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MURRAY FUTURE

Lower Lakes & Coorong Recovery

Community update

May 2013

This email newsletter is published by the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) to update the community about work being done to secure the future of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) region as a healthy, productive and resilient wetland of international importance.

Highlights

- What is a CEWH?
- Meet the Seasonal Fire Crew
- Hello Nikki
- Currency Creek Update
- What's being monitored?
- KNYA Yarlular-Ruwe (meeting of fresh and salt waters) Workshop
- Lake Albert Scoping Study Update

What is a CEWH?

The CEWH is a position within the Australian Government (held by David Papps) and stands for the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder.

The purpose of the CEWH is to meet the objectives under the Water Act, this includes being responsible for around 1500 GL of environmental water, providing it to protect and restore rivers, wetlands and floodplains throughout the Basin to promote environmental outcomes. During 2012-13 approximately 770 GL of Commonwealth environmental water will have been delivered to the Lower Lakes and Coorong.

You can visit www.environment.gov.au/water/australia/water-act/ for more details.

David Papps and Ryan Breen from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office toured the region on the 15th and 16th May with Adrienne Frears from the Living Murray Program and Russell Seaman from Major Projects, both from the South Australian Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.

David and Ryan met with the Ngarrindjeri, irrigator representatives around Lake Albert, SA Water, Lakes Hub staff at Milang and other land managers. One of the highlights of the tour was a boat trip with well known fisherman and advocate for



Backwaters of Boundary Creek looking towards the Coorong Dunes

the River Murray, Henry Jones who showed us the backwaters of Boundary Creek, Mud Island Game Reserve and Finniss River.

David and Ryan were particularly interested in understanding the complexities of managing water in this region and the views of those who work, live and enjoy the region's natural resources. They were pleased to see firsthand how Commonwealth environmental water is helping to make a difference to the environment of the Lower Lakes, and are excited about continuing to support this great area.

We would all like to thank those who we met and talked with and to Gloria and Leslie for the amazing lunches over the two days.

For more information about CEWH please see: www.environment.gov.au/ewater/

And if you would like to learn more about the regions watering priorities please ring or email Adrienne Frears on: 8463 7486 or adrienne.frears@sa.gov.au



From left: Adrienne Frears, Amelia Graham, David Papps, Will Miles and Ryan Breen

Meet the Seasonal Operation Crew

If you see some new faces around Meningie over the next few months, you may be looking at some of the nine Seasonal Operation Crew that have just joined the Major Projects Vegetation Team.

The Seasonal Operation Crew came from the Department of Environment, Water and Natural's Resources Fire Management Program and will be working in the region for the next three months to support the Vegetation program. The crew comes with a wealth of experience in managing pests and weeds including, the use of chemical spraying, chainsaw operation and tree felling. Some of the crew will also play a key role in supporting the planting of over 900,000 plants throughout the 2013 planting season.



A portion of the crew will be managing the planting hold stations at Noonameena and Pottaloch. Hold Station crews will be responsible for coordinating, tracking and dispatching 600,000 plants to planting contractors. They will receive plants from nurseries, organise plants according to their planting sites, deliver plants and tree guards to 13 planting sites and track plants accordingly.

The other portion of the crew will be delivering strategic pest management activities and restoration related projects throughout the region to boost work already being undertaken by the local community and contractors. The team will focus on projects such as environmental weedy weed control in remnant vegetation, jute matting to prevent erosion and site preparation for revegetation sites.

The creation of the Seasonal Operation Crew will provide a significant boost to the existing restoration activities in the region.

The Seasonal Operation Crew will be staying at Meningie for the duration of the Commercial Planting Program, so say hello if you see them around. For more information please contact Ben Shepherd on 0437 791 043.

Hello Nikki

Nikki has been with the CLLMM Program since October 2010. She started in a Communications and Community Engagement role and was involved in landholder and community engagement, event management, school and youth engagement and volunteer recruitment and engagement.



In 2012 Nikki started working with the Vegetation Program with a Community Engagement focus and then joined the Vegetation team in late 2012 as a Field Operations Officer. This role involves working directly with landholders, contractors, community members, and local councils to ensure the planting projects run as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Nikki grew up on a farm near Gawler and studied Geography and Environmental Studies and Marketing at Adelaide University.

