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MURRAY FUTURE

Lower Lakes & Coorong Recovery

Community update

January 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

- Opportunity for community input into Lake Albert water quality study
- Currency Creek regulator update
- Building a healthy and resilient wetland
- Planning for Restoration
- A timely reminder

Opportunity for community input into Lake Albert water quality study

The future management of water quality in Lake Albert and the Narrung Narrows will be the focus of a 12-month scoping study funded by the Australian and South Australian governments.

Local community members will have an opportunity to provide input to the study through the project's Community Reference Group.

The study will examine options for sustaining the water quality and the ecological health of the lake and the Narrung Narrows, and will recommend feasible strategies for the long-term management of the region.

In announcing the scoping study, Federal Water Minister Tony Burke said it would "enable informed decisions to be made about managing the water quality in Lake Albert and the Narrows".



"The scoping study will build on the significant investment already made in the CLLMM region," said Mr Burke.

"This study will consider the impact of varying lake levels and complementary works required in the Narrung Narrows and elsewhere to improve water exchange between Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina."

"The scoping study will also include evaluating the Meningie Narrung Lakes Irrigators Association five point plan," said the Minister.

The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources' CLLMM Recovery Program will undertake the scoping study, and Project Manager Theresa Myburgh says input from the community will be vital.

"The Community Reference Group, which includes Ngarrindjeri representation, will have an important role in the scoping study, feeding in critical community and heritage information," says Theresa.

"We're also looking for any information that will help us conduct the study, including historic photographs, maps, and articles – anything that's relevant to water quality management in the lake and Narrows."

Anyone with material they'd like to contribute should contact Andrew Dawes at the Lakes Hub Meningie on (08) 8575 1830 or write to Andrew at meningie@lakeshub.com

Currency Creek regulator

DEWNR is finalising arrangements for the removal of the Currency Creek regulator.

The aim of the removal project is to restore as near as practicable the pre-construction bathymetry of the site, with the project to be undertaken in four stages:

- Stage 1 involves relocating the mud wave of creek bed sediment which was formed during the regulator's construction. This material will be moved to an area within Currency Creek, and will remain underwater.
- Stage 2 involves the removal and disposal on land of the sand material introduced during construction. This material – as a slurry – will be piped to a private property, where it will be de-watered and the water returned to Currency Creek. The returned water will meet EPA guidelines.
- Stage 3 involves pushing the mixed material (i.e. construction sand and creek bed sediment) into the void space created by the removal of the regulator.
- Stage 4 involves removing the fabric and rock material, with the rocks to be trucked to the same private property being used for the disposal of the slurry.

Preparatory work and mobilisation at the site is expected to begin soon after a contract is awarded for the removal project. If the successful tenderer is able to maximise the daily dredging operation, the project would be completed in approximately four months, subject to any unforeseen impacts such as adverse weather conditions.

A boating exclusion zone already exists around the regulator, which will continue to be enforced during the removal project. DEWNR is working with local boat owners to ensure any boats moored in the area are moved before the project begins.

DEWNR has held two community sessions to provide information about the removal project, and we will continue to keep the community informed through regular *Community Updates* and through the Lakes Hub at Milang.

Building a healthy and resilient wetland

The shores of Lakes Alexandrina and Albert have experienced significant erosion, not only affecting the ecological integrity of the area, but also costing local landholders valuable productive land.

Planting sedges and rushes along the lakeshore is a method used to protect the valuable lakeshore as well as restoring grazed land adjacent to the shoreline.

In late 2012, the CLLMM Program's vegetation team and the Milang and District Community Association worked with a local landholder to plant 37,022 sedges and rushes with the goal of building a healthy and resilient wetland that may cope with change.



The species' planted included Sea club rush, Spiny flat sedge, Common spike rush and Jointed Rush which require moist or inundated soil conditions, and protection from the summer hot northerly's and any significant wave action that may affect young plants.

The planting site is on the Southern side of Lake Alexandrina in seasonally inundated areas adjacent to the lake's shore,

A special thank you to the Milang and District Community Association and Deborah Melville's team who completed the planting professionally and efficiently.

Planning for Restoration

The CLLMM Program vegetation team has also been busy planning for the commercial plantings that will occur during the wetter months of 2013.

Through the 2012 Expression of Interest process, we have been liaising with local landholders to plan commercial restoration activities on their properties, as well as working with five commercial nurseries for the propagation of almost 900,000 indigenous plants – consisting of 82 species of shrubs, trees, sedges, ground covers, and grasses.

The total area of ecological restoration in 2013 being managed by the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources is 866.89 ha, and includes public and privately owned land.

The vegetation team is also working on the site planning process which is an important aspect of the restoration program.

This includes analysing the local geography, identifying the vegetation currently on site, deciding on appropriate indigenous species selection, and determining what pest and weed control will be required to ensure a high plant survival rate.

We would like to thank everyone who made a submission during the Expression of Interest process.

A timely reminder

There have been two recent incidents on Lake Albert involving boats encountering a protruding fence and a structure from a pump shed while out on the Lake.

Landholders are reminded it is their responsibility to remove infrastructure that they placed on the lakebed during times of low water levels in Lake Albert.

Fortunately there were no serious consequences. However, it serves as a timely reminder to take the following precautions when going onto the lakes, even if you are familiar with the area:

1. Gain a copy of a Lakes Hazard Map which is available from the DEWNR website or the Lakes Hub.
2. Keep well away from any pump sheds. During the periods of low river flow, the suction lines from the pumps were extended well into the Lakes (in some cases hundreds of metres out).
3. Look for signs of fencing on the mainland and keep away from the area out from where the fence meets the water.
4. Use caution when close to the shoreline.
5. Seek local knowledge of any hazards.

To report a hazard, contact Murraywatch on (08) 8531 0710 but for emergencies call police on 000 or 131444.

More information

Funding

Developing and implementing 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 Program.

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:

Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Program

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