

 Let our stories unfold...

Highlights and stories of 2014-15

The 2014-15 year has seen great outcomes in Natural Resources Management in our region. This includes partnering with the community, landholders and industry, as well as the all-important on-ground works.

None of this could be achieved without the NRM Levies which the Natural Resources Management Board invests into identified areas and projects in our region, after extensive community consultation. The NRM Levies also allow the Board to leverage further funds for regional investment through State and Federal grants and funding bodies, in effect increasing our levy power.

This success story publication highlights some of those achievements which are a direct result of NRM Levy investment. The Community Panel who deliberated

on funding opportunities for the South East Drainage Network certainly was one of our major projects and received significant media attention, however other success stories included our NRM Education projects, planting days to restore habitat, weed and pest control, community grants and landholder education workshops.

I'd like to thank the SENRM Board members for their continued passion, leadership and management during 2014-15 and the hard work they have put in both individually and collectively, to improve and enhance our region's natural resources.

The Upper and Lower South East NRM Groups also need to be thanked for their commitment and efforts in working in their districts and with their local communities. They play a vital role

in informing the Board of opportunities in their area and issues that require attention, investment or further monitoring.

Finally, a thank you to the staff of Natural Resources South East and all the volunteers and community groups who have been involved in our work.

There are many success stories to be found at www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/southeast, on twitter and instagram at @yournrse.

Frank Brennan
Presiding Member
South East
Natural Resources
Management Board



1844 hectares of priority remnant areas and **582** hectares of priority habitats are managed by Natural Resources South East

Work continues to improve restored wetland

In 2005, the 230ha property immediately west of Piccaninnie Ponds Conservation Park together with approximately 26ha at the eastern end were purchased by the South Australian Government for restoration. The South East Natural Resources Management Board and the Australian Government have made this a priority investment and leveraged funding through the Australian Government.

To date, a weir and fish passageway have been constructed to reinstate the water level of the ponds to that of the early 1960s. The weir allows a greater area and depth of permanent aquatic habitat in the vicinity of the ponds. In addition, Piccaninnie Road separated the west and east sides of ponds and deprived the east side of natural surface water flows and the ecological influences of those flows such as fish movement. However, works were carried out to amend this, which have positively influenced 180ha of

wetlands through water movement.

Restoration work began at Pick Swamp during 2006 with removal of farm infrastructure, the blocking of approximately 3km of drains and construction of a levee which allowed water to return to 1.2km² of the wetland. Direct seeding and planting of 20ha of vegetation and weed control complemented the wetland restoration with ongoing monitoring of the water, birds, fish and vegetation helping to gain knowledge of restoration effects.

Pick Swamp was formally incorporated into the Piccaninnie Ponds Conservation Park in 2010 and became a Ramsar site on 21st December 2012, making the Piccaninnie Ponds Conservation Park Australia's 65th Ramsar site.

Work has continued in 2014-15 to enhance and protect this important wetland.

Protecting and improving our natural environment

Pest removal partnership with landholders improves productivity

A number of programs to mitigate threats to natural and productive agricultural systems were delivered in 2014-15 with the Regional NRM Levy.

These programs included reducing the impact of foxes through widespread fox baiting and community education programs.

Approximately 110 ha of public land along the coastal fringe was baited using an innovative aerial dispatching method. This method had not previously been used in the South East and it provided an opportunity to target larger areas in a shorter timeframe, including areas with difficult to access terrain, resulting in an increased area baited.

Workshops were also held to provide education and fox baits to private landholders, who worked in conjunction with one another to bait foxes within a localised district, thereby increasing the effectiveness of overall fox reduction programs.

A series of project 'control sites' maintained during the year have indicated that the rabbit numbers were adequately controlled for this year and 623 feral deer have been removed from public land in the Upper South East, using Commonwealth Government funding.

The South East Region also provides vital habitat and a flight corridor for many endangered and rare bird species. The NRM

Levy has invested into projects that support this.

Surveys have indicated there has been a reduction in the number of native wildlife within our regional landscape. During the 2014-15 year, a series of project activities were undertaken to improve both the extent and quality of native vegetation available within the region, including restoration of wetlands, weed control, fencing and replanting of native species.

