

# MALLEE CATCHMENT



## Environmental water delivers benefits



**Some of the region's most important natural assets are reaping the benefits of the latest environmental watering program.**

During 2009, sites including the internationally-renowned Hattah Lakes, Lindsay Island and Mulcra Island received a much needed drink, thanks to environmental water made available by various sources, including the Australian Government, Victorian Government, the inter-governmental Living Murray initiative and a generous private donor.

Late in 2009, water was also returned to Margooya Lagoon, near Robinvale,

following the restoration of a natural wetting and drying cycle at the wetland.

At all of the sites, waterbirds have returned in large numbers and red gum trees have responded well with increased canopies and healthier looking trunks and leaves.

Waterbird and vegetation monitoring will continue at all the sites that have received environmental water in order to measure the value of the water delivery.

Above: Environmental water at Lake Hattah.  
Photo: Mallee CMA.

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[www.malleecma.vic.gov.au](http://www.malleecma.vic.gov.au)

## Cultural heritage training Neds Corner hosts session



**Mallee CMA facilitated an intensive five-day cultural heritage training session during October, 2009, which was attended by a number of staff from the Mallee CMA, DPI and Neds Corner.**

The session was run over a period of two weeks, under the watchful eyes of trainer Jo Bell, from Heritage Services; Mallee CMA The Living Murray Indigenous Facilitator Ken Stewart; and Mallee CMA Indigenous Facilitator Marlon Parsons.

Participants learnt about current legislative frameworks; geological land formations and their link to cultural heritage; how to identify and interpret cultural heritage materials; and how to manage the discovery of human skeletal remains. The identification of skeletal remains was conducted by Jeanette Hope from River Junction Research.

The course involved hands-on practical work, as well as classroom discussions and activities. Part of the training was



held at Neds Corner Station, as well as at Lindsay and Mulcra Islands and the DPI Complex, Irymple.

Top photograph: Training underway at Lindsay Island.  
Above: A workshop on skeletal remains was part of the training. Photos: Mallee CMA.

## New frontage project begins

A new project is underway to protect and improve Murray River frontages at sites where water is pumped from the river.

The aim of the project is to encourage licensees that have pumps constructed under an existing works licence to undertake a self assessment questionnaire looking at the environmental impacts the infrastructure may be having on adjoining river frontage areas and the river.

Participating agencies are seeking the involvement of irrigators in the early phases of the project.

For further information on the "Reducing Nutrient and Sediment Inputs to the Murray River" project, contact Matt Wilson from Lower Murray Water on (03) 5051 0712, or Ray de Groot from the Mallee CMA on (03) 5051 4350.

### ***Mallee Catchment News***

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# Mallee and Wimmera CMAs to merge in 2011

**The Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and its Wimmera counterpart will merge under a new land and biodiversity plan released by the Victorian Government.**

The fusion of the two Catchment Management Authorities is not expected to result in job losses and natural resource management projects in the Mallee are anticipated to continue as usual until the amalgamation comes into effect on July 1, 2011.

The merger is one of five to take place across Victoria as part of the Brumby Government's white paper for land and biodiversity in a time of climate change, entitled "Securing our Natural Future".

A key plank of the white paper is the amalgamation of Catchment Management Authorities and other natural resource management agencies to form five Natural Resource and Catchment Authorities. The mergers have been designed to improve decision making regarding land, water and biodiversity assets.

The Wimmera-Mallee Natural Resource and Catchment Authority will be the local body responsible for protecting the environmental values in regional water planning. It will retain the existing CMA responsibilities of river and wetland health, sustainability, land and biodiversity, but its role will expand to include a focus on planning.

The Mallee CMA has welcomed the merger with the Wimmera CMA, saying it offers great opportunities for improving natural resource management in the region.



Mallee CMA Board Deputy Chair Tony Martin said the merger and the changes to the organisation's responsibilities would deliver an integrated and co-ordinated approach to managing important environmental values.

