Each year an estimated 170,000 visitors use Port Noarlunga Reef and Onkaparinga Estuary Aquatic Reserve for recreation.

The Onkaparinga River supplies around 40% of Adelaide’s water needs in an average year.

The river’s natural seasonal flows downstream of Clarendon Weir have been significantly altered to meet this demand. This has impacted the aquatic health of high value natural assets in the Onkaparinga River and estuary.

The Onkaparinga River estuary provides important habitat for migratory birds under international agreements.

The Onkaparinga River downstream of Clarendon Weir has a high diversity of fish and aquatic plants.

The river mouth has narrowed as a result of reduced flows, creating barriers to fish passage between estuarine and marine environments.

92% of the time there is no freshwater flow directly below Clarendon Weir.

Reduced flow has increased some salinity zones to levels higher than seawater in the estuary.

The installation of an environmental flow valve at Clarendon Weir will reduce the impact of urban water diversion on vital aquatic ecosystems.

Expected benefits of the trial include improved water quality and aquatic habitat, and more sustainable populations of native fish.

Desmids, freshwater plankton, have returned to the Onkaparinga estuary since the beginning of the environmental flows trial.

Early monitoring results of the trial show that salinity has returned to natural levels in the estuary.

Onkaparinga National Park

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Recent actions to return natural flow characteristics to the Onkaparinga are showing encouraging signs of a resilient river. The AMLR NRM Board, SA Water and Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources are trialing the annual return of 9,400 megalitres of water to the river downstream of Clarendon Weir using a flow regime that mimics natural seasonal flows.