Three community tree planting events were also held to engage and educate the community on management of native vegetation and its importance in our landscape.

Stewardship payments to landholders a key to healthy bush

South Eastern Bush Bids is a partnership program between the SA Murray Darling Basin NRM Board and the SENRM Board. Spanning both regions, this program provides a conservation tender to local landholders to protect, improve and extend vegetation communities occurring between Tailem Bend and Naracoorte, including Pine, Blue Gum, Pink Gum, Buloke, Red Gum, Grey Box and Stringy Bark.

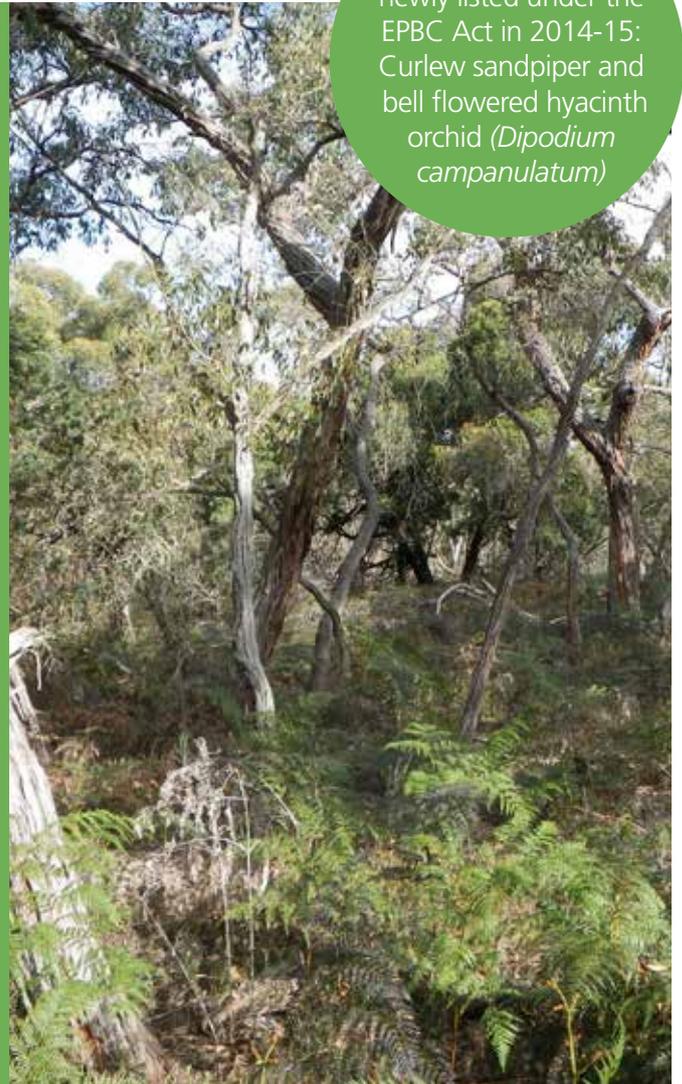
Landholders receive stewardship payments to improve condition and extent of native vegetation on private land. The program seeks to address the decline of native habitat condition and connectivity, which compromises the resilience of native flora and fauna within the landscape.

This project has been running since 2012 with landholder commitments ceasing for site management in 2024. Sixteen projects are running in the South East Region. These projects cover a combined total of over 7,876ha in the South East (of which 5986 are already under Heritage Agreement) with one million dollars of external funds invested in on-ground activities such as weed and feral animal control on these sites.

With the investment secured over a number of years, it has also provided opportunity for landholders to trial and refine best practice methods in environmental weed control for plants such as veldt grass – an emerging threat to our native habitats.

This project is supported through funding from the Australian Government.

Helping **2 species** newly listed under the EPBC Act in 2014-15: Curlew sandpiper and bell flowered hyacinth orchid (*Dipodium campanulatum*)



Schools benefit from NRM education investment

From 2013 – 2015, the SENRM Board's NRM Education team has supported 45 regional schools and kindergartens via the Schools NRM Action Grants, with over \$55,000 in funding.

Schools were invited to apply for up to \$2,000 each, to be used in establishing habitat gardens for local wildlife, or nature play spaces to better connect students with their environment on schools grounds; or for undertaking the Aboriginal On Country Learning Program.

