South East NRM Region

Freshwater

2014 Regional Snapshot

What is the ecological condition of our rivers, streams and drains?

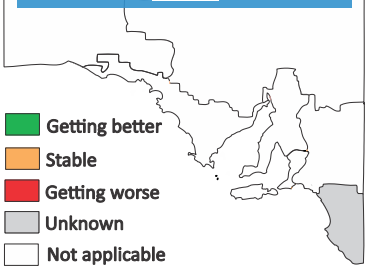
The drainage network is now the most common waterway in the South East NRM region–there are few natural rivers or streams. Both streams and drains provide water for agriculture and domestic use and habitats for native plants and animals, and the streams are places for recreation and are culturally important for Aboriginal people.

Aquatic plants and animals function together as ecological communities and improve water quality in rivers, streams and drains. These ecosystems are impacted by nutrients, sediments and pollutants in agricultural runoff and wastewater discharges. Feral and domestic animals, which graze and trample vegetation, and reductions in flow, due to dams, weirs, droughts, consumptive use and weeds, also impact rivers, stream and drains.

In 2009, the Environment Protection Authority assessed the condition of streams and drains in the South East NRM region based on water quality and the condition of invertebrate and plant communities. Assessments have been made at 71 sites, across the Glenelg River and Millicent Coast catchments. This report card summarises the information by catchment basins.

This report does not include the condition of the River Murray, which is summarised in two separate report cards, one on water quality and another on ecological condition.

Trends in the ecological condition of streams and drains



State target

Improve the condition of terrestrial aquatic ecosystems

Trend (2009)	Unknown	Creek, stream and drain condition was assessed in 2009. A trend will be available in future versions of this report card.

Because most sites have only been assessed once, recent trends in stream and drain condition are not known (see map above). Future monitoring will determine trends in condition of our creeks, streams and drains.

The Government of South Australia and the regional NRM board are investing in on ground works to improve the condition of streams and drains to improve water quality and the condition of invertebrate and plant communities. Management efforts focus on controlling feral animals and weeds, fencing creek edges, working with land holders to reduce nutrient and sediment runoff and, where possible, restoring more natural flows.

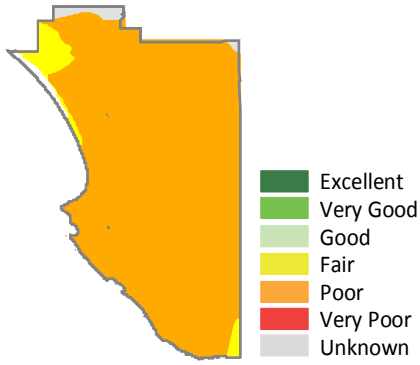
Where we are at (2009)	Poor	Substantial investments are required over many years to improve water quality, and the condition of aquatic invertebrate and plant communities

Across the South East NRM region, our streams and drains are in poor condition (map on right). These assessments were done during the drought when the ecosystems were stressed from years of low flows. Since then the condition may have improved.

The Glenelg River and Lower Murray River catchment are in fair condition, and the Millicent Coast catchment is in poor condition.

Streams and drains that are in poor condition typically have elevated levels of nutrients, salt and fine sediment as well as sparse vegetation and abundant weeds along their banks.

Our use of aquatic environments for economic and recreation purposes has affected their condition to an extent that threatens the features that make them so attractive and valuable. Water diversions and other impacts are at critical levels, and are intensified by periods of drought. It is crucial that we take steps to improve the condition of our streams and drains.



Reliability of information	★★★★☆	Very Good

Further information: Technical information for this report and EPA Aquatic Ecosystems Water Quality reports

This report is a work in progress. As resource monitoring improves, so too will our ability to describe trends in condition.

Government of South Australia