

Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board

Performance report

Quarter 2 | October - December 2021

Outcomes aligned with the 2021-22 annual business plan investment and priorities



From the General Manager

I am pleased to present the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board quarterly Performance Report for the second quarter of 2021/2022.

This report summarises the Board's performance and activities over the past three months and tracks progress towards delivering the investment and priorities as outlined in the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board Annual Business Plan.

It provides the regular review of the Board's programs, services and projects. It also highlights achievements, key partnerships and other related matters that have occurred during the period.

This report is one of the organisation's key reporting tools used to deliver performance related information to board members, the organisation and the wider community.

I hope that you will find its content valuable and informative.



Andrew Meddle
General Manager













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*note that budget may be different to that of the Business Plan, due to additional income being received or carry-over of funds from prior year.

1. Executive Summary

In Quarter 2 of 2021-22 the following progress has been made and program delivery is **on track** for the financial year.

Strategic Priority	Annual Business Plan Programs	Program Strategies
 Sustainable agricultural and pastoral landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Agriculture Farm Soils and Vegetation management Regional Landcare facilitator Pest Plant and Animal management 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On track (16) Not started (1) Completed (1) Behind schedule (1)
 Sustainable water use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Irrigation Water Planning and Management Water Allocation Planning Water literacy Pest Plant and Animal management 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On track (13) Not started (1) Completed (1) Behind schedule (2)
 Healthy rivers, lakes and wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetlands and floodplain restoration Restoring RAMSAR Wetlands Pest Plant and Animal management 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On track (4) Not started Completed (1) Behind schedule (2)
 Healthy landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape Scale Restoration Restoring Iron Grass Grasslands Threatened Mallee Birds Pest Plant and Animal management 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On track (17) Not started (2) Completed (2) Behind schedule
 People at the heart of landscape management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grassroots grants Education Program Aboriginal Partnership Program Capacity Building and Volunteer Support Citizens' Science 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On track (28) Not started Completed (2) Behind schedule
 Foundational programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board leadership and Governance Planning and Evaluation Customer and Business Services Communications Council Levy Collection Fees 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On track (27) Not started Completed (2) Behind schedule (1)

Highlights Summary

A summary of the key highlights from across the regional priorities:

- Enhanced management of farm soils and vegetation for improved resource sustainability and productive capacity MERIT reporting was approved without any issues.
- The Soil Your Undies citizen science program was completed.
- The sustainable agriculture team was invited to work with other regions on a project proposal and submit a state-wide Future Drought Fund Drought Resilient Soils and Landscapes application.
- Engagement by landholders near fountain grass control sites has been positive.
- The Riverland Pig Project has commenced collection of on-ground data, and it has proven to be a popular topic with landholders with approximately 70% of letters and surveys returned with a response.
- The water resource team has been working with the community since 2017 on reviewing and updating the Environmental Land Management Allocation policy for the Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Area within the River Murray Water Allocation Plan. After more than 3 years of community engagement, multiple meetings and consultation events to co-design the policy with the community, a new plan has been adopted.
- A 20 year review of fish data was undertaken this year, and from 2002–2021, a total of 21 freshwater fish species (15 native and 6 alien) have been sampled across the Marne Saunders Prescribed Water Resource Area.
- Preparation and submission to Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment of the 5th bi-annual report for the Water Efficiency Program.
- Commencement of a new project with the Australian Wine Research Institute supporting the benchmarking of best practice irrigation within the Riverland wine grape industry.
- 15 dam sites in Danggali Wilderness Protection Area have been earmarked for potential closure this financial year, as part of the Threatened Mallee Bird and Living Landscapes Projects.
- The landscape ecology team staffed a display at the Callington Show to inform people about the Native Grassland Project and other work carried out by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board.
- Volunteer-driven Malleefowl nest-mound monitoring surveys for the current breeding season are nearing completion with some exciting results.
- The collaborative work being undertaken by a range of dedicated partners to set-up a River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation ranger team has been a key achievement this quarter.
- First Peoples have undertaken Aboriginal waterways assessments at a range of wetlands sites across the Riverland, and the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation is developing and implementing Yarlularu Ruwe assessments that surface and capture the Ngarrindjeri values and interests with in those landscapes helping to improve their future management.
- The 2021 River Murray Youth Council program ended with an overnight camp at the Roonka Water Activity Centre near Blanchetown. The group got up close and personal with a range of critters with Animals Anonymous, and had an amazing astronomy session at Meldanda in the Dark Sky Reserve.
- The 2021 Marne and Saunders waterbug bioblitz was a great success.
- Turtle Month (November) marked the official on-line launch of the national 1 Million Turtles citizen science program.
- The landscape board's website was moved to a new content management system (CMS) at the end of November 2021.
- The board has passed their initial audit with no adverse findings.
- 7 employee vacancies were advertised and filled.
- The annual highlights report was released, showcasing the many projects and partnerships that delivered outcomes for the region and contributed to the enhancement and protection of the Murraylands and Riverland landscape.

- A pilot project for developing a methodology to use evaluative rubrics to help measure success of the landscape plan is now complete.
- Successfully completed the final moves from Strathalbyn and Mount Barker into the new office in Murray Bridge.

Risk and Challenges

Summary of potential organisational risks or key challenges from delivering programs in this quarter.

Risk	Management Strategy
COVID restrictions may compromise attendance at regional events	Review opportunities as necessary to move events to an online platform or put into place social distancing arrangements and other COVID management practices.
Risk to events of COVID-19.	The team monitors the COVID-19 situation closely and is prepared to change to online or virtual events if needed.
That deadlines, reporting or statutory obligations are missed due to conflicting workloads especially with the finance team undertaking tasks which were previously undertaken by the Department of Environment and Water.	The finance team meets weekly to discuss tasks and workload. The team is encouraged to bring forward any time pressures and to assist each other in ensuring obligations are met. The team leader meets fortnightly with the manager of business services to discuss any potential issues, seeking advice and assistance as required. The finance team will be seeking support to increase its resources.
At times the HR Advisor's work load has been very high, this has led to some tasks being delays such as ensuring reclassifications and advertising are completed within an acceptable time period.	As the HR advisor becomes more familiar with new tasks, these could potentially be completed in a shorter time period. The board may have to consider additional administrative support for the HR tasks that can be performed at a lower level.
COVID-19 cases seem to be rising especially with border restrictions being lifted. Working from home until further notice has been advised by Government of South Australia.	Team members to work from home to reduce the likelihood of spreading infections and majority of meetings on Teams. With public events due to start in February, staff will work on alternative plans with the communications team regarding online options for presenters. Staff will also follow government advice and include it in our contingency plans.
Heavy rain has been falling in isolated areas across the region. After such a long dry spell and with low levels of ground cover there is now a big risk of soil erosion.	Arrangements are being made to raise awareness of risk through social media, with a plan to hold workshops to help farmers manage the threat.
Reduced staff capacity due to long service leave. May not be able to meet planned targets.	A request has been approved to retain salary savings to aid in finding short term labour hire.
Unable to access high quality, reliable, local spray contractors. Requires staff to conduct work themselves, increasing workload and removing them from other district priorities.	Staff are seeking to expand the current known and approved contractors. Investigating the option of upskilling and accrediting local First Nations people and organisations as possible option.
DEW is leading a project looking into River Murray water planning and management issues. A key issue that has been identified is a review of the private carryover policy within the River Murray Water Allocation Plan. Undertaking a review of private carryover policy is not on the team's current workplan, and the team is already working at full capacity. If the team is required to review the policy, it will detract attention from other required statutory outcomes such as the 10-year review of the Mallee Prescribed Wells Area Water Allocation Plan (due May 2022)	Staff will liaise with DEW and provide in-kind support to review and draft the proposed amendments to the private carryover policy within the River Murray Water Allocation Plan, recognising that this helps support the team but it is likely that added pressure will still be on the team to deliver other work.
Delays with the Commonwealth Off-Farm Water Efficiency Program (\$60m on-farm component) has meant potential funding opportunity cannot yet be	Proactive negotiation by the team leader with lead funding organisations (commonwealth and state) to ensure opportunities for the board are realised so that