Tenison Woods College successfully secured \$1,000 of funding to take part in the Aboriginal On Country learning program. An Aboriginal person visited the school and talked to students about Aboriginal connection to country with the opportunity to look at Aboriginal artefacts. The students undertook an on-country visit to a local Aboriginal - managed property.

Students learning outcomes included how Aboriginal people view the environment and their use of natural resources and conservation principles in coastal environments. The students have also created a native garden at the entrance to the school that depicts the landforms that feature in the Boandik Aboriginal creation story Craitbul.

Natural Resources South East NRM Education Coordinator Natasha Dawson says "The grant program has been very well received and has strengthened partnerships with existing schools already involved and new schools keen to join."

"This has been the fourth round of funding offered in the last two years, and it has been great to see how many schools have jumped at the opportunity."

The grants were funded from the NRM Levy and the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.



20,552 volunteer hours,
Over 100 community
and industry groups,
and 20 preschools
supported by
the Regional NRM
Levy in 2014-15

Local
people
actively
managing
our natural
resources

Weed Spotters find rare invasive weed

The Weed Spotters network, which is supported by the SENRM Board, led to the discovery of a rare declared weed in the South East.

A concerned landholder collected an unusual weed specimen and delivered it to the Natural Resources Centre after learning about the Weed Spotters Network through a landholder workshop.

Through the assistance of local Authorised Officers and a weeds botanist from the State Herbarium of South Australia, the weed was identified as *Cirsium arvense*, commonly known as perennial thistle.

Perennial thistle is an erect perennial herb from Europe with spiny leaves and an extensive root system which allows it to spread very efficiently. Perennial thistle is a concern to farmers because it competes with pastures and has become a widespread agricultural weed overseas. This discovery is significant for farmers because if it were to spread, perennial thistle could be the next major regionally invasive weed.

Perennial thistle is a rare weed for South Australia since it was first recorded in the 1880s, with the only previous specimen collected from the South East in 1989 near Rendelsham.

Weed Spotters are a volunteer network of community members who are on the lookout for new and emerging weeds. The SENRM Board supports the Weed Spotters through the "Engaging the Community to Defeat the Weed Menace Project", which is funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

71 events delivered to over 6,400 participants in 2014-15 were supported by the Regional NRM Levy, promoting community awareness and understanding of NRM issues.



South East 'Safari' rewards volunteer achievements

The South East Safari was a celebration and recognition event organised by Natural Resources South East to thank and acknowledge the important contributions to Natural Resource Management made by Volunteers across the South East region.

Volunteers contributed more than 20,000 direct hours to Natural Resources South East activities for 2015 and partnered with us in sustaining conservation parks, reserves and places for our community to enjoy the natural environment.

The safari was held at Tarooki

Campsite, Robe and included workshop presentations, an overnight camp and field trips covering topics such as erosion control, revegetation, motion sensor camera monitoring, cultural knowledge and social media.

South East volunteers were recognised with NRM Premiers Certificates of Recognition for Outstanding Volunteer Service and environmental volunteer groups shared their stories of success and achievement with others. It was a great opportunity to come together, learn from each other and

celebrate our achievements.

The South East Safari was coordinated by a group of staff working across projects that involve the community and volunteer support, and was supported by the South East Natural Resources Management Board through the Upper South East and Lower South East NRM Groups, Sustainable Communities initiatives and State and Australian Government funded projects.

Farmers receive a boost in soil salinity fight

The SENRM Board's Land Management Project has supported 14 landholders part of Millicent Ag Bureau to help address the region's rising salinity issue.

After a pilot study in 2014, the Millicent Ag Bureau applied to the South East Natural Resources Management Board's Land Management Project to map approximately 500ha across 14 properties in the Millicent, Tantanoola and Furner areas.

The SENRM Board sponsored the Millicent Ag bureau to bring the 'Varis on the go pH mapping equipment' to the region. This specialised equipment can create a visual map of a paddocks varying soil pH conditions. With this information the landholder can apply varying rates of lime to address pH imbalances across the paddock.

