

Lake Bonney - Surrounding Environment

Lake Bonney in the South East is a coastal lake about 10 km south of Millicent, South Australia. At over 23 km long, it is one of Australia's largest freshwater lakes. The Lake, like most of the South East region, has been extensively altered since European settlement, particularly by the effects of drainage schemes and agricultural development schemes.

For over 60 years, large volumes of wastewater from pulp and paper mills have adversely affected the health of the Lake. Recent technological upgrades and modifications to the mills have significantly improved the quality of wastewater discharged into the Lake. Monitoring by the Environment Protection Authority has revealed that the Lake water quality has improved in recent years but there is still a long way to go.

Seventy years ago Lake Bonney was surrounded by wetlands. Overtime these wetlands have been drained and/or cleared and the associated wildlife biodiversity has reduced dramatically. During this time, Bucks Lakes, once a haven for waterfowl and aquatic plants has slowly dried out to become an ephemeral wetland surrounded by relatively dry sedge lands.

Lake Bonney has retained some of the surrounding tea tree and reed plant communities but has been degraded by vegetation clearance, stock grazing at lake margins and water pollution.

The land to the north and south of Lake Bonney forms part of the interdunal corridor that becomes low and swampy at the western margins. From time to time the land surrounding the north of the Lake floods out into pastoral properties.

Creating a channel between Lake Bonney and Bucks Lake would reinstate the flow of water into Bucks Lake without needing Lake Bonney to fill to levels that cause land management issues to properties on the eastern margins.

In time reinstating Bucks Lake will see an influx of aquatic life, plants and water birds and assist in halting the regional decline in wetland habitat that currently covers only 6% of the pre-settlement area.

Bird populations that could increase in the area include waterfowl such as teal, Black duck and migratory waders such as Sandpipers and Greenshanks. In addition the area could provide a summer refuge for birds requiring more permanent water such as heron, ibis and grebe.

Bucks Lake would also become acceptable habitat to a number of small native fish species such as the Yarra pygmy perch and Galaxias.

In addition, the Department of Health has indicated that the water quality of Lake Bonney does not pose a threat to the community and water quality complies with Australian recreational guidelines.



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Position

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