Risk	Management Strategy
<p>accessed. This mean the window to deliver new projects in mid-2022 is lost. There is, however potential for the board to be involved in the delivery of National Water Grid Authority projects which will lessened the impacts. The continued unknowns in relation to accessing key funding does mean that forward planning with certainty is a challenge.</p>	<p>this can be factored into annual business planning and team level planning in 2022/23 and beyond.</p>
<p>The investment and information team leader has been in leave since November 2021.</p>	<p>The team leader's unexpected absence required a fast reshuffle of staff members including a secondment to continue providing investment and information support to the organisation. Team members have supported each other during this time, with 3 of 4 staff taking on and learning new roles, while also teaching and supporting those that have stepped into the role they vacated.</p>
<p>The records transition project's progress has been impacted due to change of project staff and other processes that had higher priority.</p>	<p>This may be an issue if the deadline of 31/3/2022 is upheld by the Department for Environment and Water. - Landscape board general managers are currently negotiating this deadline, and DEW's proposal for landscape board's access to files going forward. A contingency plan is in place in case the organisation is unable to meet the deadline. At this stage, and if nothing else takes priority of officer's time, the deadline will be met.</p>
<p>A change to current data sharing arrangements being proposed by DEW that will impact our organisation's information management strategy and potentially lead to increased costs for data storage in the future. These changes are currently being negotiated between DEW and the general managers of the landscape boards, and the results will determine if changes to our information management strategy is required.</p>	<p>These changes, whilst somewhat disruptive to those that need to access old data and information on occasion, are unlikely to significantly impact the landscape board in the short-term. By the end of Q3, current data and information (i.e. regularly used for landscape board business) will be transitioned into available storage areas, so only old data will be somewhat restricted. As the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board has been the leader in landscape board information management during the transition away from the department, we are respected for our experiences and understanding in this space. The acting team leader for investment and information and the general manager are being consulted by the DEW during this negotiation, so the organisation is well placed to influence and get the best outcome possible. A greater threat is the cost of data storage and management in the future. The organisation's information management strategy will be reviewed once the records transition project is complete to assess future requirements based on the final changes agreed to by DEW and the landscape boards. Additional costs are unlikely to occur in the next 2 years as DEW is proposing a grace period for the landscape boards to set themselves up. These costs and associated information management projects will be built into future business plans.</p>

2. Performance by Strategic Priority



Sustainable agricultural and pastoral landscapes

Program investment

Program	Levies	External	Total	Actual YTD
Sustainable Agriculture	331,655	278,245	609,900	160,680
Farms soils and vegetation management	-	441,648	441,648	187,555
Regional Landcare Facilitator	-	135,077	135,077	78,288
Pest Plant and Animal Management	721,053	175,110	896,163	382,137
Program support	492,155	-	492,155	233,701
TOTAL	1,544,863	1,030,080	2,574,943	1,042,361

Program Progress Summary

There have been a number of funding opportunities available through this period and applications were submitted for:

- Future Drought Fund (outcomes not yet known)
- Landscape Priorities Fund (unsuccessful)
- Smart Farms Small Grants: Soils (successful)

A busy spring period kept staff busy with a full calendar of events and engagement. Almost 40 events were scheduled and planned with around 25% of those being either cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19 or poor seasonal conditions. Of the events held, more than 450 landholders attended across the region, showing the high level of interest in events held by the landscape board. Planning has also been underway for a further 13 events for the start of 2022.

Progress was made across a number of projects with some attracting strong media interest and providing an opportunity to promote the work of the landscape board.

Pest control activities have seen good engagement and participation rates with landholders including collaborations of neighbouring landholders.

Staffing changes saw commencement of Robin Tavonesa in the sustainable agriculture team leader role, relocation of staff from other regional offices to Murray Bridge and a backfill being sought for an impending vacancy.

Quarterly Program highlights

- Enhanced management of farm soils and vegetation for improved resource sustainability and productive capacity MERIT reporting was approved without any issues.
- A total of 46 property owners participated in the Soil Acidity Citizen Science project this year, testing the pH of the soil in their eastern Mount Lofty Ranges paddocks. This project has been running since 2018/19, with more than 250 landowner participants and over 1500 field locations tested. pH testing data is provided to the South Australian soils database. This was the last year of the project.
- The state-wide Smart Farms application for soil extension activities was approved and the landscape board will have a soil extension officer in our region to focus on soil testing, the interpretation of results, and work on other soil-focussed projects. This position will also be responsible for linking farmers in with the National Soil Monitoring and Incentives Program.
- The Soil Your Undies citizen science project was completed. Undies were buried on around 100 sites by farmers, schools and the general community. After being retrieved, each pair of undies was dried and weighed with the results processed and provided to participating community members.



Photo 1. Soil your undies project

- The Automatic Weather Station (AWS) network has been largely trouble-free with standard faults being identified and fixed. A new CATM1 telemetric station has just passed manufacturer's checks and is now installed and being trialled at Berri alongside the existing station.

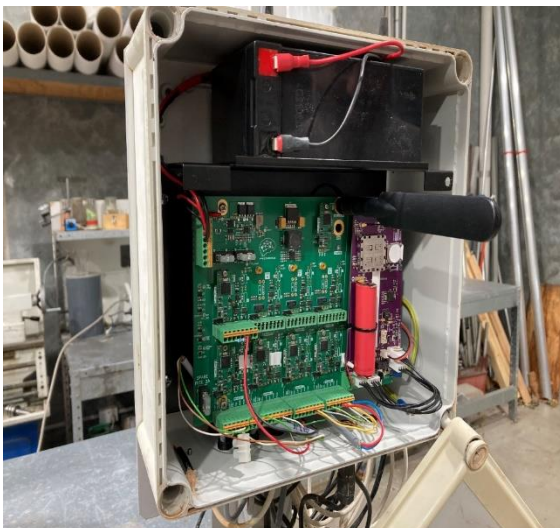


Photo 2. An internal photo of the first of the new logger/telemetry setups for our network using the CATM1 network bandwidth.

- Advertising for a backfill vacancy to cover maternity leave for Eliza Rieger (RALF/Project Officer) was published, receiving more than 50 applications for the role. The selection process will start in the near future.

- The sustainable agriculture team was invited contribute to a state-wide Future Drought Fund Drought Resilient Soils and Landscapes application, and an individual bid was also submitted. Work will soon start on the project plan to attribute the work between team members.
- Engagement of landholders near fountain grass control sites has been positive. Signage erected at control locations, along with mail outs to adjacent landholders, has received positive feedback with many requests from community members wanting to improve their ability to identify and manage this declared plant. Local media gained interest and engagement from new areas, and lead to the identification of new infestations.
- Following the spring hail storms, the team worked with PIRSA to complete rapid assessments of damage in the Riverland, primarily around Loxton East/South, Pyap, New Residence and Loveday West to clarify the impact of the event. Information about dryland crops was also received, suggesting significant impacts in some northern Mallee areas. The majority of assessments areas of concern were horticulture based.
- National Agriculture Day was celebrated on 19 November with the Karoonda and Murray Plains Women Together Learning (WoTL) groups invited to a long lunch at Bowhill. Key themes for the day were business resilience and the role of carbon low rainfall areas. The team is planning on hosting more events at the start of the New Year with some potentially held online due to the pandemic.



Photo 3. Celebration of the National Ag Day.

- The Riverland Pig Project has commenced collection of on-ground data, and it has proven a popular topic with landholders with approximately 70% of letters and surveys returned with a response. This data is being collated and assessed to improve the understanding of feral pigs before the next stage of engagement commences.
- A PIRSA vertebrate pest course was held at Piccadilly and attended by three of the district staff - Steve Baltussen, Scott Hutchens and Bec Gould, who delivered training for attendees in pindone mixing and assessed 1080 oat mixing of participants. It was great to see our highly respected district officers called upon to train others.