"Operating over a larger area will mean we can apply for and attract funding to implement projects that will deliver landscape-scale outcomes across the Wimmera-Mallee," he said.

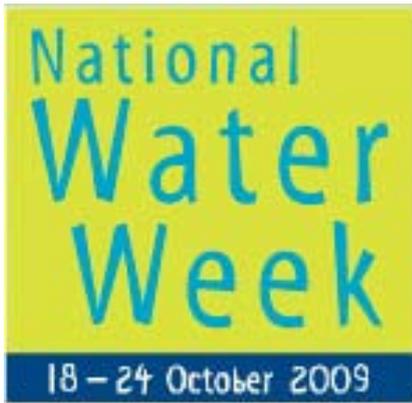
"The extension of responsibilities to include planning will mean we can have a greater role in planning future developments and advise on how this may impact on our region's natural resources.

"The projects the Mallee CMA is working on will continue as usual so community members can rest assured that the good work we are currently doing to protect and enhance our local environment will continue."

A new peak body, the Victorian Natural Resource and Catchment Council (VNRCC), will be formed to oversee the Natural Resource and Catchment Authorities. The council will provide coordinated land, water and biodiversity advice to government and a strategic approach to knowledge management. It will encompass the current Victorian Catchment Management Council, and in due course, the Victorian Coastal Council, and the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council.

More information on the "Securing our Natural Future" white paper is available from the Department of Sustainability and Environment website [www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au). Updates on the merger will be available on the Mallee CMA website at [www.malleecma.vic.gov.au](http://www.malleecma.vic.gov.au)

Above: The Murray River at Mildura.  
Photo: Mallee CMA.



## Mallee Environmental Schools Festival

**ANOTHER successful Mallee Environmental Schools Festival (MESF) attracted approximately 480 grade three and four students to the Mildura Aerodrome Ovals on October 20, 2009.**

The festival was scheduled during National Water Week and aimed to raise awareness of water and other environmental issues to encourage behavioural change toward protecting natural resources.

Workshop facilitators from local and visiting organisations conducted 30 minute interactive workshops throughout the day. Each group of students attended four workshops and a performance by Barry Peters, a singer and song writer from Warrnambool who specialises in environmental messages for children.

The festival would not have been possible without generous sponsorship. Major financial sponsors included:

- Mallee CMA
- Citipower/Powercor
- Murray Darling Basin Authority
- Lower Murray Darling CMA
- Mildura Regional Waste Management Group
- Mildura Rural City Council

Other supporters of the festival included:

- Transpacific Industries
- Christie Centre

# National



Above: snapshots of the many activities the students were involved in at the MESF.

Photos: Lower Murray Water.

Left: Sponsors and supporters of the MESF.

- Lower Murray Water
- The Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre
- Packaging Council of Australia
- Department Sustainability & Environment
- Mildura West Water Ambassadors
- Iluka

The next MESF is scheduled for 2011.



# Water Week 2009

## Catch a Carp Day

**MILDURA'S annual Catch a Carp Day attracted impressive crowds on Sunday, October 25 at Apex Park Sandbar.**

Everyone who caught a Carp on the day automatically went into the draw for the \$500 first prize, which was won by a Red Cliffs resident. There were 295 people registered for fishing which resulted in 61 Carp and one goldfish being caught!

Catch a Carp Day was first held in 2004 and has continued to grow, with the 2009 event attracting record levels of participation and sponsorship from local businesses, environmental agencies and community groups.

The event was organised by the Mallee Catchment Management Authority and focused on encouraging locals to learn more about the river system and what is being done to improve the health of the Murray River.

Sunraysia Marine was the major sponsor of Catch a Carp Day 2009 for the fourth consecutive year. Thanks to all the businesses who supported this family day.

Key attractions on the day included bug surveys, live music, an electro fishing display, a casting competition, jumping castle, childrens activities, Trentham Estate Carp cook-up and face painting.

Top: The participants filled the sandbar at Apex Park for Catch a Carp Day.

Centre left: The winner's cheque being presented by Brett Woods from Sunraysia Marine and Mallee CMA Chair, Joan Burns.

