

Coorong & Lower Lakes vegetation



Vegetation target success

South Australia's

Environmental trend and condition report card 2018

STATEWIDE



Trend
Stable



Condition
Poor



Reliability
Excellent

Trend

The achievement of vegetation targets in the Coorong and Lower Lakes is generally stable, but is getting better in some areas.

Vegetation targets are used to track the condition, and inform management, of aquatic vegetation in the Coorong and Lower Lakes.

Higher flows and increased water levels since the end of the millennium drought (2001–2009) have led to slight improvements in the achievement of vegetation targets in the Coorong and Lower Lakes region, particularly in temporary wetlands and the Goolwa Channel (top figure). However, the overall trend in the achievement of vegetation targets is stable.

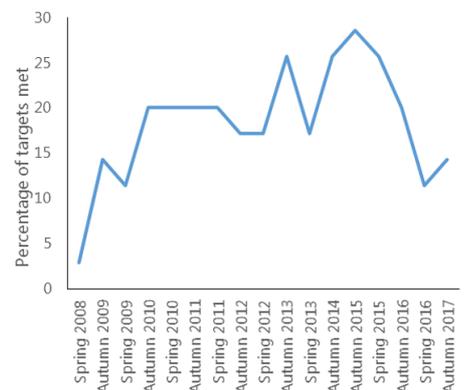
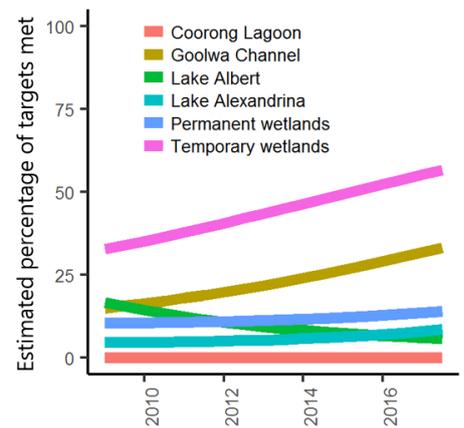
In the Coorong, *Ruppia tuberosa* is a critical plant for ensuring that the ecosystem is in good condition. Recently, the extent and abundance of *Ruppia* has increased. However, some dense mats of algae have prevented strong flowering and seed set of *Ruppia*.

Condition

The condition was assessed as poor because less than 50% of the vegetation targets are being met.

Insufficient flows, water level variability and time since the drought mean that the vegetation in the Coorong and Lower Lakes region is yet to respond in ways that allow more vegetation targets to be met (bottom figure).

More vegetation targets in the Goolwa Channel and temporary wetlands are being met, but the overall trend is stable



Why is Coorong & Lower Lakes vegetation important?

Diverse aquatic and shoreline vegetation communities are important because they support ecological food webs; provide habitat for diverse species of small animals, including insects, fish and invertebrates; act as shelter from predatory fish and birds; help to minimise shoreline erosion; help resist invasion by opportunistic weeds; and cycle nutrients and improve water quality.

What are the pressures?

Regulation of the River Murray, combined with river operations arrangements to support irrigation, town water supply and navigation, have stabilised water levels in the river and Lower Lakes, and reduced water delivery to the Coorong. This has reduced the variability in water level that a diverse aquatic and shoreline vegetation community requires.

The health of aquatic and shoreline vegetation is also affected by changes in water quality, which can limit the ability of plants to respond to positive changes in water levels.

What is being done?

Additional environmental water for the Coorong and Lower Lakes is being sourced from the South East Flows Restoration Program and the Murray–Darling Basin Plan. This additional water seeks to support diverse vegetation communities through more desirable water levels and improved water quality.

The Coorong and Lower Lakes region is of international ecological importance, and is protected under state, federal and international laws and agreements.

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



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