

Stages of the Environmental Works and Measures Feasibility Program State-led Community Component

The community played a vital role in determining the priorities and developing the ideas to pre-feasibility through a five stage process as detailed below.

STAGE 1 – EXPRESSION OF INTEREST SUBMITTED BY THE COMMUNITY

In February 2012, the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board (the Board) invited the South Australian River Murray community to submit expressions of interest for project ideas that would contribute to the desired outcomes of the Basin Plan. The Expression of Interest stage was supported by advertisements and articles in regional papers, four information sessions, on-line and written information and Local Action Planning officers inviting ideas from their local communities.

A total of 107 expressions of interest were received from the community.

STAGE 2 – INTERNAL ASSESSMENT TO REVIEW AND SHORT LIST IDEAS RECEIVED FROM THE COMMUNITY

An internal assessment panel reviewed the ideas generated by the community. Based on information provided, the panel identified and excluded ideas that:

- were located outside the River Murray corridor – that is, outside of the geographic scope of the EWMFP
- did not meet the program objectives
- were already funded or being considered for funding through other initiatives. For example, native reed establishment around Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina is already funded under the Murray Futures Coorong Lower Lakes Murray Mouth Project.

The remaining ideas were considered for Stage 3 - community prioritisation.

STAGE 3 – COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS TO PRIORITISE AND DEVELOP COMMUNITY IDEAS

A series of workshops were held in early June 2012 across the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin region at Berri, Mannum and Goolwa, where ideas from Stage 2 were prioritised by the community. An open invitation was provided for attendance at the workshops through the Board's existing community networks and local media outlets.



A total of 11 ideas were identified as priorities at the first round of workshops, namely:

- Weir pool manipulation (raising and lowering water levels between Locks 1 and 6)
- Bookmark Creek and Wetland
- Martins Bend Wetlands
- Loveday Wetlands Complex
- Wetlands between Waikerie and Murray Bridge
- Mouth of Marne River
- Lower Murray Irrigation Swamps
- Active management of water levels in Lakes Alexandrina and Albert
- Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetlands
- Hindmarsh Island Wetlands
- Upgrading the Goolwa Barrage.

These priority ideas were developed into more detailed proposals at a second series of community workshops held in mid-June 2012 at the same three locations.

The Board also received feedback on stakeholder views of the respective merits of the 11 ideas via an online survey, which confirmed these ideas as the priorities.

STAGE 4 – EXPERT PANEL FURTHER ASSESSED PRIORITY IDEAS TO ESTABLISH WHICH BEST MET THE CRITERIA AND WOULD UNDERGO FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

Following the community prioritisation process, an Expert Panel was convened to further consider how each idea would contribute to achieving the program objectives. The Expert Panel comprised Department Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR), SA Water and Environment Protection Agency staff members with expertise in ecology, wetland management, environmental management and engineering. Based on the 11 community prioritised proposals and the advice of the Expert Panel, it was recommended that eight ideas progress to pre-feasibility assessment, namely:

- Bookmark Creek and Wetland restoration
- Martins Bend Wetlands restoration and stormwater reuse
- Lower Murray Irrigation Swamps
- Tolderol Wetland
- Teringie Wetland
- Waltowa Wetland
- Reconnecting Wetlands on Hindmarsh Island
- Upgrading the Barrages (specifically Goolwa Barrage).

The basis for the above eight ideas progressing to pre-feasibility assessment was that, on the information provided, they demonstrated a higher likelihood of achieving the objectives of the EWMFP; were not already being assessed for pre-feasibility or feasibility through another program; or were likely candidates for alternative funding sources.

STAGE 5 – DEWNR DEVELOPED PRE-FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENTS FOR SIX PROJECT PROPOSALS AND SUBMITTED THEM TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FOR POTENTIAL FUNDING

During Stage 5, the Lower Murray Irrigation Swamps and the Goolwa barrage ideas were eliminated from the final group of pre-feasibility assessments. Information came to hand during this stage about expected activities outside of the EWMFP, whereby these two ideas would be considered. Information gathered by DEWNR on these two ideas was subsequently passed on.

Between November 2012 and March 2013, DEWNR prepared pre-feasibility assessment reports for the final six proposals for submission to the Australian Government. The assessment reports consolidated all information received through Stages 1-4.

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