Progress on program strategies

Program strategies	Focus Areas*	Status
Regenerative Grazing Monitoring - ongoing monitoring of short term and long term sites across 5 properties - high to low rainfall, landholder engagement, development of case studies and extension of results.	3	☑
Future Drought Fund Regenerative opportunities in low rainfall zone - investigating management opportunities through grower engagement, management, investigation, soil testing, literature review and extension.	3	☑
Weather stations, Trusted Private Automatic Weather Stations (TPAWS) - ongoing management of infrastructure and data, trial and testing of new telemetric option for network, promotion of data usage and website management.	5	☑
Implementation of the Smart Farm small grant to deliver webinars to localised areas with in the region around optimising ground cover and climate bench marking.	4	○
Acid soils in the Mallee and acidity trial site - Ongoing monitoring of trial site, farmer survey, soil testing and extension.	1	☑
Carbon baseline - Establishment and monitoring of base line	1	☑
Dry saline land - grower engagement, establishment of treatment methods trials, monitoring and extension of results	4	☑
Partnered Projects - Mallee seeps, cover crops, legumes on sands - working with industry groups, monitoring trial sites and extension of results.	1	☑
Delivery of Spring crop walks, involvement in communities of practice , and Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator engagement	1	☑
Coordination, guidance and implementation of control programs for identified priority pests across the region.	2	☑
Summer grasses - Undertake trials and extension to demonstrate best practice management of African lovegrass.	2	☒
Incursion pathways - Monitoring and control of incursions pathways across the district.	2	☑
Southern Mallee Pest and Weed Project, co-delivered with two Mallee councils through provision of field officer to manage on-ground works.	2	😊
Coordination of fox management program, running fox bait distribution events across the region. Working with the working group to plan and execute the program.	2	☑
Wild dogs - Support landholder network, provide tailored advice and tools for long-term monitoring and management of wild dogs. Support the baiting program across Ngarkat Conservation Park.	2	☑
Priority weeds projects - Landholders in strategic areas will be assisted to control priority weeds	2	☑
Coordinated pest control - Landholder in key areas will be assisted to control priority pest animals including rabbits, goats and deer	2	☑
Maintain on-farm trials, build relationships with graziers and promote the benefits of managing healthy native grasslands on farm.	4	☑
Promote the production benefits of maintaining healthy native grasslands on sheep grazing properties via communication products, events and one-on-one interactions.	3	☑

*Refer to Appendix 1

Legend ☑ = On Track, ○ = Not Started, ☒ = Behind Schedule, 😊 = Completed



Sustainable water use

Program investment

Program	Levies	External	Total	Actual YTD
Sustainable Irrigation	215,756	6,420,372	6,636,128	5,317,126
Water Planning and Management	1,961,328	-	1,961,328	980,664
Water Allocation Planning	450,396	-	450,396	186,187
Water Literacy	-	-	-	0
Pest Plant and Animal Management	229,850	54,000	283,850	100,859
Program Support	1,330,698	-	1,330,698	631,885
TOTAL	4,188,028	6,474,372	10,662,400	7,216,721

Program Progress Summary

After some significant work by the water resources team, the updated Environmental Land Management Allocation policy for the LMRIA was adopted by the Minister as part of the River Murray Water Allocations Plan and implementation can now be with certainty. On a more sobering note, in the Marne Saunders Prescribed Water Resource Area, spring monitoring has identified some decline for our water and fauna and a public forum is scheduled to work with community to plan a way forward.

The sustainable water use team has continued with work with community on their water efficiency projects with pleasing progress being made. The team has embarked on a new partnership project to support the benchmarking of best practice irrigation in the Riverland and is continuing to engage with community and stakeholders. This engagement is working well with community on pest control works with new landholders becoming involved in the pest control programs and working together with our staff.

Quarterly Program highlights

- The water resource team has been working with the community since 2017 to review and update the Environmental Land Management Allocation policy for the Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Area) within the River Murray Water Allocation Plan. After more than 3 years of community engagement, multiple meetings and consultation events to co-design the policy with the community, it was a big achievement for the Minister to adopt the new Plan. The team still have a long road ahead through working with DEW water licensing to make sure the new policy is fully implemented over the next 10 years.
- As part of the implementation of the Water Allocation Plan in the Marne Saunders Prescribed Water Resource Area (PWRA), the landscape board monitors streamflow and fish populations to determine whether the plan provides sufficient environmental water to ecosystems. A 20 year review of fish data was undertaken this year, and from 2002–2021, a total of 21 freshwater fish species (15 native and 6 alien) have been sampled across the Marne Saunders PWRA. The findings of the review revealed a picture of substantial decline across the Marne Saunders PWRA.

Namely, the review highlighted that between 2002 and 2021, the Marne Saunders PWRA experienced, a:

- decline in rainfall and runoff
 - reduction in surface flow and groundwater levels
 - reduction of flow days at gauged sites
 - reduction in water quality, specifically an increase in salinity
 - environmental water requirements for fish related assets not being delivered, and
 - shift in fish communities including reductions and likely future loss of fish-related assets.
- The demonstrated decline in condition at most sites indicates that environmental water requirements are insufficient to support fish-related assets in the Marne Saunders PWRA. The primary factor contributing to decline is the reduced rainfall and runoff that results in a lack of surface flow and the deterioration of groundwater and surface water quality. In light of this review, plus community concerns, the water resource team has organised a Marne Saunders Water Forum in February 2022 at Cambrai to inform the community of current trends, conditions, investigations and projects that are underway, and to plan a way forward on what to do next in regards to water planning.
 - The sustainable water use team prepared and submitted the 5th bi-annual report for the Water Efficiency Program (WEP) to Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment which will facilitate the next milestone payment being received by the landscape board.
 - More than 50% of the 28 approved WEP project proponents have now completed their contracted on-farm works.
 - Completion of the 2-day Murray-Darling Association (MDA) Annual Stakeholder Symposium Forum at Murray Bridge which was financially supported by the landscape board's Sustainable Water Use program.
 - The team commenced a new project with the Australian Wine Research Institute (AWRI) supporting the benchmarking of best practice irrigation within the Riverland wine grape industry.
 - The rabbit season commenced early across the region and staff were proactive in providing support, advice and resources to landholders. Tailored programs and control methods for the varying situations are key to ensuring the solution is the right one and control is effective. Many situations in the Riverland are not eligible for 1080 bait, and staff are seeking alternative methods of support for these landholders. Pindone is becoming more popular along with fumigation among landholders who previously had thought that these types of control were not viable options.
 - The annual Eastside rabbit project included the distribution of flyers to all residential properties in the Murray Bridge East and Riverglades neighbourhood that reached the minimum size (1000 m²). This approach allowed us to bring new participants on board who have previously missed AusPost delivery routes. A total of 34 residents attended 5 Eastside rabbit bait mixing day events plus 1 out of session event. Combined, the participants purchased 280 kg pindone oats and 52kg free feed oats. Eastside has been an area with an ongoing rabbit issue so it was great to see this many landholders keen on managing rabbits and receiving targeted advice from our skilled staff.

Progress on program strategies

Program Strategies	Focus Areas*	Status
Monitor streamflow and fish populations in the Marne Saunders Prescribed Water Resource Area and undertake a 20 year review of fish monitoring to date	3	😊
Coordinate and engage the Marne Saunders community on the current status of the prescribed water resource	3	❌
Coordinate and collect Annual Water Use Surveys and Salinity Samples from the Mallee, Peake Roby and Sherlock, and Marne Saunders prescribed wells/water resource areas	2	✅
Implement the River Murray Water Allocation Plan specifically, the ELMA policy and the upper Pike Extraction Limit	1	○
Undertake a 10 year review of the WAP for the Mallee prescribed wells area	3	✅
Investigate pathways to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework / MERI plan(s) for water allocation plans in the region	4	✅
Coordinate the engagement of First Nations in water planning and management	3	❌
Assess and issue water affecting activity permits in accordance with the regions Water Affecting Activity Control Policy and provide comments on development applications in relation to the regions water resources	2	✅
Water resources team to support the coordination of the bi-monthly Water Advisory Committee meetings	3	✅
Produce material to support the community's understanding of policies within water allocation plans, specifically in 2021-22 the updated ELMA policy	3	✅
Support the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan	1	✅
Identify new project opportunities that support the adoption of alternative water sources	2	✅
Identify new project opportunities that deliver sustainable water outcomes	1	✅
Support communication and engagement activities that contribute to the community having an improved understanding of water literacy	3	✅
Coordination, guidance and implementation of control programs for identified priority pest plant species.	5	✅
Landholders are supported to conduct coordinated pest animal control programs, and encouraged to work across the landscape. Options for projects and alternative support is investigated.	5	✅
Cost recovery works are planned and completed in a coordinated manner targeting priority species and locations.	5	✅

*Refer to Appendix 1.

