the NRA acknowledged the numerous partners that have supported the NYR Program including DEWNR, Flinders University, Office of Indigenous Strategy and Engagement and the Goyder Institute.

The NYR Program has received substantial support from the South Australian Government’s Murray Futures Program, funded by the Australian Government. For more information please contact Lachlan Sutherland, River Murray Operations and Major Projects on 8204 9363.

The NRA is the peak Ngarrindjeri regional body established to represent the communities and organisations that make up the Ngarrindjeri Nation - <http://www.ngarrindjeri.org.au/>.



**Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority accepting the Australian River Prize**

LTR: Tim Hartman, Chair of NRA, Luke Trevorrow (NRA), Dr Roger Higgins, Chair of the International River Foundation, Daryle Rigney (NRA and Flinders University), Clyde Rigney Jr. (NRA), Lachlan Sutherland (DEWNR), Janice Goodwins (DEWNR), Steven Hemming (NRA and Flinders University).





## Team effort sees Riverland groundwater monitoring underway

It's been all hands on deck in the Riverland, with "inter-branch" collaboration responsible for a new groundwater monitoring and drilling program that will benefit the Pike and Katarapko floodplains.

DEWNR Project Manager Whendee Young said the eight week program is taking place thanks to successful collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

"It's been great to see Major Projects including engineers and cultural heritage team members working together with Science, Monitoring and Knowledge's hydrogeologists, groundwater modellers and ecologists to help restore the Pike and Katarapko floodplains," Whendee said.

"The drilling will allow for more effective groundwater monitoring of both water levels and salinity and provide a better understanding of the location of freshwater lenses and saline groundwater."

Works are seeing the creation of up to 60 groundwater observation wells between Paringa and Lyrup and also near Loxton.

For more information on the project, contact Major Projects Project Manager [Lieke Van Roosmalen](#) or visit the website:

[http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/Home/Full\\_newsevents\\_listing/News\\_Events\\_Listing/150901-groundwater-monitoring-pike-katarapko](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/Home/Full_newsevents_listing/News_Events_Listing/150901-groundwater-monitoring-pike-katarapko)

*Katfish Reach. Photo courtesy of Mark Potts*



## Preparing for the end of the CLLMM Recovery Project

The CLLMM Recovery Project, having commenced in 2010, is set to be completed by December 2016, with some actions being completed in June of 2016.

To help prepare the Department and community for the end of the program, a cross-agency Transition Reference Group has been established.

The group consists of staff from across the agency, including from the areas of Natural Resources SA MDB, Natural Resources South East, Crown Lands, Water and Climate Change, Business Technology and Information, and Science Monitoring and Knowledge.

Community stakeholders are also involved in transition through project partnerships, the Lakes Hub, Community Advisory Panel and the Ngarrindjeri Partnerships Project. Key areas of interest have been the transfer of knowledge, providing access to information gained through the drought, planning for future community governance for the Ramsar site, and continued support for the Ngarrindjeri Yarlumar-Ruwe program.



*Boundary Creek Barrage with recently completed fishway*

The role of the Transition Reference Group is to guide the transition and closure of the Recovery Project in a way that supports the program legacy and exchange of knowledge to key groups within both government and community.

On 10 September 2015 the group met to visit a number of project sites in the CLLMM region, to learn more and meet some of the people involved.

Sites included Boundary Creek Barrage, Vegetation Program planting and pest control sites, the Lakes Hub in Meningie and Camp Coorong.



*Boundary Creek Barrage*

The group had a chance to hear community perspectives on the program, the value of its investment and their hopes for the future. The visit gave the Group a chance to see first-hand, the great work that has been undertaken through the CLLMM Recovery Project and the legacy that will be left in years to come.

If you would like to know more about the status of CLLMM Recovery Project actions and outcomes to date, the end of the

program planning underway or would like to get involved in the future management of the site you can visit [www.lakeshub.com](http://www.lakeshub.com) or pop into one of the Lakes Hub offices in Milang and Meningie.



## 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ramsar listing for Coorong and Lower Lakes

Water and the River Murray Minister Ian Hunter joined celebrations marking 30 years since the listing of the Coorong, Lakes Alexandrina and Albert wetland as a Ramsar wetland of international significance.

Speaking at the events on 12 November at Goolwa and at Boundary Creek, he said “There is much to celebrate today – alongside the 30th anniversary, we also marked five years of continuous flows to the Coorong, made possible with environmental flows at the end of the Millennium drought, and the opening of the Boundary Creek Fishway,” he said.

“These are noteworthy milestones that show the progress we have made in helping return this beautiful region to health following the drought.

“State and Australian Governments and the local community have all been vital in restoring the region and building its resilience, however its future is dependent on environmental water.

“This is one of the many reasons why the State Government is calling for the Murray Darling Basin Plan to be implemented on time and in full.

“The delivery of environmental water under The Living Murray Initiative has been essential to maintaining freshwater releases to the Coorong, and these flows are critical to supporting the ongoing recovery of native fish, waterbirds, vegetation and maintaining the site’s ecology and international importance.

