Fact Sheet

Wallpolla Island

Floodplain Restoration Project Overview

The Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project (VMFRP) is one of the largest coordinated environmental improvement programs currently being delivered along the Murray River.

The VMFRP would reconnect important floodplains to the Murray River by removing barriers to water flow and building carefully designed infrastructure to support the seasonal wetting cycles that native plants and animals depend on. It will improve the ecological health of up to 15,000 hectares of wetlands and flood-dependent forests.

The Wallpolla Island project is located on the southern side of the Murray River, approximately 30 km west of Mildura, Victoria, and immediately downstream of the junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers. It forms part of the significant Chowilla-Lindsay-Wallpolla Icon Site identified under The Living Murray (TLM) program.

The Wallpolla Island project aims to restore more natural flooding patterns by improving how water moves onto, across and off the floodplain using either river flows or pumped water during low flood events. This would allow water to spread further and stay longer when the river rises, and provide a timely top-up with environmental water during dry-periods and when natural flooding isn't sufficient.

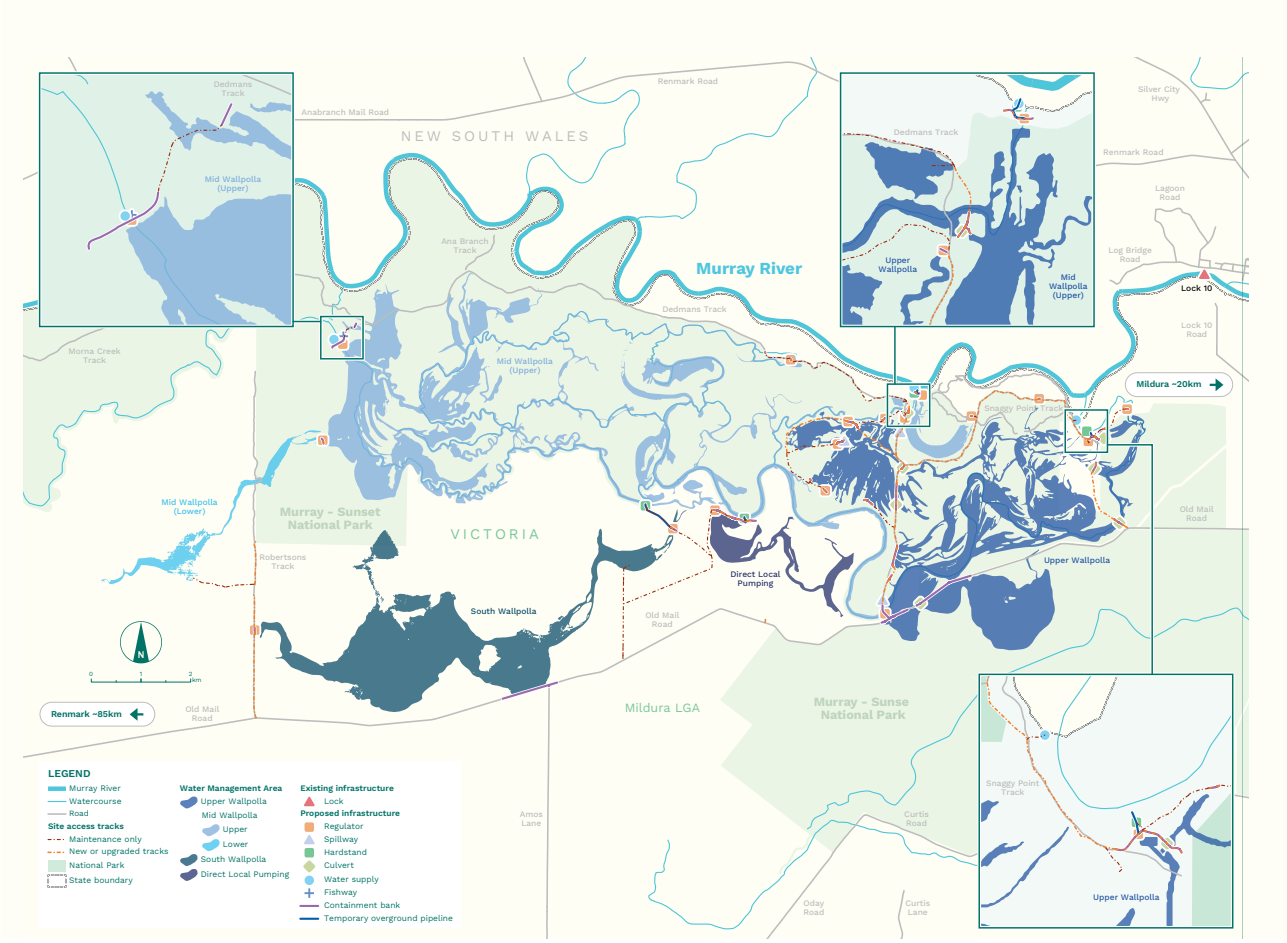
Restoring flooding at Wallpolla Island will help revive native flora. In turn, this would support vegetation communities, such as the Grassy Riverine Forest, Riverine Grassy Woodland and Lignum Shrubland to produce seeds that would increase the connectivity of habitats. It will also improve habitat for native fish, frogs, waterbirds, reptiles and mammals, and protect cultural heritage values that depend on stable soils and healthy landscapes.

