

# Looking after the environment that looks after you: landscapes in the SA Murray-Darling Basin

125,000 people live within the SA Murray-Darling Basin region and their prosperity relies on its natural resources. It is a large and complex region of 5.7 million hectares with many different land uses and ecological systems.

## Our natural assets

Every landscape within the region contains things of value that we call assets. Our natural assets are people, water, biodiversity, land and atmosphere. Improving our knowledge of these assets enables everyone to take better care of them and use them more efficiently.

In 2009 the first NRM Strategic Plan, with help from the community, identified Regional Condition Targets (RCTs) for each of these assets. These targets have been reviewed and amended to ensure that they still reflect the values of the region today.

<b>People</b> Communities contributing to the management of natural resources	<b>P1</b> : People have the capacity to manage natural resources sustainably by 2030
	<b>P2</b> : Increase protection and preservation of Aboriginal culture through participation of Aboriginal people by 2030
	<b>P3</b> : All planning, policy and investment decisions consider natural resources management (ecological, social and economic) by 2030
<b>Water</b> Water resources that are healthy, valued and supporting of communities and thriving ecosystems	<b>W1</b> : All water resources are managed sustainably by 2030
	<b>W2</b> : Improve water quality to meet regional water needs by 2030
	<b>W3</b> : Water is available and managed to enhance and maintain the ecological function and resilience of water dependent ecosystems by 2030
<b>Biodiversity</b> A healthy and ecologically productive environment that sustains biodiversity and is valued by the community	<b>B1</b> : Increase the ecological function and resilience of native ecosystems by 2030
	<b>B2</b> : Native species and ecological communities at lower or no greater risk of extinction by 2030

<b>Land</b> Sustainable, productive landscapes	<b>L1</b> : Protect and improve soil and land to support the productive capacity and natural resources of the region by 2030
	<b>A1</b> : Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in the SA Murray-Darling Basin in line with State targets by 2030
<b>Atmosphere</b> A clean and healthy atmosphere with effective adaptation to climate change	<b>A2</b> : All natural resource managers have capacity to adapt to climate change impacts by 2030

Detailed descriptions of the assets and the threats to them are provided within the draft NRM Strategic Plan. This document is available from [www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/samurraydarlingbasin](http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/samurraydarlingbasin)

## Looking after our landscapes

It is important to remember that our natural assets cannot be managed in isolation. Interactions occurring between the assets are as important as the assets themselves. They become part of a natural system within the framework of the landscape. It is helpful, when trying plan for natural resources management, to divide the region into smaller units. It is much easier to think about what is required to manage our natural resources at a local landscape level. It assists us to define specific management actions that together we can work on to manage resources in our patch. Collectively the activity undertaken on our local patches will contribute to managing at a landscape scale which then contributes to management at a regional scale.

The SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM region has been divided into 4 sub-regions based on social networks and how local communities interact within the landscape, as well as land use and environmental characteristics.

The 4 sub-regions are:

- **Mallee-Coorong**
- **Riverland**
- **Rangelands**
- **Ranges to River**



## Mallee- Coorong

The Mallee-Coorong sub-region covers 1,688,900 ha from the Victorian border to the Murray Lakes and Coorong, and from Ngarkat Conservation Park (CP) to just south of the River Murray near Loxton. It includes the towns of Karoonda, Lameroo, Meningie, Pinnaroo and Tailem Bend. Cereal cropping and grazing (Northern and Southern Mallee areas) are the main land uses, with some groundwater irrigated agriculture, dairy and fishing industries. The sub-region includes Billiatt Wilderness Area and Ngarkat CP, as well as parts of the internationally important Murray Lakes and Coorong.

## Riverland

The Riverland sub-region covers 750,000 ha and includes the River Murray from the New South Wales / Victorian border to just south of Lock 1 near Blanchetown. Land adjacent to the River Murray includes the major towns of Barmera, Berri, Loxton, Renmark and Waikerie. Irrigated agriculture in this area relies heavily on water from the River Murray. To the south of the river, the land mainly supports rotational cereal cropping and stock grazing (Northern Murray Mallee), while to the north of the river the sub-region is part of the larger Bookmark Mallee area mainly used for nature conservation.

## Rangelands

The Rangelands sub-region covers 2,376,300 ha north of the River Murray from the eastern hills of the Mount Lofty Ranges to the New South Wales border. The majority of the sub-region comprises gently undulating plains divided between two major land uses; mallee nature conservation (Bookmark Mallee) to the east and the grazing of native vegetation in the central pastoral area (Rangelands Pastoral Country). The hilly western edge of the sub-region (Eastern Hills) is mainly used for grazing and cropping, and includes the towns of Burra and Eudunda which are the major population centres for the sub-region.

## Ranges to River

The Ranges to River sub-region covers 855,100 ha from the eastern flanks of the Mount Lofty Ranges to the River Murray, from Blanchetown to Goolwa. The sub-region includes the major towns of Murray Bridge, Mount Barker, Strathalbyn, Mannum and Mount Compass. Grazing and cropping are dominant land uses in the Western, Southern and Northern Murray Mallee area but the Eastern Hills are more diverse and include intensive land uses, mainly in the higher rainfall areas. The Murray Lakes support dairy and fishing industries, and are part of an internationally recognised wetland.

A detailed description of each of these landscapes and the communities within them is provided in the draft NRM Strategic Plan. This document is available from <http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/samurraydarlingbasin>

## Managing a complex environment

The NRM Strategic Plan uses systems thinking to learn about, interpret and understand complex interactions occurring within the landscape. It considers all assets and every interaction to be part of a larger whole "system" – the landscape. It helps to devise management actions that will benefit the whole landscape rather than find solutions to individual problems.

The NRM Strategic Plan aims to encourage a "resilient" landscape that resists, tolerates and recovers quickly from disturbance rather than one that collapses under increasing environmental, economic and social pressures. The concept of resilience is important as it forces us to consider the things that cause change within the landscape, whether they are positive or negative changes, and if they will cause long lasting effects to the natural assets. Understanding this helps us recognise the things that are needed to manage or maintain the landscape in the best possible condition for all.

## The things we do will make a difference

The NRM Strategic Plan is implemented through a Regional Action Plan that identifies the actions needed to achieve our shared vision of a healthy living landscape. A Regional Action Plan will assist everyone to manage the region's assets.

It will:

- discover what is needed to manage and improve the condition of our natural assets in each sub-region,
- identify actions needed to address the RCTs, and
- determine the amount of investment required and who needs to be involved.

It is important that everyone has a say in putting the Regional Action Plan together, as community, industry and the three tiers of government will all be contributing to its implementation. We will need to decide the priorities together.

**To have your say about NRM in the SA Murray-Darling Basin go to [www.environment.sa.gov.au/haveyoursay/samdb-nrmplan](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/haveyoursay/samdb-nrmplan) .**