Legend  = On Track,  = Not Started,  = Behind Schedule,  = Completed



Healthy rivers, lakes and wetlands

Program investment

Program	Levies	External	Total	Actual YTD
Wetlands and Floodplain Restoration	476,751	1,159,275	1,636,026	559,733
Restoring Ramsar Wetlands	-	866,478	866,478	283,405
Pest plant and animal management	175,506	-	175,506	81,715
Program Support	299,266	-	299,266	142,107
TOTAL	951,523	2,025,753	2,977,276	1,066,960

Program Progress Summary

While spring was a technically challenging period due to the weather conditions experienced, the collaborations and solutions developed have seen good responses from flora, fauna and river health.

The region experienced a long unregulated flow event as a result of spring rains across the Basin. One down side of the high flows is that a number of carp-free pool-connected sites have been subject to over bank flows. This may have allowed large carp to get into the lagoons. While it is not known how substantial this breach has been, it can be assumed that these fish will have some impact on the extent and duration of submerged vegetation habitat development that can be achieved during this wet phase.

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO) pumping program is proceeding well and to plan. Initial fill volumes have been delivered to 14 sites including the largest pumping operation this year, Markaranka. Initial fill operations continued up to Christmas at two sites including the second largest operation for this year at Nikalapko. Being advanced in the work program enabled the suspension of operations over the Christmas and New Year period to be resumed in January 2022.

As a result of the mild winter and spring conditions including unregulated flows, actual water use will come in well below the approved 2021-2022 watering schedule. Negotiation commenced with the CEWO to reapply this volume to an expanded pumping objective at Markaranka to inundate a larger floodplain area, much of which is prime Regent Parrot habitat.

Quarterly Program highlights

- Spring was a complex period for the planning and implementation of environmental watering – particularly in the Riverland. Rainfall and river flow conditions have been very good across the Murray-Darling Basin throughout the season (and on the back of continuing strong La Nina conditions) with sustained modest unregulated flows over a period of three months.

Spring conditions allowed the implementation of the most complex suite of hydrological manipulations ever planned and attempted along the South Australian section of the River Murray. This included the concurrent watering of three major floodplains (Chowilla, Pike and Katarapko), weir pool raising operations for environmental benefits in all six weirs, attractant flows over the barrages, flushing flows for the Murray Mouth in addition to our own suite of pool connected wetland manipulations and our annual CEWO pumping operations).

On top of the weir pool manipulations, the region experienced a modest sustained unregulated flow (around 30,000 ML/day since September) – and this is believed to be the first time that water managers have had both the opportunity and the complexities of managing unregulated flow over weir pool manipulations – certainly at this scale of operation.








Ultimately all of the planned operations have been implemented effectively creating the conditions similar to those that might normally reflect a 60,000+ ML/day seasonal flow pulse. This type of environmental water management is the result of the infrastructure development, planning, negotiations and operational experience that has been evolving over the last 10 years – and is the primary goal of the Basin Plan.

This endeavour has however been challenging to deliver. It requires complex environmental water modelling and allocation negotiations at many levels, particularly in such a dynamic flow situation, as well as continuous operational adaptation and resolution, with multiple concurrent objectives being pursued and operations being implemented in and around one another.

The work has exposed some process gaps or weaknesses that we need to address but it did work very well and with outstanding results. This endeavour involved water managers involved not just the members of our own wetlands team but our colleagues from DEW the MDBA the CEWO, landholders and stakeholders.

- A collaborative approach and voluntary compliance are proving effective in managing boneseed in the Kingston-on-Murray area. Staff from both district teams have come together to conduct control on a key stretch of Murray River and an associated creek. Follow up work and inspections have been coordinated with the local National Parks and Wildlife staff, and private property owners.
- The success of the Murraylands district boneseed control program relates closely to the effort put in last year to greatly reduce infestations at key sites. This year the predominant focus has the maintenance of germinated plants between seasons, including works by internal staff and external contractors. One new site at Cowirra was surveyed and controlled by the team. The district team is making a significant impact on this environmental weed, to the point of having 'broken the back' and gained control of the biggest infestations.

Progress on program strategies

Program Strategies	Focus Areas*	Status
River corridor weed control project - survey and control aquatic and terrestrial weeds impacting the river corridor environment	5	
Boneseed control project river corridor - boneseed infestations are identified, mapped and priority sites along river corridor	5	
Survey, control and monitoring of Murray River and associated creeks and wetlands.	5	
Plan, negotiate, implement and monitor the delivery of CEWO environmental water to targeted floodplain (ephemeral) wetlands along the River Murray.	1	
Plan, coordinate (with other agencies), guide and monitor the hydrological profiles (drying / re-wetting / water quality manipulation) of managed pool-connected wetlands along the River Murray.	2	
Engage landholder / stakeholders (inc. Traditional Owners) / school groups / volunteers and the regional community in wetland planning, management monitoring and learning opportunities around wetland environments, wetland management and on the nature, value and use of environmental water.	4	
Plan, implement and support key wetland threatened species initiatives involving regional organisations (NGO's, universities, etc.), landholders, Traditional Owners, school groups and volunteers.	3	

*Refer to Appendix 1

Legend  = On Track,  = Not Started,  = Behind Schedule,  = Completed



Healthy natural landscapes

Program investment

Program	Levies	External	Total	Actual YTD
Landscape Scale Restoration	370,929	700,000	1,070,929	223,348
Restoring Iron grass Grasslands	-	625,531	625,531	193,547
Threatened Mallee Birds	-	315,055	315,055	102,361
Pest plant and animal management	222,660	-	222,660	105,429
Program Support	276,342	54,847	331,189	131,222
TOTAL	869,931	1,695,433	2,565,364	755,906

Progress Summary

This quarter has seen excellent community engagement outcomes across a number of projects, inspiring those involved and the broader community. This is an achievement in itself and augers well for future community engagement endeavours and landholder participation.

The results from work undertaken is evident in the biological responses and environmental outcomes being seen and that is likely to be attractive to collaborators and to funding bodies into the future.

Quarterly Program highlights

- A workshop was held with the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee (FPRMM) in November, providing an overview of the Living Landscapes project and gaining input regarding the ways in which the FPRMM would like to be involved. The project budget includes \$60,000 to support projects led by the First Peoples and a further budget to support their engagement in activities led by National Parks and Wildlife Service South Australia Australian Landscape Trust and the landscape board. This initial workshop was a great opportunity to discuss how to implement some of the ideas generated in the Conservation Action Planning exercise undertaken a few years ago and to understand the First Peoples' interests in this area, such as significant sites and species.



Photo 4. Workshop with the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee (FPRMM).

- In November, landscape ecology and citizen science staff ran a native grassland walk and talk at Callington Hill. The property is owned by the Rural City of Murray Bridge and the council's community biodiversity officer was attended the walk and told the attendees about the Kanmantoo-Callington Landcare Group and other volunteers who have been instrumental in caring for this heritage agreement protected property. The site is one of the best examples of iron-grass native grasslands in the region and has a wide variety of native grasses with more than 30 species recorded on site. The event was scheduled to showcase the grasses which usually flower later than the more colourful species. There were 18 attendees and everyone learnt about new grasses and, from the feedback sheets and appreciation at the end of the talk, the landscape board has a new group of supporters.



Photo 5. Nicola Barnes discussing Kangaroo Grass – a species that used to be widespread and abundant but has diminished greatly under grazing pressure in many areas.



Photo 6. Kate Graham showing the differences between two types of Aristida's (grasses with three awns on each lemma of each floret).

