

# LONG TERM MANAGEMENT OF THE SOUTH EAST DRAINS AND WETLANDS

The South East drainage system plays a vital role in maintaining and enhancing long-term social, economic and environmental values in the South East.

## Introduction

The South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Board (SEWCD Board) and the Department for Water (DFW) are working together to deliver optimal management of the South East drainage system. This includes managing water in the drainage system, wetlands and environmental assets to meet multiple objectives including:

- Protecting infrastructure, land, soils and ecosystems from flooding
- Providing water for environmental purposes and to enhance the natural environment, including wetlands
- Protecting and enhancing agricultural lands for production purposes
- Assisting in the proper conservation and management of water.

## The SE DWM Program

The South East Drainage and Wetland Management (SE DWM) Program consists of 12 projects aimed at delivering optimal water resources management for the South East. Outcomes include:

- Integrated and efficient operations, management and maintenance of the total drainage system
- Enhanced environmental and agricultural values for the region
- Implementation of new legislation such as the South East Drainage System Operation and Management (SEDSOM) Bill (following its assent)
- Increased stakeholder engagement.

**“Collectively we’re implementing a program to deliver optimal management of the drainage system, wetlands and environmental assets to meet multiple objectives.”**

*– Andrew Johnson, Executive Director, Operations and Major Programs, DFW*



The drainage system provides water to enhance the region's valuable wetland ecosystems.



## South East drainage system

The South East region of South Australia is a highly modified landscape, extending over an area of approximately 28,000 square kilometres.

Broad-scale land clearing and an extensive drainage network have converted what was once a wetland-dominated landscape into land suited for agricultural production.

There is a long history of drainage in the South East with the first drains in the lower South East coming into operation in 1863. The majority of drains were built between 1949 and 1972.

The lower South East drainage system was originally developed to overcome waterlogging in order to maintain the region's productivity. More recently, the lower South East drainage system is also being managed to enhance and develop natural wetlands in the region.

The upper South East drainage system was initiated in the 1990s to address community concerns about dryland salinity, waterlogging, degradation and the fragmentation of ecosystems in the upper South East.

## Legislation

Currently the South East drainage system is managed under two Acts; the *Upper South East Dryland Salinity and Flood Management (USE) Act 2002* and the *South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage (SEWCD) Act 1992*.

The SEDSOM Bill has been drafted to replace this legislation.

The SEDSOM Bill proposes to establish a new managing authority (the South Eastern Drainage Management Board) to operate, manage and maintain the total drainage system.

## Facts and Figures

The lower South East drainage network comprises:

- 1875km of drainage infrastructure
- More than 1800 structures including road bridges, culverts, inlets, sea outlet structures and regulators.

The upper South East comprises:

- 714km of drainage network (624km of earthen drains and 90km of major floodways)
- 150 regulating structures including weirs and regulators to manage flows

- 156 Biodiversity Management Agreements covering in excess of 18,483 hectares
- More than 40,000 hectares of wetland habitats, including in excess of 200 individually named wetlands across the region
- 144 hydrological monitoring locations
- 19 water quality sites.

## Keeping you informed

The Water for Good website will be updated regularly to keep you informed about the management of the integrated drainage and wetland management system. In addition you can sign up to receive regular news about the South East Drainage and Wetland Management Program.



An aerial view of the South East showing agricultural land and wetlands which have benefited from the drainage system.

## For further information please contact:

Department for Water  
GPO Box 2834  
Adelaide SA 5001  
Telephone: 8463 3887  
Web: [www.waterforgood.sa.gov.au](http://www.waterforgood.sa.gov.au)



Licensed under Creative Commons  
Attribution 3.0 Australia License

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au>

Copyright Owner:  
Crown in right of the State of South Australia 2012