



**VICTORIAN MURRAY FLOODPLAIN
RESTORATION PROJECT**
HEALTHY LANDSCAPES, STRONG COMMUNITIES

VMFRP East projects environmental pathway released

Victorian Planning Minister Richard Wynne has advised the two east Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Projects – at Gunbower National Park and Guttrum and Benwell state forests – to submit comprehensive environmental reports as part of their next stage.

The two projects involve using works such as regulators and pump stations to efficiently and effectively deliver water to the forests' floodplains and wetlands, all without buying back further water from irrigators.

The projects will restore and help build the resilience of the floodplains and wetlands to cope with climate change and low river flows, while also keeping irrigation water in the hands of farmers and the community.

The floodplains and wetlands are home to important plants and animals, including threatened species. They also provide important waterbird breeding habitat and are highly valued by Traditional Owners and local communities.

The VMFRP aims to restore these floodplains and wetlands, so future generations can enjoy and benefit from them as much as the current community does.

The environmental report and the process of developing that report will focus on a range of issues that need further investigation and explanation such as hydrogeology and water quality, cultural heritage, the benefits of the flows, and the impact of the works on existing native flora and fauna.

VMFRP East Project Manager Tim Shanahan said the report was an important next step and builds on the work already done.

“This process allows us to be certain about the ecological benefits of the projects against any concerns of impact on the floodplains during construction and operation,” he said.

“As we have always said, there is a lot of work to do to ensure these projects are the best they can be, and this decision from the Planning Minister is in line with that.

“The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning is responsible for overseeing the approvals process. VMFRP is the applicant and we will comply with the steps the government requires when seeking approval for proposed projects to proceed.

“This report will require a lot of development and then be rigorously assessed by scientific experts and the community to ensure that what is proposed has benefit to the forest. This is science, transparency, and accountability at work.”

Mr Shanahan said a key part of that transparency was consultation.

“We have at least 12 months of work to do in developing the environment report and we want more community input into these projects. These projects could have big benefits for a broad range of people.

“They can help cement the area as key eco-tourism hotspot and embed the social and economic benefits water for the environment has for agriculture, the liveability of the area and the wellbeing of the community.

“We want to set up community reference groups, with representation from a broad range of forest users and community members, so they can have input into the environmental benefits and impacts of the project.

“The Murray floodplains are to be enjoyed by communities for generations. We want them to have a say on how best to manage these forests and wetlands, while keeping irrigation water in the community.



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“VMFRP will work with DELWP on the next steps and we’ll have more details to share with the community about that in the new year.”

Decisions on the other seven VMFRP projects have also been made, with details at www.vmfrp.com.au/latest-news/

Further information on those projects will come in the new year.

The detailed referral decisions for all nine projects are available on the government website at www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/referrals-and-decisions

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