- Fifteen dam sites in Danggali Wilderness Protection Area have been earmarked for potential closure this financial year under the Threatened Mallee Bird and Living Landscapes projects. A large number of sites are being considered partly because recent good rains have seen several dams catch and hold water. If these conditions continue, there may be some difficulty clearing dam sites. Additionally, it may be some time before there is another opportunity to get earthmoving equipment deployed to such a remote location. Aboriginal heritage surveys of the sites have begun.



Photo 7. Morgan Vale dam at Danggali – Cultural heritage survey trip. A high priority site for decommissioning due to its size, reliable water holding capacity and location in respect of northern property boundaries and proximity to pastoral holdings.



Photo 8. Grazing pressure and soil disturbance from visitation by goats is very evident at this site, especially around the fence lines and gateways.

- Volunteer-driven Malleefowl nest-mound monitoring surveys for the current breeding season are nearing completion and have shown some exciting results. North of the river, where breeding activity has been alarmingly low in recent years, there are signs of a good response to the relatively wet season this year. An active nest-mound was recorded in Danggali Conservation Park the first active mound in this site for six years. Meanwhile, in the Pooginook Conservation Park site there has been an active mound recorded for the first time in 17 years. It is very heartening to see that there remains an active breeding population of Malleefowl at these sites after so long.



Photo 9. Malleefowl Nest-Mound Monitoring Surveys.

- As part of our research permit for the native grassland project, the landscape board is required to collect a voucher specimen for each plant species recorded. To date we have been focussed on vegetation surveys during field trips to the grasslands but, this season we were able to collect some voucher specimens. Landscape board ecologists were joined by Aimee Linke from Mid Murray Landcare for the trip and together they collected, labelled and pressed 86 native species by late November. The specimens have all been dried at the Herbarium in Adelaide and are now ready for processing.



Photo 10. Aimee Linke, Nicola Barnes and Kate Graham – processing plant specimens on the tail-gate of the ute.



Photo 11. Nicola Barnes and Kate Graham – pressing the plants in the field and adding voucher labels.

- The Landscape Ecology team staffed a display at the 2021 Callington Show to provide information about the Native Grassland Project and other work carried out by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board. Trays exhibited a variety of native grassland plants which were a magnet for people who came to look at, touch and talk about the plants. This provided the opportunity to talk to a lot of people about the project and there was great interest in the native grasslands and how to establish and improve them. The show was well attended and really worthwhile for making contact with landholders and promoting the native grassland walk.



Photo 12. Nicola Barnes discussing grassland with some interested show goers; and Kate Graham and Nicola Barnes's grassland stall.

- As part of the grassland vegetation survey the Iron-grass Natural Temperate Grassland team surveyed one of the largest native grassland properties to date at Terowie. The team was invited onto Lynbrae Station as the landholder is keen to have the biodiversity values of the property captured in the state's records. Around 97% of the 2,618 hectare property still supports the nationally endangered grassland ecosystem, including several areas of the best condition class possible (class A). It was uplifting for the INTG survey team and a great chance to collaborate with external project members Aimee Linke and Anne Brown.



Photo 13. Typical lowland paddock of Lorna's near Terowie and the survey team – Nicola Barnes, Kate Graham, Anne Brown and Aimee Linke.

- Bird surveys were undertaken in five contiguous conservation reserves including Taylorville and Calperum Stations, Chowilla Regional Reserve, Danggali Wilderness Protection Area and Danggali Conservation Park for the Living Landscape project. 55 sites were surveyed, and each site was surveyed three times. A dedicated team of ornithologists completed the surveys with assistance from some very experienced volunteers. Sightings of the red-lored whistler and the striated grasswren were a highlight for those involved. In the coming months the team will analyse the data looking at the presence and distribution of species. Information from this will help in conservation planning and to inform and improve fire management in the area.



Photo 14. Tom Hunt – Red-lored whistler



Photo 75. Tom Hunt – Striated grasswren

- The Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (MER) pilot network post-fire monitoring resulted in the landscape board being engaged by the Australian Government to deliver the on-ground monitoring on a site on Calperum station. While the 2019–20 fire season saw unprecedented bushfires in forests, woodlands, rainforests and shrublands across Australia, these conditions provided an opportunity to understand how ecosystems recover from fires of this scale, and to determine where interventions are needed to enhance recovery.

This monitoring will ensure our region is included in a national study comparing post-fire recovery responses of native vegetation with weed management as a potential strategy. Members from the landscape ecology team, the MERI team together with a researcher and an Indigenous Ranger from the Australian Landscape Trust were trained in this methodology by a TERN scientist. This trip to X was so successful that the contract may be varied to include an additional site next year.



Photo 16. MER Pilot Network post-fire monitoring at Calperum Station.









- The Youngusband African boxthorn program was completed with many landholders taking the opportunity to be involved with spraying carried out on key roadsides by staff and contractors. Roadside signs were used to promote the project and remind landowners about the seasonal relevance for control. Two spray unit trailers were on continuous loan out to landholders in the area and were in high demand. On one large property, spraying was undertaken by Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board staff, and charged to the landholder. With large boxthorn plants easily seen from the roadside, and with dense infestation, weed control on this property will spark conversation among the local community and will help next year's program. Future work will focus on landholders who haven't yet started boxthorn control.
- The Southern Mallee Pest and Weed project with Karoonda East Murray and Southern Mallee Councils drew to a close this quarter. The project focused on managing six target weeds on council roads and ripping rabbit warrens on roadsides. The statistics and outcomes from this project are

impressive the over 9300 warrens managed on roadsides (the target for the program was 1000), 410 km of roads treated for rabbits and 1100 km of roads treated for pest weeds. Reporting to the federal funding body will occur in January and mapping data will be incorporated into the landscape board's mapping system to ensure follow up works and management occur effectively.

- The Summer Grasses, African Lovegrass project established a new site at Karoonda, with site treatments being undertaken at both this site and Tailem Bend. The Karoonda site will be treated using a Rota wiper and a glyphosate-based herbicide mix. The aim of the project is to find a method of control for African lovegrass that upholds the landholder's values, is achievable and importantly, avoids risking wind erosion during summer. Treatment at the Tailem Bend site will be downgraded this year due to consecutive applications of flupropanate. A site visit was taken to both the Karoonda and Tailem Bend sites with Sandy Cummings (Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board) and Shannon Robertson (PIRSA), to discuss trial works, design, project progress and outcomes and links with the PIRSA state unpalatable grasses project.

Progress on program strategies

Program Deliverable	Focus Areas*	Status
Continue to decommission former pastoral dams	5	
Set up trials to investigate different restoration techniques to restore function to the South Olary Plain.	3	
Collect and store native seed for use in restoration actions	4	
Facilitate working group to deliver coordinated monitoring effort and direct herbivore control to reduce total grazing pressure to the South Olary Plain.	1	
Undertake priority actions to address the conservation of threatened flora, namely targeted threat abatement activities to maintain momentum on the conservation of a few key flora species	5	
Protect a key biodiversity hotspot (e.g. Jutland precinct, Prospect Hill or the Monarto complex) through implementation of restoration activities to ensure the gains from previous investment in restoration are retained and capitalised upon.	3	
Create and maintain seed production areas	4	
Use seed from wild harvest and seed production areas to seed into degraded areas and improve plant species diversity.	3	
Set up specific trials to investigate the impacts of different sheep grazing strategies, including pulse grazing and resting periods.	1	
Improve the understanding of the role of fire in threatened bird and plant conservation. e.g. further modelling of species preferred habitat (appropriate age structure) and informing burn program to enhance plant recruitment, enhance habitat quality or protect important species. This will include surveys to get a better understanding of ecological requirements of some threatened species across the Living Landscapes project area and Billiatt Conservation Park.	2	
Contribute to fire planning to ensure the best ecological outcomes from the prescribed burn program and CFS fire planning.	5	
Strategic herbivore control will be undertaken in conjunction with the wetland team and Riverland district officers	1	
Undertake targeted Malleefowl monitoring as part of national Malleefowl mound monitoring and adaptive management predator experiment as well as targeted monitoring for other species such as phenotype studies in black eared-miners	5	

