

F4F News

The Flows for the Future Program Update

Our First Edition

Welcome to the first edition of the Flows for the Future newsletter. You are receiving this newsletter as a valued member of our low flows community and you are important to the success of the program. We hope that you enjoy these updates and find them useful and informative.

Overview

Flows for the Future (F4F), is the first large scale low flow program nationally (and as far as we know globally), and was established to improve the health and sustainability of catchments across the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges (EMLR).

There are over 8,000 dams interrupting stream flow in the EMLR and more than 20,000 across the whole Mount Lofty Ranges. F4F aims to re-establish seasonal low flow patterns to restore catchment and ecosystem health.

F4F is a joint Australian and state government funded initiative working in partnership with landholders, stakeholders and communities to improve the health, resilience and sustainability of our natural habitats.

With successful completion of the initial 3 years of the program, F4F moves from strength to strength with over 350 sites now passing low flows.

River Blackfish populations

Hidden at the base of a rocky cliff face in the lower Rodwell Creek is a deep, peaceful pool that is home to one of the only remaining River Blackfish populations in the SA Murray Darling Basin.

Peaceful, that is, until the guys from Andy's Water Transport rumble on up in their water truck to deliver their regular life-saving truckload of water!

The environmental watering or 'e-watering' and aeration of the pool is the only thing preventing local extinction of this State-Endangered species. The population was rediscovered back in 2004 before which it was not detected in the catchment for 50 years. The e-watering began as a Department of Environment and Water (DEW) project during the millennium drought, after it was determined that barriers created by dams upstream were leading to the progressive drying of the entire catchment, with the pool no longer able to sustain itself. One landholder a few kilometres upstream reports no flow at all since Winter 2017. The e-watering is currently unfunded and is instead supported (in a much scaled-back operation) by the actions and contributions of local landholders and organisations such as conservation NGO Aquasave–Nature Glenelg Trust.

Rodwell Creek is a spectacular and intriguing watercourse, with spring-fed flows in the upper reaches (near Wistow) followed by sections where water disappears underground before emerging further downstream as base flows which then contribute to the overall flow into the main Bremer River at Woodchester.

Rodwell landowners who have the opportunity to install a low flow device on their property can know that not only will their actions help maintain the general resilience of these rapidly-drying habitats, but they will be contributing directly to the saving of a species on the brink of collapse.



Water sampling at Beryl and Jim Belford's River Blackfish pool

F4F gains another four years to restore low flows

The program hit the ground in early 2017, and has since worked with numerous landholders, communities and businesses across the EMLR to successfully install low flow devices.

While the program was initially approved as a 3 year project, additional funding was successfully secured following an assessment of the project and what could be achieved with a further three years. The positive response and uptake by landholders and communities across the region was also considered during this assessment and funding would not have been forthcoming without the support of these groups.

This means that many more landholders, communities and catchments of the EMLR will have the opportunity to benefit from F4F funding over the next 4 years. The program has commenced work in early 2020 in the Currency Creek catchment, soon to be followed by the Finnis River and several smaller catchments upstream of Mannum and Murray Bridge.

The success of the program will ensure that our use of water in the EMLR is sustainable. Here's to everyone's continuing success. Bring on the next 4 years!



Low flow community champions unveiled

In this newsletter we want to share some of the great stories about landholders and businesses partnering with us to restore low flows. If you would like to share your story, please let us know.

Howard Vineyard

Howard Vineyard is a second generation family owned business located in Nairne in the picturesque Adelaide Hills. The vineyard has built a reputation for growing premium quality grapes, producing world class Adelaide hills wine, plus the restaurant, cellar door, wedding and function centre.

Tom Northcott, Howard Vineyard's Viticulturist and Winemaker, says sustainability is a key part of vineyard practices. "We have a really dedicated focus on our own production now," says Tom, "sustainability and the environment are so important for us", "pristine and

sustainable water quality is essential to grow and maintain the premium quality fruit the vineyard produces".

Tom acknowledges the F4F program as an important part of that sustainability. The vineyard has a gravity device installed by the program allowing low flow events to pass around dams and to feed the major creek line below.

"A healthy catchment is a thriving catchment and one that regularly sees water flow through it. It's important that every farmer, viticulturist or person in the region does their bit for the environment so everyone benefits for generations to come."

To hear more about Howard Vineyard's involvement with F4F, see an interview with Tom at www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/samurraydarlingbasin/water/flows-for-future/how-can-low-flows-be_secured



Tom regularly inspects the inlet pit of the low flow device for any debris at the vineyard.