“We must continue to highlight the importance of continued, careful management by South Australia to make the most efficient use of environmental water.”

The Boundary Creek fishway is the first of several new barrage fishways, with others planned for the Ewe Island, Goolwa and Mundoo Island barrages.

The fishway has been completed in collaboration with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and SA Water, and supported by RecFish SA.

Minister Hunter said some great outcomes for the region were starting to be realised.

“But we still have more work to do to sustain the Coorong, Lakes Alexandrina and Albert wetland as a Ramsar site, as well as supporting its role in recreation, tourism, agriculture and fishing, and as an area central to Aboriginal culture and spiritual beliefs,” he said.



*Minister Hunter at Boundary Creek with Gloria Jones*



*Minister Hunter with Bill Paterson*





# South East Flows Restoration Project Update

## Design and Survey

In July 2015, the concept design was confirmed for the alignment section of Blackford Drain off-take to Henry Creek Road. Since then, further consultation has helped confirm the best locations for crossings, fencing and drainage infrastructure to complement existing landholder operations. This phase has also identified landholder interest to inundate wetlands along the way to the Coorong, to be incorporated in the design where applicable. Over the coming months, on-ground survey and desktop water flow modelling will continue to refine the alignment design, with completion scheduled for February 2016. The alignment from Henry Creek Road to the Salt Creek outlet is in the final stages of investigation to identify the feasibility of inundating the Tilley Swamp Watercourse *en route* to the Coorong South Lagoon. Once completed, a concept design for this section of the alignment will be confirmed.

## Environmental Management Program

Data collected during the flora, fauna and native vegetation surveys in June 2015 has been reviewed and a Native Vegetation Management Plan is in preparation, outlining how construction intends to avoid or minimise clearance of native vegetation. Strategies to minimise the spread of weeds and *Phytophthora* will be developed and wetland areas that have become “terrestrialised” due to lack of water identified, and how these may be restored to aquatic environments through additional flows once infrastructure is operational. Water quality monitoring in the Coorong and SE Drainage Network is underway, with EPA sampling 14 locations to support water quality risk assessment. Four science workshops have identified strategies to ensure no adverse impacts on water quality.

## Community Engagement

The SEFRP webpage has been updated with a map of the SEFRP alignment from Blackford Drain to Henry Creek Road at concept design stage, images of the project alignment, representative images of on-ground survey works and wetland birds. On completion of the alignment concept design, public information sessions will be held across the South East and CLLMM regions. Further information will be provided over the coming months.

## Cultural Heritage Program

This Program involves a cultural heritage survey to identify Aboriginal cultural heritage sites (sites, objects or burials) along and adjacent to the proposed construction works. Pre-construction cultural heritage monitoring involves an archaeologist and two community heritage monitors surveying the length of the alignment to ensure sites identified are managed in a culturally appropriate manner.

## Land Acquisition

Land for the project will be acquired by agreement or by compulsory acquisition in accordance with the *Land Acquisition Act 1969*. It is preferred to acquire land by agreement and this process will commence once design development of the alignment has progressed.

## Construction Delivery

A construction contract will be awarded on completion of design documentation for the SEFRP alignment. This is scheduled to enable mobilisation of construction crew in spring 2016.

For more information on the South East Flows Restoration Project

Contact Natural Resources South East, P: (08) 8755 1630, E: [louise.mcintosh@sa.gov.au](mailto:louise.mcintosh@sa.gov.au)

<http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/southeast/projects/se-flows>



*The South East Flows Restoration Project is part of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Recovery Project funded by the South Australian Government's Murray Futures program and the Australian Government.*



**Government of South Australia**  
Department of Environment,  
Water and Natural Resources

## Passionate photographer and nature lover? Enter our new competition

To mark the 30th birthday of the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetland being designated a Ramsar site, DEWNR is reaching out to the community to share their love of the site through the power of photos!

We are calling on photo enthusiasts who live, work and play in the Coorong or Lakes Alexandrina and Albert area to help showcase what makes this area unique and special.

The photography competition is all about reflecting on the values and recovery of the site since the 2006-2010 drought. We hope to capture the value and beauty of this unique wetland through the lens of the community.

It's worth spreading the word with your contacts as there's a **\$1000 Diamonds Camera and Video voucher (with a bonus training course valued at \$500)** up for grabs for the overall winner\*.

Prizes will also be awarded to the photographers with the best picture in each of five categories. They'll take home one of five Canoe, Spirit of the Coorong or National Parks experiences.

The five categories are:

- **Our wetland – iconic values, benefits and services**
- **Wetland habitat and landscapes**
- **Wetland flora and fauna**
- **Threats including pests and weeds**
- **The wetland through time.**

For further information contact the [Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Recovery Project team](#) or visit the [website](#).

\* DEWNR staff are ineligible.



### Further Information

For further information about the Coorong Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Recovery Project please contact:

Nerida Buckley, Community Partnerships Coordinator

at [DEWNRCLMM@sa.gov.au](mailto:DEWNRCLMM@sa.gov.au)