Wallpolla Island is a place of deep cultural, spiritual and historical significance for Traditional Owners. Protecting cultural heritage and working closely with Traditional Owners is a key consideration in planning the project.

Project benefits

- Up to 3,109 hectares of floodplain targeted for improved ecological health
- 149 rare or threatened species, such as the Winged Peppercress and Murray Hardyhead, would benefit from improved habitat conditions
- The health of more than 9,707 large trees would improve
- Fish habitats at Wallpolla Island would be reconnected to wider floodplain areas
- Improved breeding areas for waterbirds including egrets, glossy ibis, spoonbills, cormorants and night herons
- Increased tourism and recreational opportunities
- Employment opportunities during construction, and long-term employment in the tourism and recreation industries in Mildura from anticipated uplift in visitors

Map showing proposed environmental works at Wallpolla Island



Proposed infrastructure

Most of the infrastructure would be located on crown land, with some work proposed on private property. The Wallpolla Island project complements and builds on existing environmental watering at Wallpolla Island, built under TLM as part of the Chowilla-Lindsay-Wallpolla Icon Site project. These works were completed in 2006 and included the installation of an inlet regulator at Horseshoe Lagoon.

Environmental watering proposed under the VMFRP at the Wallpolla Island project would be constructed across four Water Management Areas and would include:

- One very large regulator, which act like gates, incorporating a vertical slot fishway
  - Three large regulators
  - Twelve small regulators
  - Approximately 5.0 km of containment banks with access tracks on top
  - Eight culverts (a tunnel-like structure to help water flow under a road or track)
  - Three spillways
- Four permanent hardstand areas for temporary pumps (to transfer environmental water and construction water from the Murray River, Wallpolla Creek or Snaggy Point Billabong, as required during operation and construction)
  - Four pipeline alignments for temporary pump infrastructure (for operation)
  - Around 27 km of existing access tracks that are subject to upgrade
  - Around 15 km of existing access tracks that would be used during construction and operation that would be used for maintenance activities only
  - 1.5 km of new access tracks that would be accessible to all park users.

No permanent pumps or pipelines are proposed as part of the Wallpolla Island project

Water Management Areas

A Water Management Area (WMA) is a specific area used to manage surface water. It is defined by boundaries, such as the landscape and physical structures (for example, containment banks). Each WMA has different target inundation water levels and are designed to maximise the inundation benefits by reusing water between WMAs, where possible. There are four identified WMAs for the Wallpolla Island project including the Upper, Mid and South Wallpolla and Direct Local Pumping WMAs.