Program Deliverable	Focus Areas*	Status
Support ongoing pest animal management activities and surveillance in potentially emerging areas.	1	
Invasion pathway monitoring and control targeting pest plant and alert species.	6	
Boneseed control project - Boneseed infestations are identified, mapped and priority sites across key areas of the Murraylands district	6	
African boxthorn campaigns - management of priority African Boxthorn infestations through landholder engagement and education, assisting landholders with management, roadside and property notices and community education and media campaigns	6	
Working to destroy infestations of bridal veil and hudson pear from the Murraylands district	6	
Cost recovery works are successfully secured and delivered for external agencies	6	
Coordinated pest control - Landholders in key areas will be assisted to control priority pest animals including rabbits and goats	6	
Priority weeds projects - Landholders in target areas will be assisted to control priority weeds	6	

**Refer to Appendix 1*

Legend  = On Track,  = Not Started,  = Behind Schedule,  = Completed



People at the heart of landscape management

Program investment

Program	Levies	External	Total	Actual YTD
Grassroots Grants	333,289	-	333,289	160,307
Education Program	297,429	-	297,429	104,800
Aboriginal Partnership Program	348,291	319,769	668,060	404,798
Capacity Building and volunteer support	169,971	-	169,971	70,940
Citizen Science	128,625	-	128,625	82,015
Program Support	592,953	-	592,953	281,565
TOTAL	1,870,558	319,769	2,190,327	1,104,425

Program Progress summary

The second quarter of the year continued to be another busy period for staff across the organisation in listening and acting with our partners across the region. These partners are a mix of new and established, First Nations and migrants, young and older, business and volunteers. Together, when the landscape board facilitates these relationships, great outcomes are achieved.

Our staff have also worked collaboratively with board members to improve the design and function of Grassroots Grants and to support the delivery of “Kitchen Table Conversations” as part of the engagement on the development of the Murraylands and Riverland Plan. When the Board and its staff team work well in partnership, the sense and power of a true One Team organisation becomes clear.

Quarterly Program highlights

- The collaborative work being undertaken by a range of dedicated partners to set up a River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC) ranger team has been a key achievement this quarter. This team is being established, in addition to the existing Indigenous ranger team at Calperum Station, following the announcement of the landscape board's successful \$4.8m / 7 year funding application to the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). This partnership will result in fantastic outcomes for both RMMAC and the landscape board and will make significant contributions to the strategic goals of both organisations.



Photo 87. River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC) ranger team.

- In December 2021, a ceremony was held to celebrate the graduation of the Monarto Aboriginal Learning on Country (ALOC) team trainees. Three Indigenous school-based trainees from the Murray Bridge High School were involved in the project which gave them formal qualifications, valuable work experience, and contributed to their SACE studies. The landscape board is a proud supporter of the Monarto Safari Park ALOC program and looks forward to continuing this outstanding partnership with ZoosSA into the future.



Photo 18. Graduation of the Monarto Aboriginal Learning on Country (ALOC) team trainees.

- The landscape board partnered with the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation to run a community wetland day as part of NAIDOC Week celebrations in Murray Bridge. The day included an amazing Welcome to Country by Rita and Michael Lindsay, a fantastic talk about Ngarrindjeri perspectives on wetlands and the River Murray by Elder Owen Love, and a range of interesting and hands-on wetland activities run by the landscape board's wetland team.
- The landscape board has been working with First Nation's people to develop and support cultural values assessments and monitoring and this has been a highlight this quarter. First Nation's peoples have undertaken Aboriginal Waterways Assessments at a range of wetlands sites across the Riverland and the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation is developing and implementing Yarluwar Ruwe Assessments. These processes increase First Nations' involvement in water planning and management and assist in meeting requirements associated with environmental water planning and delivery along the River Murray.
- A workshop was held with the River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation to explore options for First Peoples' involvement in the Landscape Priority Fund Living Landscape Project. First Peoples have had a long involvement in the Living Landscapes Program as key participants in the original conservation action planning workshops for the area several years ago and have since been heavily involved in undertaking heritage surveys associated with the decommissioning of dams in the area.
- The 2021, the River Murray Youth Council (RMYC) program ended with an overnight camp at the Roonka Water Activity Centre near Blanchetown. The group got up close and personal with a range of critters with Animals Anonymous and had an amazing astronomy session at Meldanda in the Dark Sky Reserve. The group also workshoped ideas and approaches for next year's RMYC program. The trip was also a great opportunity to farewell a number of members who were in year 12, although all are keen to continue their involvement with the group in mentoring roles.

- A key achievement was the review of the Round 2 Grassroots Grants process which has informed the updated process for Round 3.



Photo 19. Aboriginal Waterways Assessments across the Riverland.



Photo 9. Workshop with the River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation

- Water-themed Young Environmental Leaders (YEL) forums were run with primary school students from across the region. The Riverland YEL forum was held in Renmark and the Murraylands YEL forum was held at Swanport Wetland near Murray Bridge. Students learned about First Nations' perspectives on water, using water efficiently, and wetlands flora and fauna. A big part of the YEL forums is developing leadership skills and participating students are expected to take what they have learnt and educate and involve others back in their schools and communities.



Photo 21. River Murray Youth Council program.



Photo 22. Water-themed Young Environmental Leaders (YEL) Forums.

- Teachers' understanding of water and how to incorporate water-related education into their schools was increased with two teacher professional development sessions. The Riverland teacher session was held at Banrock Station and teachers from across the Murraylands came together for a cruise on the Captain Proud Paddle Steamer in Murray Bridge. Teachers heard about First Nations' perspectives on water, learnt about how environmental water is managed in the River Murray, and found out about the new 'Wickedly Water Efficient' schools education program on irrigation efficiency.
- Partnerships between the landscape board and local government continue to strengthen. Works staff from the Mid Murray Council have received extension and engagement opportunities, with opportunities to conduct site visits, seek advice, weed identification and assisting in river surveys. The Berri Barmera Council Canid Pest Ejector program with works staff has been effective, gaining educational footage from remote cameras on fox behaviour which can be utilised for engagement and further refining of programs.



Photo 103. Teacher professional development (PD) sessions.

- The very popular Soil Your Undies project run in partnership with the sustainable agriculture team wrapped up with the returned undies being dried and weighed at the Loxton Research Centre. Each participant was then provided with a comprehensive report of what their undies told us about their soils and how they could be improved. A short, light-hearted and informative video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8gvic-0eDo>) was produced summing up the project, and shared widely on World Soil Day on December 5. Participant feedback was very positive and they all enjoyed learning about the health of their soils.



Photo 114. Soil Your Undies project.

- The 2021 Marne and Saunders waterbug bioblitz was a great success. A large variety of participants including primary school students, local landholders, members of the Keyneton Progress Association, Flows for the Future staff, staff from 3 different landscape boards and the Barossa Council, Traditional Owner Isobelle Campbell and volunteers sampled the sites along with macroinvertebrate experts. Each participant had their own perspective on catchment management and everyone was keen to share and learn. Samples were collected from 12 sites with 16 different species present at one site including a rare phantom midge. Water availability in these catchments is currently a concern so this data on catchment health is of great use.



Photo 25. Participants at Marne and Saunders waterbug bioblitz.

- 1 November marked the beginning of Turtle Month and the official on-line launch of the national 1 Million Turtles citizen science program. A Riverland-focused webinar with turtle expert Mike Thompson was also held, along with a number of community turtle nest surveys. This has led to a large increase in turtle and nest sightings submitted to TurtleSAT and the discovery of a nesting hotspot at Martins Bend near Berri. The launch event was recorded and is available to be viewed through the 1 Million Turtles website.



Photo 26. 1 Million Turtles citizen science program.