Progress in the Angas and Bremer catchments

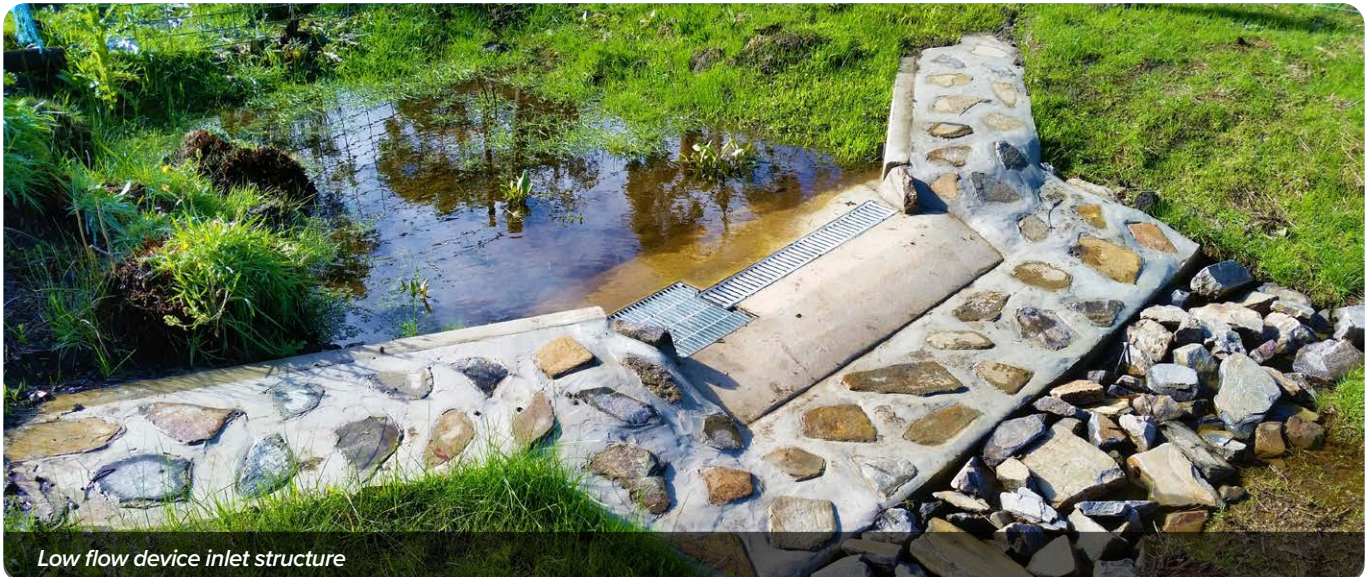
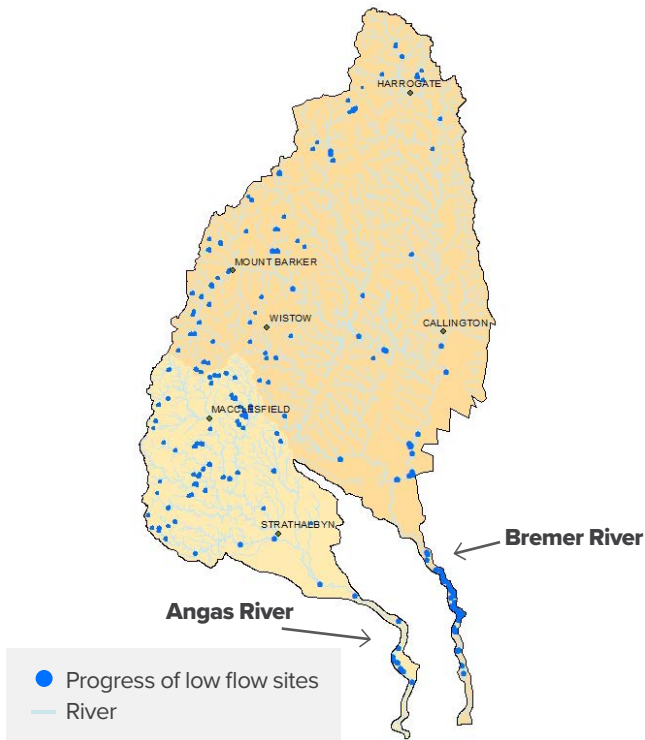
At the end of April 2020, a total of 358 sites have F4F funded devices installed with the capability to pass low flows across all catchments in the program area.

We've been humbled by the number of landholders working with F4F to restore low flows across the region, and the enthusiasm shown for the program.

It's a big task, but as one of our landholders commented:

It's only right that someone who collects water from the land for their own purposes lets some go back. I guess that's the only reasonable thing to do.

The image to the left and below right is a representation of the progress of low flow sites (as shown by blue dots) either constructed or soon to be completed across the catchments.