Examples of proposed infrastructure

Very Large Regulator


Small Regulator


Spillway


Containment Bank

Construction

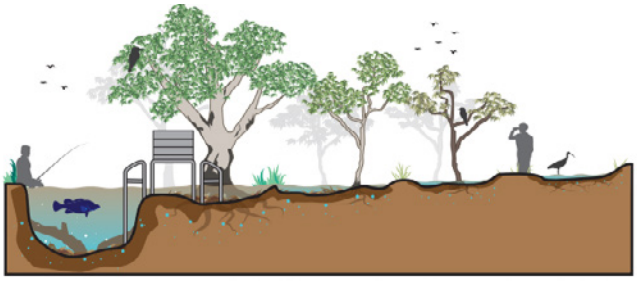
If the Wallpolla Island project is approved, construction is expected to take around 12-18 months to complete. The construction footprint, which is the area of land needed to build the projects, covers 64 hectares, and includes all infrastructure and associated construction activities, including laydown areas, site compounds, and workforce facilities, upgrades to site access and borrow sites. No works or impacts would be permitted outside of the approved construction footprint. The project would prioritise avoiding and minimising impacts to the greatest extent possible.

Before the start of any construction, detailed designs would be finalised and additional approvals and construction permits would be required. The community would be updated during the pre-construction period, and notified before the start of any works.

Construction impacts would be monitored before, during and after works. Areas disturbed during construction would be rehabilitated and long-term ecological monitoring would continue after construction is complete to track the recovery of the floodplain and inform future watering decisions.

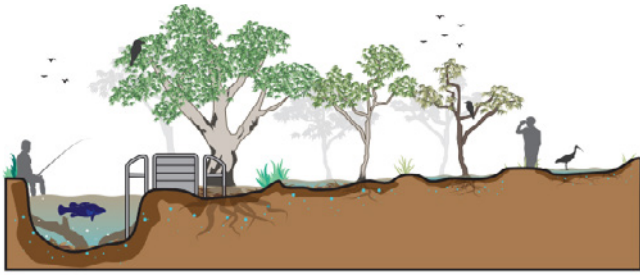
Proposed operations

Potential operating scenarios have been developed to deliver environmental water at different frequencies and durations based on the ecological needs of the Wallpolla Island sites. These scenarios would rely on high Murray River flow events and temporary pumps to deliver water to each site. Pump infrastructure would not be permanent - pumps and pipelines would be brought in temporarily for each watering event.



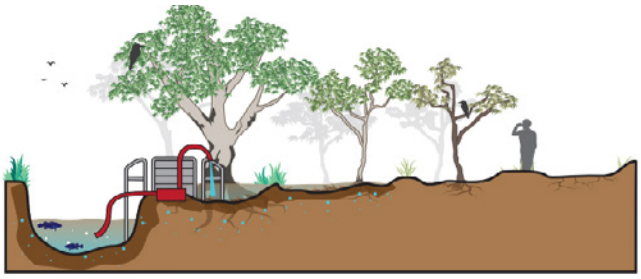
Scenario 1:

Infrequently, when the river is high and flowing into the forest, and the water stays on the floodplain for long enough, we would open the regulators and leave the water to flow naturally.



Scenario 2:

Often, when the river is high and flowing into the forest, but the flood won't last as long as it's needed, we would shut the regulators and hold the water on the floodplain, before returning the water to the river.



Scenario 3:

If the floodplain is too dry, we could use a temporary pump to get environmental water onto the floodplain and close the regulators to hold the water there for as long as needed, before returning the water to the river.

Contact us

To learn more about the Wallpolla Island Floodplain Restoration Project, visit the Wallpolla Island Project pages on the VMFRP website. The VMFRP team will continue to engage with the community, stakeholders and Traditional Owners across all stages of development of the VMFRP projects.

For more information please visit the VMFRP website or contact the team.

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