Progress on program strategies

Program strategies	Focus Area*	Status
Establish and maintain regular formal engagement mechanisms with First Nations groups.	2	☑
Support landscape board programs, projects and staff with First Nations engagement including heritage risk management, ILUA processes, project delivery, cultural values assessment and monitoring, planning and meeting mandatory employment/procurement targets.	2	☑
Facilitate and support First Nations' participation in landscape management including employment and capacity building programs.	2	☑
Support cultural awareness and competency development of the board, its staff, and partners.	2	☑
Build and maintain strategic partnerships with, and between, stakeholders (other landscape boards, state government, Australian government, local government, RTOs, NGOs, industry etc.) to support First Nations engagement.	1	☑
Deliver an effective, efficient and community-friendly Grassroots Grants funding program.	5	☑
Support Grassroots Grants projects that build community knowledge, skills and participation in landscape management.	4	☑
Grant management of the Grassroots Grants program	5	☑

Program strategies	Focus Area*	Status
Advice and support to landholders regarding best practice pest plant and animal control.	4	☑
Support community-led pest plant and animal management actions and projects across all four landscape boards priorities	5	☑
Support landholders and provide best practice advice to manage pest plants and animals across the landscape, including one-on-one advice.	4	☑
Build the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board citizen science network through partnerships and community engagement and training	1	☑
Deliver the Waterwatch program - support volunteer water quality data contributions and run Marne and Saunders Waterbug Bioblitz	4	☑
Utilise other citizen science platforms like FrogWatch SA and FungiMap to support other team's objectives and provide data and engagement for the region	4	☑
Coordinate the 1 Million Turtles Community Conservation Program in SA	4	☑
Recognise volunteer contributions to citizen science projects through showcase events and awards	6	😊
Ensure volunteers have access to the infrastructure needed to contribute to citizen science projects (fit for purpose databases and equipment)	6	☑
Recognise volunteer contributions to citizen science projects through Showcase events and awards	6	☑
Support internal teams to integrate citizen science components into their projects	4	☑
Work with schools to educate and involve young people and teachers in landscape management and foster their leadership.	3	☑
Facilitate the River Murray Youth Council program.	3	☑
Engage young people into landscape management projects and activities (inc. work experience).	3	☑
Provide funding for field days and forums such as the Mallee Sustainable Farming event and the Mallee and Coorong Advisory Committee AgForum.	4	☑
Implementation of AgKnowledge grant round, including development, approvals, assessments, management and reporting.	5	☑
CCW Improving Riverland Soils - ongoing monitoring of sites across the Riverland, grower engagement and extension of results	4	☑
Extension of other relevant project work and information and promotion of events and information	4	☑
Provide coordinate for the steering group progressing priority multi-tenure actions in the South Olary Plain and engage with the many partners within our region, across the state and interstate to improve conservation outcomes for species	1	☑
Continue with the development of a citizen science project looking at increasing our knowledge of the distribution of Fungi in the region	4	☑
Undertake vegetation monitoring of trial sites and long-term monitoring sites, interpret results for the benefit of the grazing community and organise appropriate opportunities to spread this knowledge in the local community.	4	😊
Support regional and national recovery teams for threatened Mallee birds	1	☑

*Refer to Appendix 1.

Legend ☑ = On Track, ○ = Not Started, ☒ = Behind Schedule, 😊 = Completed



Foundational programs

Program investment

Program	Levies	External	Total	Actual YTD
Board leadership and governance	197,611		197,611	95,461
Planning and Evaluation	599,167	26,000	625,167	284,743
Customer and Business Services	114,359		114,359	47,460
Council levy collection fees	33,899		33,899	32,215
Communications	491,843		491,843	193,661
Program Support	667,119	233,597	900,717	315,435
TOTAL	2,103,998	259,597	2,363,595	968,976

Progress summary

A number of staff within the foundational programs have taken on new opportunities this quarter, either within other programs or through the vacancies these people have created. Exceptional support continues to be provided to the organisation even with these changes.

Key projects across a number of teams were completed this quarter including the migration of website content to a new content management system, the release of the annual achievements report, the audit of the annual financial statements and the Murray Bridge office move.

It was also a busy quarter in human resources with Performance, review and developments completed, along with 7 vacancies advertised, 5 new recruits commenced and 4 voluntary separation packages offered with one accepted.

Quarterly Program highlights

- The regional website was moved to a new content management system (CMS) at the end of November 2021. Users would not see a difference but the new CMS will enable the communications team to improve the functionality of the website over time to make it a more modern and interactive experience for users.
- The regional communications strategy has been endorsed by the landscape board.
- The landscape board passed an initial audit with no adverse findings.
- Seven vacancies were advertised and filled.

- Five new recruits started and completed the induction program.
- 95% of performance reviews were completed. (We are however required to achieve 100%).
- 94% of staff have received two COVID vaccines.
- 4 voluntary separation packages were offered and one was accepted, which allowed the landscape board to be restructured in a more appropriate manner.
- The annual highlights report was released, showcasing the many projects and partnerships that delivered positive outcomes for the region and contributed to the enhancement and protection of the Murraylands and Riverland landscape.























Photo 127. Annual Highlights report.









- A pilot project to help measure success of the landscape plan has been completed.
- Staff and equipment from the Strathalbyn and Mount Barker offices were relocated to the new office in Murray Bridge.



Photo 28. Murray Bridge office

Progress on program strategies

Program strategies	Focus Area*	Status
Provide a high level of customer service and administration services to both internal and external stakeholders	7	
Undertake landscape board office relocations	7	
Undertake landscape board office renovation	7	
Undertake IT upgrades and procedure review	7	
Undertake an MS Teams trial for desk-based phone calls (both internal and external)	7	
Regional communications strategy guides general communications activity to build awareness of the landscape board and its work, and how the landscape levy contributes to the management of the region's landscapes	5	
Oversee the management of landscape board and funding partner branding to maintain integrity and meet funding guidelines	3	
All external projects are identified and monitored through the finance system	3	
Support is provided to Team Leaders and executive leadership team for the financial management of their projects.	6	
All levy projects are identified and monitored through the finance system	1	
Manage all aspects of transactional human resources management including administration, systems and reporting to achieve employment accuracy and staff satisfaction.	8	
Manage all aspects of Injury on Duty including Work Cover claims and Return to Work procedures as per legislation and to achieve staff satisfaction.	8	
Apply human resources policies and procedures as per legislation, commissioners' determinations, regulations, wards and enterprise agreements to meet legislative requirements.	8	
Provide appropriate human resources advice to all staff on request and provide strategic human resources advice and guidance to line management when required.	8	
Provision of executive support to the landscape board and its committees	7	
Ensure the landscape board continues to meet the statutory board requirements through training, maintenance of registers and evaluating performance.	7	
Council levy collection administration	3	
Transitioning information management from DEW to internal ownership, maintaining legislative requirements and easy access for staff, whilst also taking the opportunity to improve information management in line with best practice.	4	
Geographic information system (GIS) support to help staff collect and share location-based information and stories	4	
Annual business and operational planning.	1	
Grant management support for Community Grants and Ag Knowledge Grant programs as well as providing administrative support for the Ag Excellence Alliance Mixed Cover Cropping partnership project	3	
Launch and implementation of the landscape plan to guides business decisions	1	







Program strategies	Focus Area*	Status
Facilitate the ongoing review and implementation of the business plan (Annual Evaluation process)	1	
Development of the Landscape Evaluation Framework for evaluating the delivery of the landscape plan and supporting business plan.	2	
Ensure the objectives of landscape board's policy and the regional landscape plan are promoted in responses to State Government policy and other referral matters e.g. development applications and planning and design code amendments	3	
Enable the landscape board to deliver state and national reporting requirements e.g. state report cards and RLP reporting.	3	
Building the MERI skills and knowledge of staff by providing technical advice, development of systems and coordination of evaluation activities.	2	
Continued management and implementation of the Water Efficiency Program	3	
Undertake bird surveys as part of the ongoing Landscape Assessment Framework across the region	4	
Deliver the Insect Investigators project for the South Australian Museum	3	

**Refer to Appendix 1.*

Legend  = On Track,  = Not Started,  = Behind Schedule,  = Completed

3. Standard metrics reporting

The standard metrics are a defined and agreed short-list of measures the organisation counts for the purposes of communicating to the public and accountability to the executive leadership team and board members. These standard metrics quantify what has been delivered during the current quarter.