Centre right and bottom: Successful Carp fisher-people!  
Photos: Mallee CMA, Lower Murray Water.



# New water plan welcomed by Mallee CMA

**The release of the Victorian Government's Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy is good news for northern Victoria's rivers, wetlands and floodplain sites, according to the Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA).**

Mallee CMA chair Joan Burns said the strategy was the result of 18 months' consultation on how to manage a future with less water.

"Mallee CMA, along with other consultative committee members, have debated ways to balance the needs of urban and rural water users, and the environment, and increase reliability for all water users in a future where there may be less water," Ms Burns said.

The Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy Consultative Committee had representation from northern Victorian Catchment Management Authorities, urban and rural water corporations, local government, Environment Victoria, the Victorian Farmers Federation, and local government.

Ms Burns said the final strategy delivered a suite of key actions to improve the environment's ability to respond to periods of prolonged drought and climate change.

"Managing the environment in a future where there is likely to be less water means we have to be smarter in how we use our environmental water," she said.

"In prolonged drought like the one we have been experiencing for 13 years, or under climate change scenarios, the simple fact is our rivers and wetlands will

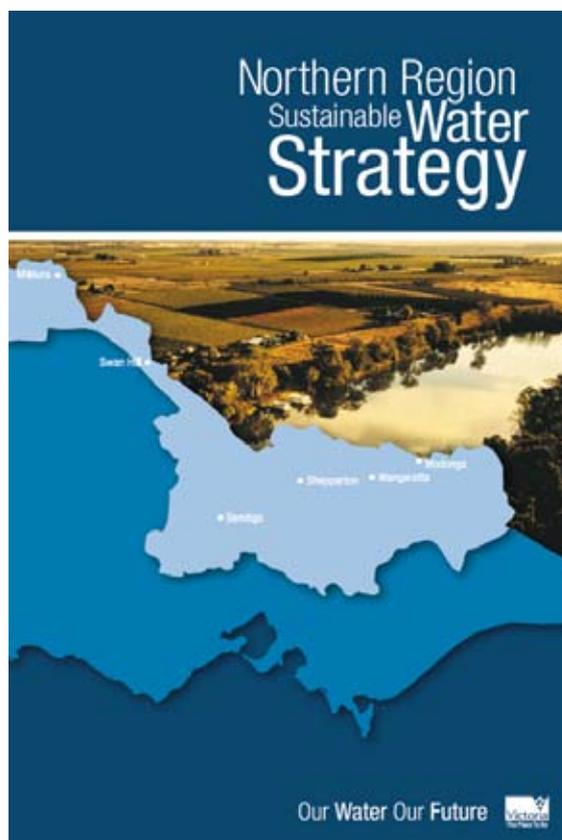
have far less water flowing into them than in the past.

"Traditionally, the environment gets most of its water from unregulated flows and when reservoirs spill. Under climate change or periods of prolonged drought, reservoirs will spill less often – if we continued to rely heavily on these sources of water, it would be bad news for our rivers, wetlands and floodplain sites.

"What this strategy delivers is a targeted way to get the environment water to meet specific needs even in times of extreme dry."

Key actions delivered by the Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy to safeguard the environment include:

- identify water recovery targets to guide the Commonwealth's \$3.1 billion buyback program;
- establish a Victorian Environmental Water Holder to coordinate and prioritise the delivery of environmental water across the region;
- identify the need for structural works to improve environmental benefits and reduce the need for environmental water recovery;
- improve the efficiency of environmental water use by introducing innovative carryover arrangements and through the reuse of return flows, complementary works and consumptive water being used en route;



- establish clear processes for adapting the way we manage rivers and wetlands, including environmental water use, to suit seasonal conditions in a given year;
- develop a reasoned and transparent process to change environmental objectives if necessary while ensuring this is not done prematurely.

