

River Murray: high-value wetlands



Achievement of ecological targets

South Australia's

Environmental trend and condition report card 2018

STATEWIDE



Trend

The achievement of ecological targets in River Murray high-value wetlands is generally stable, but is getting better in the Lower Lakes, Coorong and Murray Mouth region.

This assessment focuses on the achievement of ecological targets for the Chowilla floodplain, and the Lower Lakes, Coorong and Murray Mouth (LLCMM) icon sites since 2006.

Although other high-value wetlands exist along the River Murray in South Australia, reporting is focused on these key sites.

The overall trend in the achievement of ecological targets across the two icon sites is stable. The improvement in the achievement of targets in the LLCMM region have coincided with higher natural flows and the delivery of environmental water (top figure).

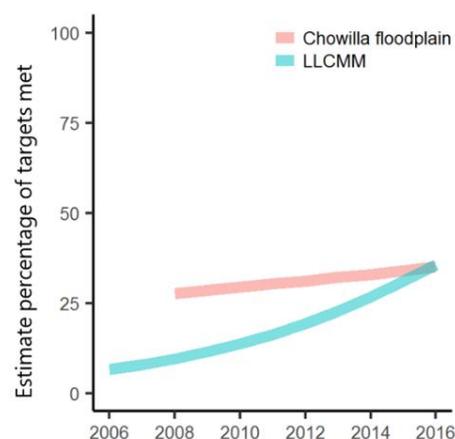
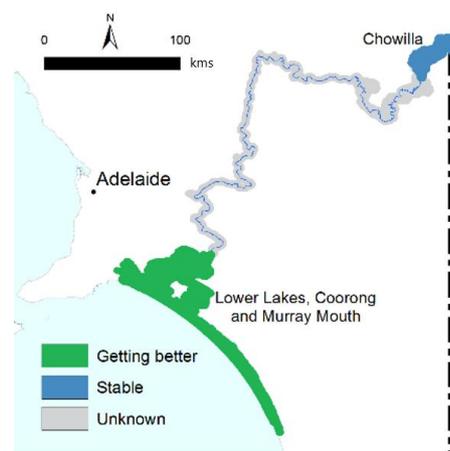
River flows and water levels for fish, birds, invertebrates, floodplain trees (black box and river red gum) and aquatic vegetation (*Ruppia* in the LLCMM) have improved.

Condition

The condition of River Murray high-value wetlands is poor because less than 50% of ecological targets have been met since 2006.

While there have been reported improvements in wetland condition since the millennium drought (2001–2009), the rate of achievement of ecological targets remains below 50% cent (bottom figure).

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Why are River Murray high-value wetlands important?

Healthy wetlands support healthy river systems by filtering sediments and recycling nutrients to improve water quality. They also provide feeding and breeding habitat, and replenish food webs that sustain diverse populations of plants, birds, fish and other animals.

What are the pressures?

Regulation of the River Murray, combined with river operations arrangements to support irrigation and navigation, have significantly altered the patterns of flow in the river and the connections between the river and its wetlands and floodplains.

Some wetlands are now permanently wet, while others do not get wet as often as they used to. This change has severely affected the ecology and health of River Murray wetlands.

What is being done?

Managed river flows, using water for the environment, are being implemented under the Murray–Darling Basin Plan to support and improve wetland condition.

Engineering works, such as regulators and pumps on wetlands, are also being used to reinstate more natural patterns of wetting and drying.

For further information see: [technical information](#)



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