

Proposal Statement

Water Allocation Plan Marne River and Saunders Creek Prescribed Water Resources Area



**river
murray**
catchment water
management board

a healthy catchment ~ sustainable uses

February 2005

Foreword

The *Water Resources Act 1997* (the Act) requires a Water Allocation Plan to be prepared for each prescribed water resource in South Australia.

This document is the Proposal Statement for the Water Allocation Plan for the Marne River and Saunders Creek Prescribed Water Resources Area in South Australia. When completed, the Water Allocation Plan will be the sixth water management plan developed by the River Murray Catchment Water Management Board, and will include cross-references to those other plans.

The Marne-Saunders Water Allocation Plan will need to ensure that the allocation regime meets the objectives of the Act and the State Water Plan. Other binding arrangements, such as Murray-Darling Basin Commission strategies and the Council of Australian Governments water reform initiative, will also need to be met.

This Proposal Statement has been prepared by the Marne-Saunders Water Resources Planning Committee, based on their deliberations and input provided by the community. The Committee is a community-based group that was formed by the Board to assist in the development of the Marne-Saunders Water Allocation Plan.

The role of the Proposal Statement is to:

- set out in general terms the proposed content of the plan and issues to be addressed
- specify matters to be investigated before the draft plan is developed
- set out the process for consultation during the development of the Plan in addition to the requirements set out in the Act.



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1 Introduction

The Marne and Saunders catchments rise in the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges near the towns of Springton, Eden Valley and Keyneton, flowing down over the Murray Plains past the towns of Sanderston and Cambrai before joining the River Murray (see map).

Surface water and stream flow in the high rainfall Hills area of the catchments is captured, together with water from fractured rock aquifers, to support a variety of industries including irrigated agriculture as well as stock and domestic needs. Rainfall is much lower on the Murray Plains, and fresh groundwater associated with the watercourse provides the primary water resource in this area. Human water users share the water resources with diverse water-dependent ecosystems that include fish, plants and trees, frogs, birds and macro-invertebrates. The different water resources are strongly linked, with streamflow derived from the hills area forming the main source of water for recharging the sedimentary groundwater aquifers on the plains.

Community concerns with declining quantity and quality of water as well as declining health of water-dependent ecosystems in the catchments led to several investigations into the impacts of water use on stream flow and groundwater levels and their water-dependent ecosystems. The results of these investigations, together with the mounting community concerns, led to formal regulation of the water resources of the catchments.

Regulation began when a Notice of Restriction (NoR) was gazetted for the water resources of the Marne catchment (ground water, surface water and watercourse water) on 29 April 1999 pursuant to the Water Resources Act 1997 (“the Act”), followed by a NoR in the Saunders catchment on 24 January 2002.

The water resources of the Marne River and Saunders Creek catchments (ground water, surface water and watercourse water) were prescribed on 20 March 2003 under the Act. Following prescription, the River Murray Catchment Water Management Board became responsible for preparing a Water Allocation Plan (WAP) for the Marne River and Saunders Creek Prescribed Water Resource Area (PWRA). The WAP will set out the rules for taking and use of the prescribed water resources and will provide for equitable sharing of water between social, environmental and economic needs.

2 Role of the Proposal Statement

The Proposal Statement is the first step in the water allocation planning process. Under section 102(2) of the Act, the Proposal Statement must:

- Set out in general terms the proposed content of the water allocation plan
- Specify matters to be investigated by the Board before preparation of the draft plan
- Set out proposals for consultation on the draft plan that are in addition to the requirements of the Act for consultation

These matters are addressed in the following sections.

A Proposal Statement does not examine issues in detail or propose solutions, as these matters will be explored during the process of preparation of the WAP.

3 Proposed content of the Water Allocation Plan

3.1 Purpose of the WAP

- Clear statement of the problem and what the WAP aims to achieve

3.2 Description of the PWRA and water resources

- General description and map
- Interactions between surface water, watercourse water and ground water
- Impacts of past, present and future land use change on water quantity and quality

3.3 Water-dependent ecosystems

- Identification of water-dependent ecosystems
- An assessment of the quantity and quality of water needed by water-dependent ecosystems and the time or period when water is needed by those ecosystems
- Environmental impacts of water use within PWRA – prescribed water resources and imported water
- Environmental water provision for water-dependent ecosystems
- Consideration of the environmental effect that water has on the spread of pest plants