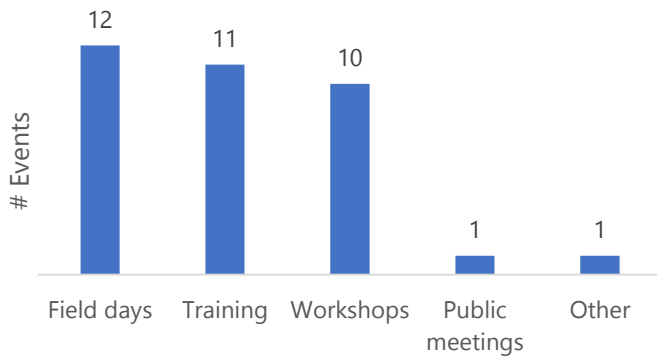
	Meas- ure	Frequ- ency							Q2 Actual
Events	#	Quarterly							35
Groups financially supported	#								34
Individuals engaged at events	#								932
Participants at volunteer events	#								0
Partnerships	#								45
Schools supported	#								80
One-on-one technical advice interactions	#								269
On-ground trials / demonstrations established or maintained	#								36
Area benefitted from pest animal control	Ha								45042
Area benefitted from pest weed control	Ha								1
Land managers involved in coordinated baiting	Ha								45
Area surveyed	Ha								16127
Compliance issues investigated	#								2
Communication materials published	#								622
Radio/TV/newspaper interviews conducted	#								7
Followers on social media	#							5357	
WAA permits received and processed	#							1	
Development referrals responded to by landscape board staff	#							19	
Area of wetlands and surrounding floodplain water regimes managed	Ha	Annual							13000
Area treated by fire management action	Ha								0
Priority threatened species and/or ecological communities supported	#								26
Volume of water returned to the environment	ML								0
Area covered by species recovery actions	Ha								0
Area of revegetation	Ha								0
Area covered by practice change	Ha								145
Treatments implemented to improve water management	#								0
External funds to levy funds	Ratio								0

Note: The shaded boxes above represent which priorities make up the total number of the quarter for each standard metric.

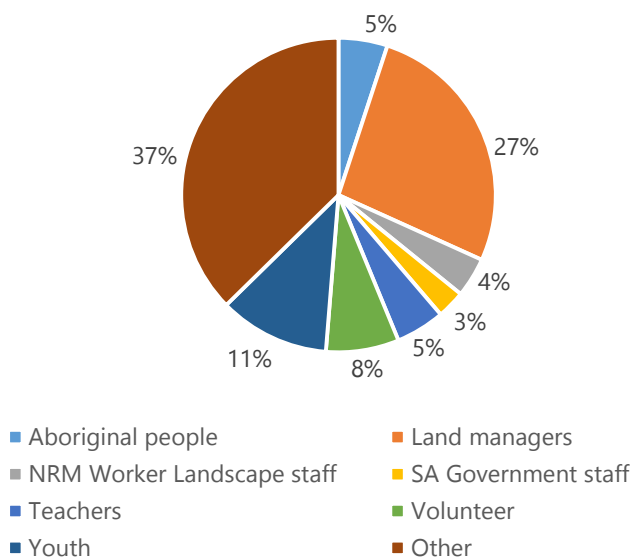
4. Stakeholder engagement

The landscape board seeks to engage with the community and diverse stakeholders through different activities, projects and media in order to work together towards long-term regional landscape outcomes. This section provides a summary of the stakeholder engagement during the current quarter.

Type of events conducted



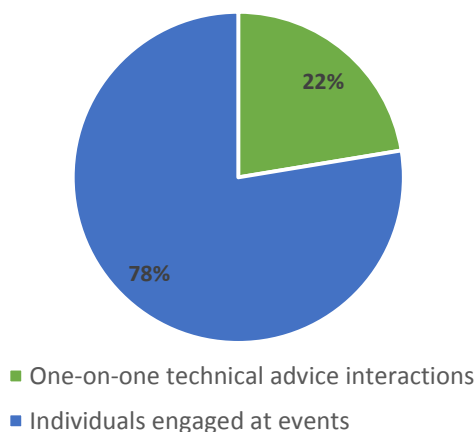
Types of individuals engaged at events



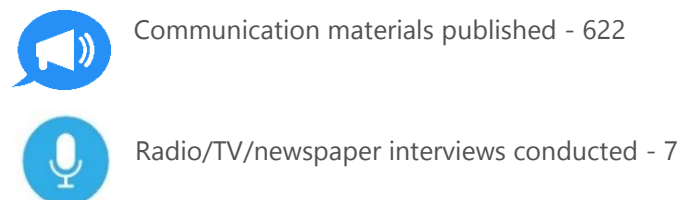
Key Partnerships



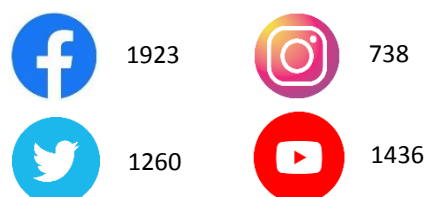
Spilt on how individuals are engaged



Traditional media produced



Followers on social media



Appendix 1. Focus Areas for Priorities



Sustainable agricultural and pastoral landscapes

1. Work with industry and farming groups to identify and address soil management issues to improve soil health and build resilience.
2. Encourage integrated management of prioritised pest plants and animals and early detection of alert species for improved biosecurity.
3. Promote and support the protection and enhancement of on-farm biodiversity and native vegetation as part of a productive system.
4. Promote and demonstrate best management practices to retain ground-cover and reduce erosion risk.
5. Support land managers to build resilience in farming systems through monitoring and managing climate risks and extreme events.



Sustainable water use

1. Work with the irrigation industry to optimise water use for productive, environmental and cultural outcomes.
2. Ensure sustainable water use by all water users in a changing climate.
3. Improve water literacy to develop the community's understanding of water management for productive, environmental and cultural outcomes.
4. Support water users to build resilience through monitoring and managing climate risks and extreme events.
5. Encourage integrated management of prioritised pest plants and animals and early detection of alert species for improved biosecurity.



Healthy rivers, lakes and wetlands

1. Manage and deliver environmental water to build the resilience of targeted wetland and floodplain ecosystems.
2. Actively manage watercourses for improved ecological outcomes in a changing climate.
3. Deliver initiatives that improve conditions for threatened species and culturally significant species.
4. Improve water literacy to develop the community's understanding of water management for productive, environmental and cultural outcomes.
5. Encourage integrated management of prioritised pest plants and animals and early detection of alert species.



Healthy landscapes

1. Work in partnership to manage total grazing pressure, including from over-abundant native species.
2. Work in partnership to proactively manage fire in the landscape to improve or maintain condition of key ecological and cultural assets.
3. Encourage targeted revegetation and restoration.
4. Ensure future seed availability of native species for revegetation in a changing climate.
5. Improve the level of protection for threatened and culturally significant species and ecological communities.
6. Encourage integrated management of prioritised pest plants and animals and early detection of alert species.



People at the heart of landscape management

1. Build and maintain strategic partnerships with, and between, stakeholders for mutually beneficial outcomes.
2. Work in partnership with First Nations to manage the region's landscapes, protect and restore cultural values and assets, and build capacity.
3. Partner with young people, foster their understanding, participation and leadership.
4. Strengthen capacity through increased knowledge, skills and participation.
5. Support community-led landscape management, providing resources to support community projects and practical action.
6. Recognise and encourage volunteers and volunteer community groups and support them to work safely and effectively.



Foundational programs

1. Develop the regional landscape plan and associated business plans.
2. Implement an effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework.
3. Ensure contractual obligations that come with external funding are delivered.
4. Continuously improve the information management systems that support evidence-based decision making.
5. Regular communication of landscape board business.
6. Accurate and timely financial, accounting and budgetary support services which are compliant with Australian Accounting Standards and government financial policies and procedures.
7. Effective and efficient administrative services providing support to staff, the landscape board, and its committees.
8. Maintain staff satisfaction through the management and delivery of human resources policy and programs

More information

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