

PROJECT UPDATE

March 2024



VICTORIAN MURRAY FLOODPLAIN
RESTORATION PROJECT
HEALTHY LANDSCAPES. STRONG COMMUNITIES

VMFRP Update

The Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project (VMFRP) will get much needed water back onto high-value floodplains along the Murray River. Without this water, these iconic landscapes will continue to decline - along with many native trees, animals and plants that depend on them.

Work is continuing on the VMFRP as Victoria and the Australian Government continue talks on future funding for the project.

We can confirm:

- The project team is focused on progressing the primary approvals at Hattah Lakes North, Belsar-Yungera, Nyah and Vinifera.
- We have received the Minister for Planning's assessment of our Burra Creek project. The Burra Creek project will not proceed as part of the VMFRP.

The work of the team has contributed to an incredible uplift in the level of data and insights known about our floodplain sites.

We look forward to continuing our work with specialists and communities to build on our understanding of these unique ecosystems.

Planning Assessments

The Minister for Planning's (Vic) assessment of sites is the first step in a series of planning approvals steps required for each of the project that form part of the VMFRP.

Planning approvals to be sought

- ➔ **Planning Scheme Amendment:**
Update & submit to Minister for planning
- ➔ **Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation:**
Commonwealth Minister for Environment approved decision
- ➔ **Cultural Heritage Management Plan:** Finalise & submit for approval
- ➔ **Other approvals:**
Prepare & submit applications



Site Summaries

Gunbower National Park

Work to progress this project to Public Exhibition and Minister's Assessment is currently paused pending further Commonwealth funding being secured. Engagement with Traditional Owner groups is ongoing.

Guttrum Benwell Forests

Work on this project is mostly paused pending further Commonwealth funding being secured. There is some work being done to progress matters specific to preparing the Environment Report including engagement with Traditional Owner groups.

Vinifera Nyah

Approvals progressing. The Minister for Planning's (Vic) assessment of ER Central was received October 2023. The project team is now working on addressing the Minister's recommendations, including for the Planning Scheme Amendment and EPBC approval.

Belsar-Yungera Hattah Lakes North

Approvals progressing. The Minister for Planning's (Vic) assessment of EES Central was received in July 2023. The project team is now working on addressing the Minister's recommendations, including for the Planning Scheme Amendment and EPBC approval.

Wallpolla Island Lindsay Island

Work on this project is mostly paused pending further Commonwealth funding being secured. There is some minor work being done to progress some matters which need to be resolved prior to EES process.

Burra Creek

The Minister for Planning's (Vic) assessment of Burra Creek was received in January 2024. In keeping with the Ministers assessment, the Burra Creek project will not proceed as part of the VMFRP.

Floodplain Studies and Monitoring

The Murray River and its floodplains are part of a highly interconnected ecosystem. Historically, the river would spill onto the floodplains as often as 9 out of every 10 years, nourishing both the floodplain and the river, and supporting an extraordinarily rich tapestry of life.

Over time, we have changed the way the Murray flows to suit our needs, building weirs, dams and levees. We've benefited in many ways from regulating the river, but it has come at a serious ecological cost.

River regulation has caused blockages to flow and reduced the frequency, duration and extent of flood events. It has also caused increasingly long dry periods between floods, making it harder for floodplains to bounce back.

Varying degrees of stress are already apparent across our floodplains. The tree canopy lacks vigour and flood-tolerant vegetation are stressed, which reduces habitat and food available for animals that rely on healthy floodplains. If we do not intervene, these iconic landscapes will continue to decline, potentially beyond the point of rejuvenation.

We know from our existing environmental water programs and from infrastructure built under The Living Murray program that we can reverse this decline and restore our floodplains.

The decision to release water at a site is based on monitoring of floodplain conditions and is part of a holistic approach to keeping the Murray and its floodplains healthy.

Find out more about the studies and monitoring we are doing to continually improve our understanding and management of floodplains, visit www.vmfrp.com.au/studies.

For more information, please contact info@vmfrp.vic.gov.au