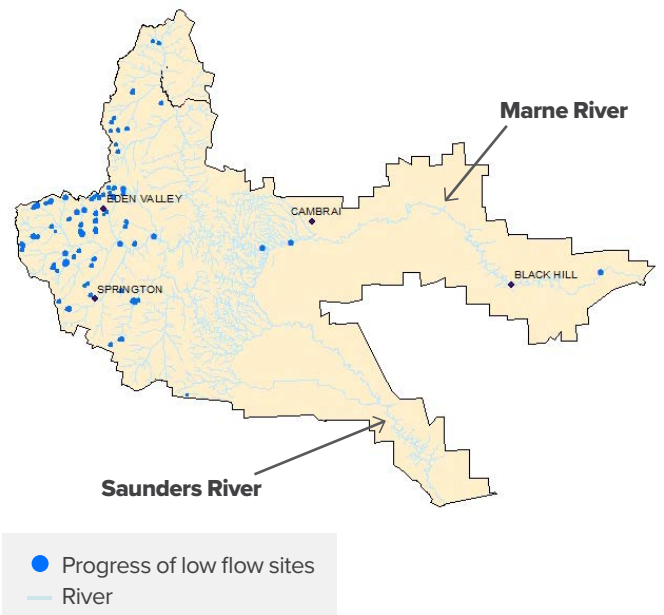


Progress in the Marne and Saunders catchments

Many landholders and community members in this area have been very supportive of the program. In a relatively short period of time, the majority of critical sites have been built and can now pass low flows.

The rainfall for these catchments has been well below average for the second year now, so most sites have not yet passed any low flows.

The program is continuing to work in these catchments and 85% of sites in this area are expected to soon be capable of passing low flows



Water remains key for future generations in the Eden Valley

Growing up as a sixth-generation producer from Keyneton in the Eden Valley, Kylie Pendergast is aware of the importance of healthy water catchments.

Together with her husband Leon and their two children Lachlan, 4, and Liam, 3, they run a 6.8-hectare vineyard, growing Shiraz, Riesling and Cabernet.

“They’re the great three varieties for this area,” Kylie said.

“With the tonnage we get off this property we make wine for our own wine label, Kyara, and we also sell the fruit to other winemakers in the area.”

The Pendergasts have owned their property for the past five years, with a bypass device installed on a small dam on the property in September 2018. The device allows low flows of water to pass further downstream by diverting them around the dam.

Water is used sparingly on their property, with the vineyard only receiving “three to five waters” each season.

“We use irrigation just to give the vines a little freshen up when needed. The fruit is predominately dry-grown,” Kylie said.

Kylie’s family, the Fiebigers, have been in South Australia since the 1800s, with her direct ancestor Heinrich Fiebiger arriving in SA at age 10 with his parents and brother from Silesia, Prussia. They first settled in Hahndorf before Heinrich moved to the Barossa and Eden Valley region in 1861.

Her father and brother run a dairy farm at Keyneton. Kylie has many memories of playing in the creek on her family property as a child at Keyneton.



“Playing in the creek, building boats and watching them flow down the creek was our fun in winter,” she said.

“It’s something that I haven’t even been able to do with my children once, because the creek no longer flows.

“There’s no permanent water in the creek anymore in winter. When we get a heavy rainfall event it may flow for a day or a few hours, but it goes as quickly as it comes.

“It does really concern me because I believe this lack of water would have to be impacting on the environment.”

Kylie said they decided to become involved in the Flows for the Future program voluntarily.

“We were contacted by our local NRM officer (F4F Field Officers) and asked if we were interested in becoming involved with Flows for the Future. When they explained what the project focused on and what the bypass device did, I told her I was heartily encouraged by it. I think it is something that is very much needed,” she said.

Winner of Water Association Innovation Award



“We could not do this without the amazing landholders,”

Flows for the Future (F4F) has been recognised in the South Australian Water Awards (AWA), winning gold in the Program Innovation Award Category at the SA Gala Dinner and Awards Night on 8 November 2019.

F4F impressed the judges with its simple but innovative approach to returning seasonal stream flows over a significant proportion of Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges catchments.

It was exciting news for F4F Program Leader, Kym Rumbelow as it meant the program had been recognised as the sector’s ‘best of the best’.

AWA commended F4F in redefining infrastructure best practice for catchment management and landholder engagement which have been critical to delivering the program.

‘We could not do this without the amazing landholders,’ said Kym, ‘who have allowed us onto their properties, and worked with us to deliver this unique project’.

More information

Provide feedback, share your story or request to receive our next update electronically via

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www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/flows-for-future