A copy of the Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy can be downloaded from [www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/programs/sws/northern](http://www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/programs/sws/northern)

# Grants for community groups

## 17 local groups to benefit



**The Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) has received a \$323,000.00 share of the Victorian Government's Second Generation Landcare grants for this financial year.**

The Victorian Government has provided the funding for local community groups to finance projects that will benefit the health of the region's land and waterways.

A total of 17 individual groups successfully applied for the funding, which will be invested in four integrated pest plant and animal control projects, five pest plant control projects, eight rabbit control projects and one revegetation project.

All projects considered for funding through Second Generation Landcare grants were assessed by a community-based panel established by the Mallee CMA, according to the natural resource priorities for the region.

Mallee CMA chairperson Joan Burns welcomed the funding for the region and praised the groups for applying for the grants.

"It's great to see so many local community groups keen to undertake important on-ground works that will protect our natural assets," she said.

"Rabbit and weed control works are among the key projects that our community groups will be implementing."

Projects are expected to start early in the New Year and will be completed by December, 2010.

For further information, contact the Mallee Catchment Management Authority on (03) 5051 4377.

Above: Neds Corner Station, which is one of the groups to receive a Second Generation Landcare Grant.  
Photo: Mallee CMA.

## Crown Frontage Licence Review

**Victorian catchment and land managers are working to improve river bank management. The aim is to protect and improve waterway health.**

The Priority Crown Frontage Licence Review project is part of this. It focuses on management of Crown land alongside waterways and will update licences to reflect already improved river bank management and accelerate improvements in priority areas.

The project is a partnership between the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and catchment management authorities (CMAs).

This project affects up to 1400 of the 10,000 Crown Frontage Licences in Victoria. It affects you if:

- You have already improved waterway health via better river bank management. There are about 28 Crown Frontage Licences in the Victorian Mallee that can be updated under this project to reflect this; or
- You have one of the 114 Crown Frontage Licences in the identified priority areas (water supply catchments and waterways with strong environmental, economic, cultural and social values).

If you are in a priority area, you will be contacted by your local project officer offering to work with you to improve waterway health. To find out how you can participate, call Kevin Forbes at the Mallee CMA on (03) 5051 4377 or log on to [www.malleecma.vic.gov.au](http://www.malleecma.vic.gov.au)

# New field guides available

## Local waterbirds and frogs identified

**TWO new field guides identifying waterbirds and frogs of the Victorian Mallee are now available free of charge.**

The Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) joined forces with community members to develop the field guides, with a number of local people contributing photographs and descriptions of the species featured in the publications.

The waterbird field guide includes about 70 different species found in our region, while the frog field guide includes 12 frogs found in the Mallee.

The guides have been designed to be light-weight and small enough to fit into your pocket, making them easy to carry in the field. The pages have also been coated to ensure they are not easily damaged by water.

The guides are intended to be useful tools for natural resource managers monitoring waterbird/frog numbers at sites that have received environmental water. The guides are also equally suitable for seasoned bird/frog observers and anyone interested in learning more about the species that can be found in the Mallee.

A number of local groups and individuals were involved in the development of the field guides, including the Sunraysia

Bird Observers Club, the Sunraysia Field Naturalists and Friends of Kings Billabong. All local photographers who submitted photographs for the field guides have been credited in the publications.

Mallee CMA chair Joan Burns said the development of the field guides was a successful not-for-profit project that would benefit the community.



“This project has been a great example of the strong relationships between the authority and the community – as soon as we put the word out that we were looking for peoples’ input, we received photographs, descriptions and suggestions,” she said.

The Mallee Waterbird and Frog Field Guides are available free of charge from the Mallee CMA, which is located at the DPI Complex on the corner of Koorlong Avenue and Eleventh Street, Irymple. For more information, please contact the Mallee CMA on 5051 4377 or email [info@malleecma.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@malleecma.vic.gov.au)

## Upcoming events

### January

26 Australia Day

### February

2 World Wetlands Day

### March

5 Schools Clean Up Day

7 Clean Up Australia Day

7-13 Groundwater Awareness Week

8 Labour Day

22 World Water Day

### April

22 Earth Day

## Project Partners