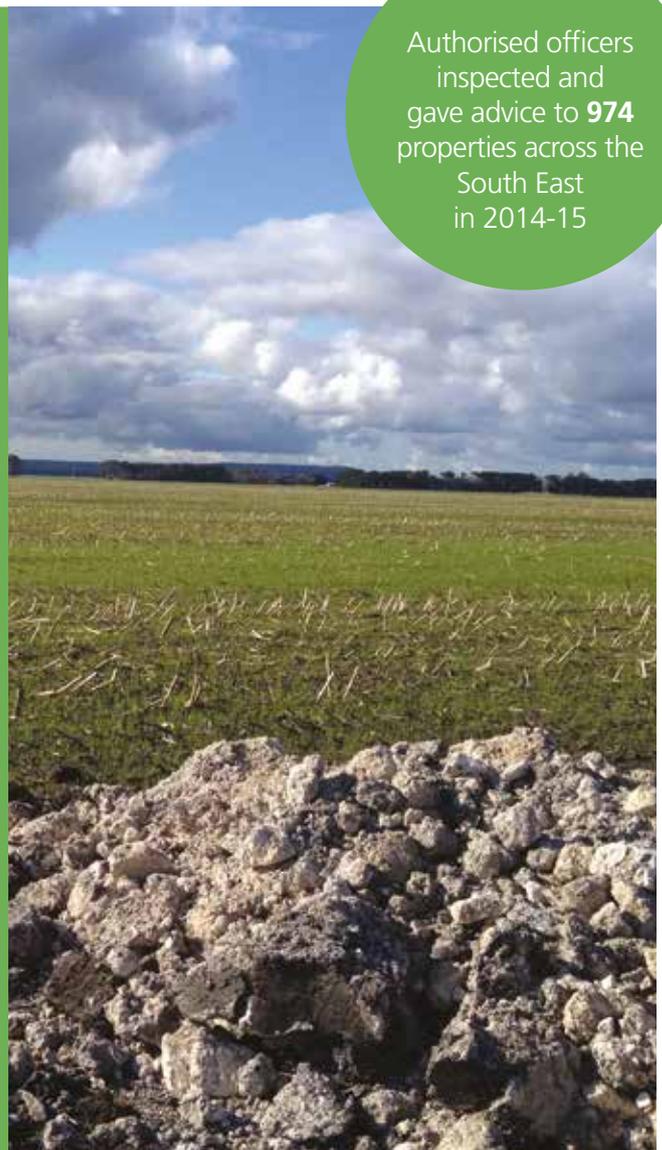
As a result of the project, there has been an additional 1,250 tonnes of lime applied to the region's soils.

Chris Bateman, President of Millicent Ag Bureau said "This new technology will be a game changer for managing soil pH in our region with the ability to visually see where tests need to be done and determine the lime rates that need applying."

This work has also led to an additional outcome: to perform on-farm basic soil testing, good and reliable equipment is needed but is expensive, requires calibration and is only used on a number of occasions a year. The SENRM Board has assembled 5 soil test loan kits which landholders can borrow. This will enable landholder to perform basic soil tests at little cost to their enterprise.

The Land Management Project is supported by the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

Authorised officers inspected and gave advice to **974** properties across the South East in 2014-15



Red meat industry benefits from SENRM Board support

The Limestone Coast Economic Diversification Committee and Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) sought out the expertise of the Regional Landcare Facilitator to support them in connecting to red meat producers in the South East in relation to a variety of production and value chain issues.

A forum was held involving key stakeholders in the red meat industry, including producers, agribusiness consultants, livestock agents, transporters and others. A working group was then formed to focus on the creation of a Red Meat Cluster - a formal industry group to work on the key issues identified.

The Regional Landcare Facilitator was instrumental in helping producers and others across the red meat value chain to apply for funding from PIRSA.

In mid-2014 the Limestone Coast Red Meat Cluster (LCRMC) was officially formed and achieved Round One funding through PIRSA's Premium Food and Wine Innovation Cluster Program. Activities for

the first 12 months included value chain mapping, regional data analysis and engaging with the region's large processors, with the Regional Landcare Facilitator heavily involved.

Round Two funding for a collaborative project with University of Adelaide has recently been approved. The second round of funding will provide the opportunity for the cluster to continue to explore innovative options for the industry and build on the work done by the cluster so far. It will also provide an opportunity for the University of Adelaide to offer training and extension activities for their research currently occurring in the region.