3.4 Assessment of effects on other water resources

- An assessment of the effect of taking and use of water from the prescribed water resources on the quantity and quality of other water resources
- If this taking or use would result in detrimental effects on other water resources:
 - Analysis of the needs of users and dependent ecosystems of the other water resources
 - Provisions designed to prevent or reduce the detrimental effects identified

3.5 Assessment of the capacity of the resource to meet demands

- An assessment of the quantity and quality of the water resources
- An assessment of the capacity of the resource to meet demands for water on a continuing basis, including an indication of the accuracy of the assessment
- Identification of current demands – licensed and non-licensed (including stock and domestic) needs
- Identification of future demands– licensed and non-licensed (including stock and domestic) needs
- Land capacity to meet future demands

3.6 Water allocation and transfer

- Setting sustainable extraction volumes or levels and providing a review mechanism
- Basis for water allocation
- Criteria for water allocation, taking and use
- Provision for allocation of returned and remaining water
- Water transfer criteria

- Water allocation and transfer policies that are equitable and balance social, environmental and economic needs
- Impacts of water allocation and transfer policies – short and long term
- Likely effects of policies on value of land
- Definition of management zone boundaries
- Trigger mechanisms for highlighting changes to water resource condition and/or status of dependent ecosystems
- Responses to triggers when activated
- Sustainable use of water resources
- Water use development and water management plans and programs
- Efficient taking, storage and use of water
- Groundwater recharge
- Social and economic impacts of water use and WAP policies
- Impact assessment of water use – eg. off-site and environmental impacts
- Provision for stock and domestic requirements

3.7 Permits

- Identification of water-affecting activities requiring permits (if any)
- Policies and criteria for granting permits

3.8 Taking and use of other water resources

- Provisions relating to taking and use of water from another resource if this is likely to affect the management of the prescribed resource

3.9 Monitoring

- Provisions for the regular monitoring of the prescribed resource to assess capacity to meet demands for water on a continuing basis
- Provisions for the monitoring of water-dependent ecosystems to assess whether their water requirements are being met
- Identification of knowledge gaps and further research needs

4 Matters to be investigated

- Determination of ecological characteristics
- Determination of areas/issues of cultural significance
- Needs and health of water-dependent ecosystems
- Determination of hydrological characteristics
- Assessment of quantity, quality, flow regime and capacity of the water resources
- Determination of sustainable extraction volumes or levels for different water resources
- Determination of appropriate management area boundaries
- Assessment of current demands (social, economic and environmental) on different water resources including stock and domestic requirements

5 Proposed Development Plan and legislation amendments

The Act provides the opportunity for the WAP to propose changes to Development Plans of constituent councils or to other Acts or subordinate legislation where necessary or desirable for the proper management of water resources.

It is anticipated that any such changes will be identified through the water allocation plan development process. Any changes proposed to Development Plans will be defined in consultation with constituent councils, the Department of Transport and Urban Planning and Planning SA, together with other stakeholders and the broader community.

6 Additional consultation during WAP development

6.1 Marne-Saunders Water Resources Planning Committee

The River Murray Catchment Water Management Board has established the Marne-Saunders Water Resources Planning Committee (MSWRPC) to assist the Board in the preparation of the WAP. The MSWRPC is made up of a cross section of community members and water users in the Marne and Saunders catchments.

The role of the MSWRPC is to provide a balanced and researched review of options for water allocation and water resource management in the PWRA and to make recommendations on these issues to the Board, ensuring a balance of economic, social and environmental benefits.

6.2 Discussion papers

The Board and MSWRPC will develop a range of discussion papers for community information as a basis for consultation during the development of the WAP.