Currency Creek Update

The first stage of dredging was completed on the 23 May 2013 which involved the dredging of mixed sediments to the under-water disposal location.

Work has been scheduled for Stage two dredging during June and early July 2013. The work will focus on preparing the land based disposal ponds and the disposal pipeline.



What's being monitored?

Surface Water Quality

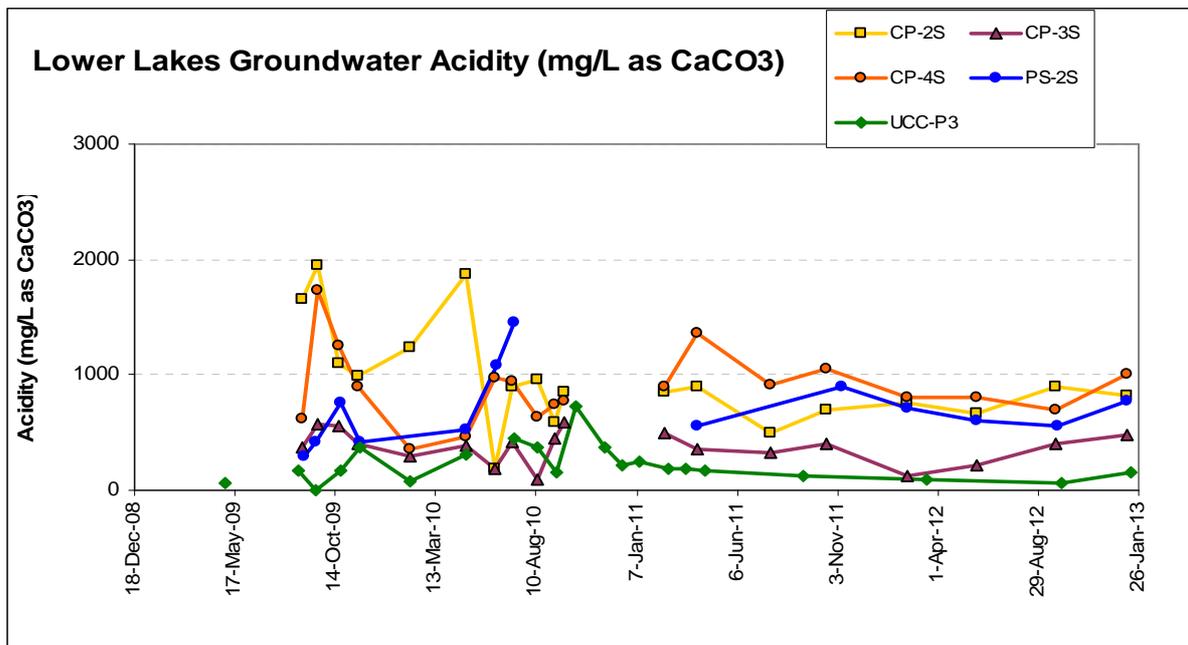
Salinity levels in Lake Alexandrina have returned to pre drought levels of on average less than 600 EC. The current average salinity of Lake Albert is approximately 3000 EC (DEWNR telemetered data) which is an improvement from June 2012 (4145 EC). Whole of lake water quality - pH and alkalinity remain stable (pH above 7.5 and alkalinity above 50 mg/L) with Lake Alexandrina currently representative of inflow water quality.

Event-based water quality monitoring has indicated neutral pH above 7.5 and alkalinity within acceptable levels. However, continued monitoring at Boggy and Hunters Creeks on Hindmarsh Island indicated localised acid sulfate soils hotspots continue to show low levels of persistent acidity despite the presence of neutral pH and alkalinity.

Groundwater

Quarterly regional unsaturated zone groundwater monitoring indicates the site is continuing to recover from drought, although acidity remains in the porewater at the following sites despite 2-3 years of inundation:

- Campbell Park
- Point Sturt
- Currency Creek



Acidic groundwater sites in the Lake Lakes (Source: EPA 2013)

While measurements generally indicate increasing pH and a change to reducing conditions, soluble metals (Iron, Magnesium) are also increasing, which may indicate reductive dissolution of metal oxides and secondary acidic minerals being formed. The sediment acidity/metals could be diffusing into surface water, with effects on benthic communities. This is currently being investigated through the acid sulfate soils research program by CSIRO and EPA.