The SENRM Board's Regional Landcare Facilitator has been an important part of the LCRMC journey and a great example of identifying a problem, finding a solution and supporting a collaborative approach in management. The Regional Landcare Facilitator's project is funded through the Australian Government National Landcare Programme.

Helping industries grow through careful use and management of our natural resources



290 landholders participating in on-ground NRM activities delivered by Natural Resources South East



New leaders created and equipped for the region

The SENRM Board leverages funding through the Australian Government National Landcare Programme to employ two Regional Landcare Facilitators whose role is to improve communication across sustainable agriculture in the South East.

One of the achievements of the Regional Landcare Facilitators was the establishment of the Sustainable Agriculture Collaborative Network comprising of farmer groups, industry associations from seven different agricultural industries, state and local government agencies, agribusiness and public research organisations. The members have the opportunity to interact, discuss issues and identify potential opportunities to collaborate.

The Network acknowledged a need for improved leadership skills in their groups and organisations with one member group, MacKillop Farm Management Group, taking the lead role in solving this problem. Working with the Regional Landcare Facilitators, a suitable grant was sourced for them and the Regional Landcare Facilitators assisted with the grant application process.

The application was successful and the Regional Landcare Facilitators continued to provide support with set up and participation on the project steering committee, and advice regarding governance, project evaluation, working with supporting groups and communication of the project to the community and the SE Sustainable Agriculture Collaborative Network.

The result was 18 leaders and 13 mentors graduating from a leadership course in August 2014. Graduates, from a mix of farming businesses, producer and environment groups and agribusinesses, enjoyed high quality training and are already taking on new leadership responsibilities within the agricultural sector in the region.

Monitoring and evaluation the key to successful NRM

The South East Natural Resources Management Board has a Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement Team that supports staff to deliver their projects in accordance with the Project Management Framework.

The measurement of progress is of vital importance to the SENRM Board as it shows accountability for the NRM Levy and other funding received, measures project outcomes, documents lessons learned to improve future performance and instils confidence that good investment is happening in the region.

Monitoring and evaluation takes a lot of time and effort and requires significant data analysis. 2014-15 was a successful year for the MERI team, with the first ever review of the progress made so far in achieving the outcomes set out in the Regional Natural Resources Management Plan. This review covered all regional projects, with a mix of Levy, State and Commonwealth Government-funded projects.

This exercise helped to establish which targets were easily attainable and which were more difficult to achieve, within the given resources and time constraints.

Progress had been made towards 78% of Management Action targets (MATs), with 42% either achieved or on-track to be achieved by 2015.

63 people
partnered with the
SENRM Board
as Weed Spotters in
2014-15



Working together to find ways to keep improving

SENRM Board prepares well for climate change adaptation

The climate change outlook for South Australia is a hotter, drier climate, with more frequent and longer heat waves, less rainfall (especially in spring), higher storm surges, increased bushfire risk and less recharge to groundwater.

The SENRM Board, in partnership with Regional Development Australia (RDA) and the Limestone Coast Local Government Association (LCLGA) have been successful in obtaining funding in order to prepare for these changes in climate.

Through the State's Prospering in a Changing Climate fund and the Australian Government National Disaster Resilience Program, along with co-contributions from LCLGA and RDA and in-kind contribution from DEWNR in the form of project management, a Regional Climate Change Adaptation Plan is being developed.

As a first step towards this adaptation plan, a series of workshops were held in Keith and Mount Gambier in late June. A total of 55 representatives from the agriculture, dairy, wine, forestry, potato growers, natural resources management, local government, volunteer, community development, health and emergency management sectors attended these workshops. Attendees were asked to score the impact that these changes in climate can be expected to have on their particular sector.

Further workshops will be held to discuss the results and develop actions for adapting to climate change. A Regional Adaptation Plan will be developed that guides South East organisations, businesses and communities to prioritise actions to adapt to the changes in climate in coming decades. The actions from this plan will also inform the Board's new Regional NRM Plan scheduled for 2017.



23 new management agreements with private landholders in 2014-15 supported by the Regional NRM Levy



Natural Resources South East

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