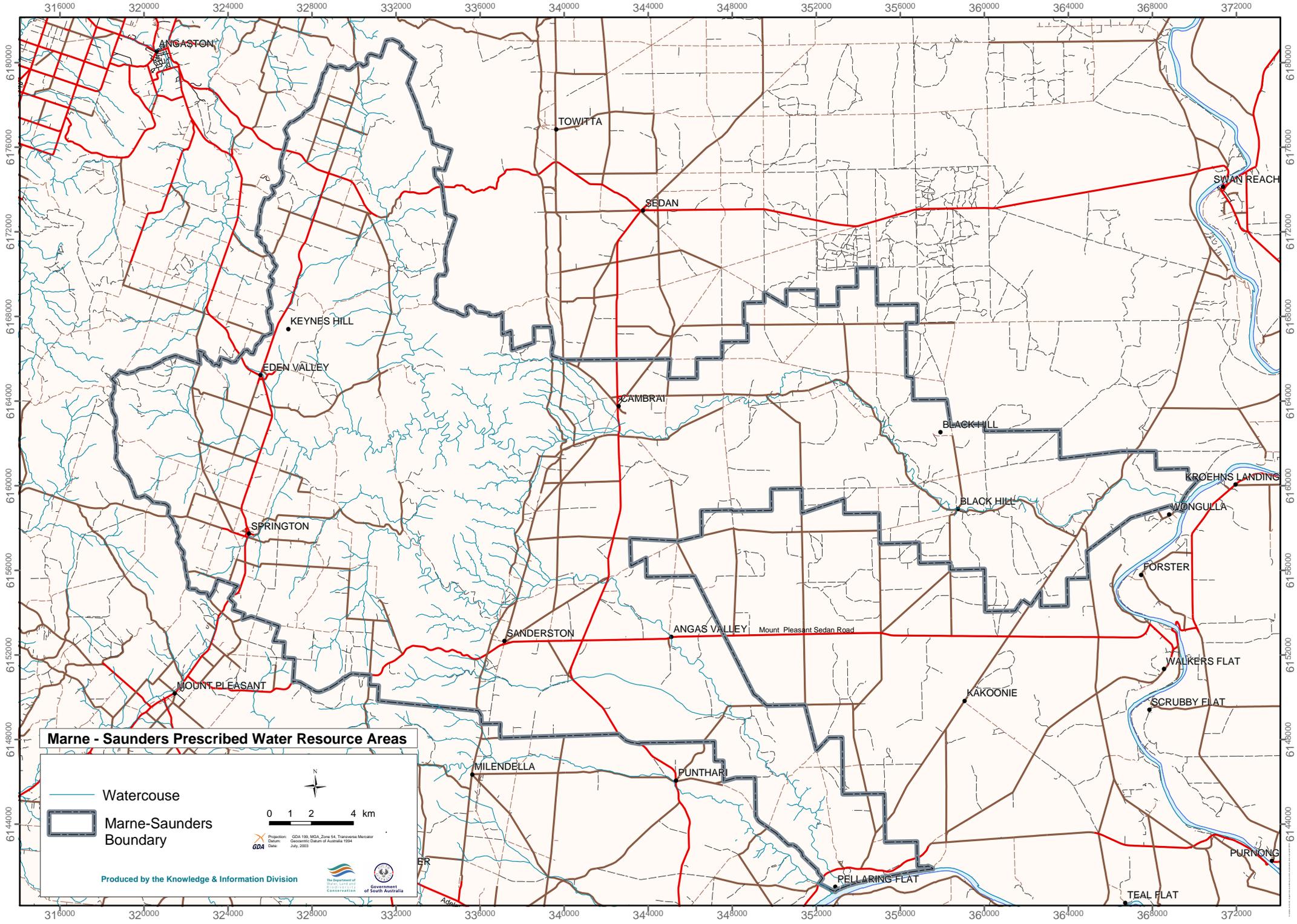
6.3 Extra consultation

Targeted (eg. water user workshops) and general community consultation

7 Links to other legislation

The WAP will have regard to the benefits of consistency with other relevant Acts/strategies etc, including:

- Natural Resources Management Act 2004 (as well as any parts of Acts that this Act has replaced that are still in operation);
- relevant management plans under the River Murray Act 2003;
- Coastal Protection Act 1972;
- relevant Development Plans under the Development Act 1993;
- relevant environmental protection policies under the Environment Protection Act 1993;
- relevant plans of management under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972;
- relevant District Plans under the Soil Conservation and Land Care Act 1989;
- native vegetation management guidelines adopted by the Native Vegetation Council under the Native Vegetation Act 1991;
- State Water Plan; and
- Catchment Water Management Plan for the River Murray in South Australia; as well as any other such plans, policies and guidelines as prescribed by regulation.



Marne - Saunders Prescribed Water Resource Areas

 Watercourse
 Marne-Saunders Boundary


 0 1 2 4 km

 Projection: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 54 Transverse Mercator
 Datum: Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994
 Date: July 2009

 The Department of Water and Environmental Conservation
 Government of South Australia

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