EPA groundwater monitoring in Currency Creek (Source: EPA 2013)

KNYA Yarluwar-Ruwe (meeting of fresh and salt waters) Workshop

Back in February, The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) collaborated with the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority (NRA) to hold the KNYA Yarluwar-Ruwe Workshop. The workshop was held at Camp Coorong, and brought together Ngarrindjeri, South Australian water planners, Commonwealth Environmental Water Office and researchers from the Goyder Institute, Flinders and Griffith Universities.

The workshop had two key objectives:

- Improve Ngarrindjeri understanding of the water planning and policy framework; and,
- Improve Government understanding of Ngarrindjeri perspectives and interests in water.

Ngarrindjeri Elders welcomed attendees to the Ngarrindjeri lands and waters, and a ceremony was performed to cleanse attendees, and invite the ancestors to guide the group in their discussions.

Ngarrindjeri Elders and NRA representatives provided a Ngarrindjeri context to the workshop, describing their connection to the lands, waters and all living things and the importance of water. Ngarrindjeri explained that when they were talking about water they were also considering their people's wellbeing, futures, culture and livelihood. The NRA talked about the establishment of the Ngarrindjeri Yarluwar-Ruwe program that sought to build a future for Ngarrindjeri around caring for their lands and waters.

DEWNR representatives from the Sustainable Water Resources Branch then gave an overview of the State's water planning framework, and discussed planning approaches that were accommodating Aboriginal perspectives and interests. A number of current processes, including wetland management and environmental water planning, have progressed the integration of Aboriginal values and perspectives. It was generally accepted that more could be done by the State to meet the National Water Initiative's objective of 'water access entitlement and planning frameworks should recognise indigenous needs in relation to access and management'.

Dr Tony Minns from the Goyder Institute and Dr Sue Jackson from Griffith University also provided an overview of research being proposed or conducted that aimed to consider the incorporation of Indigenous interests into water management planning. Dr Jackson provided an overview of research she has been conducting across Australia looking at the link between water flows and Indigenous resource use, and how this has implications for current environmental water planning.

DEWNR and the NRA propose to conduct a follow up workshop later in the year to further discuss how Ngarrindjeri interests can be accommodated in the current water planning framework, and opportunities to re-think future planning processes that incorporate Aboriginal objectives and desired outcomes.

For more information about the project please contact Lachlan Sutherland, Ngarrindjeri Partnerships Coordinator, DEWNR Major Projects Branch, on 8204 1138 or via email at lachlan.sutherland@sa.gov.au.

Lake Albert Scoping Study Update

Thank you to all who participated in the Community Requirements Study as part of the Lake Albert Scoping Study. Two focus group sessions were held, and ten in depth interviews were given. In addition, 200 households were contacted to participate in a telephone survey and an online survey was also made available. The Community Reference Group is expecting to get the preliminary report on the study's findings in mid June.

A report on the preliminary modelling investigation is presently being finalised and planning for the more detailed modelling is underway. This modelling will look at each of the potential management actions under different scenarios of inflows, starting lake salinity, winds and net evaporation. The engineers are soon to commence a review of each management action considering the engineering feasibility in meeting the objective of improving water quality in Lake Albert. This review will consider the required installation, operation and maintenance, and indicative costs of each management action. A legislative review is also underway to identify the relevant approvals and timeframes that would be required for each management action.

A Talking Heads Session will be organised for mid July at the Meningie Lakes Hub to provide an update on the Project's progress and next steps. For further information, contact Andrew Dawes on 85751830.

More information

Funding

Implementation of the Long-Term Plan is part of the South Australian Government's *Murray Futures* program, which is funded by the Australian Government's *Water for the Future* initiative.

The Lakes Hubs have been funded through a grant made to the Milang and Districts Community Association as part of the CLLMM Recovery Project.

Find out more

To find out about the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources' work in the Coorong and Lower Lakes region, visit www.environment.sa.gov.au/cllmm or contact us at:
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