

Wetlands

Percentage cover

South Australia's

Environmental trend and condition report card 2018



STATEWIDE



Trend
Stable



Condition
Fair



Reliability
Excellent

Trend

Statewide, the percentage cover of wetlands is stable; however, it is getting worse in three natural resources management (NRM) regions.

This assessment uses data on wetlands (e.g. inland water bodies and associated vegetation) from the South Australian land cover layers 1990-2015.

The trend in percentage cover of wetlands is stable in five NRM regions (Alinytjara Wilurara [AW], Eyre Peninsula [EP], Northern and Yorke [NY], South Australian Arid Lands [SAAL] and South Australian Murray-Darling Basin [SAMDB]) and getting worse in three regions (Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges [AMLR], Kangaroo Island [KI] and South East [SE]) (top figure).

Prior to 1990 the reduction in extent of wetlands in South Australia was even more extensive. For example, in the south east of the state, more than 1.6 million hectares of wetlands were converted to agricultural land by various drainage schemes.

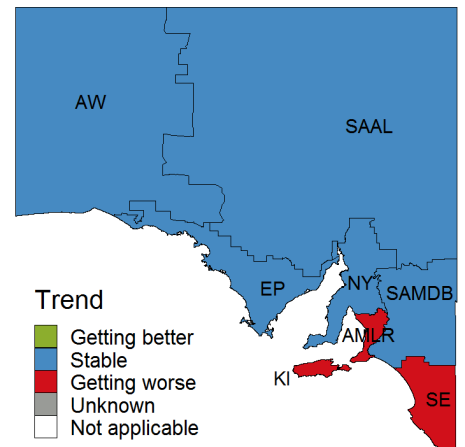
Condition

Compared with worldwide changes since 1990, the statewide change in cover of wetlands is considered fair.

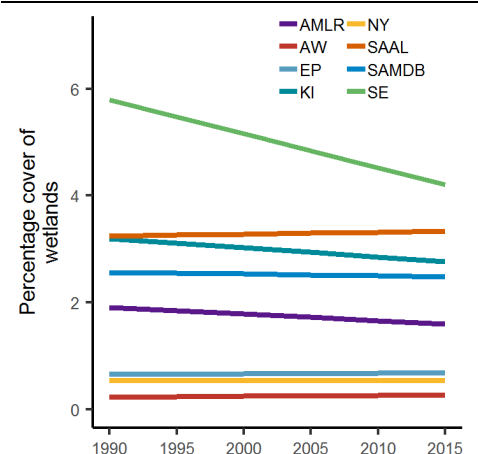
The regional percentage cover of wetlands is shown in the bottom figure.

The statewide change in cover of wetlands since 1990 is estimated as 0.72% (fair). At the regional level, estimates are a loss of 16.27% in AMLR (fair), a loss of 22.27% in AW (fair), a gain of 5.09% in EP (fair), a loss of 13.67% in KI (fair), a gain of 0.63% in NY (fair), a gain of 2.83% in SAAL (fair), a loss of 3.41% in SAMDB (fair) and a loss of 27.45% in SE (poor).

Losses of an estimated 888,400 hectares from the three high-rainfall NRM regions are attributed to less rainfall and intensified land and water use.



Wetland cover is stable in South Australia, but has declined in the wetter regions



Why are wetlands important?

Wetlands play important roles in a range of environmental, social, cultural and economic services, such as protecting lake and river shorelines from wave action, reducing the impacts of floods, absorbing pollutants, improving water quality, and providing habitat for animals and plants. Wetlands contain a wide diversity of life, supporting plants and animals that are found nowhere else. They are also one of the most productive and biodiverse ecosystems.

What are the pressures?

Wetlands are impacted by a range of factors, including changes in water regime due to dams, weirs, consumptive use and changes in rainfall and land use; excessive nutrients, sediments and pollutants from agricultural run-off and wastewater discharges; weeds and pest animals; and grazing and trampling of vegetation.

What is being done?

Legislation protects native vegetation from clearance and guides the sustainable management of water resources.

Other actions that are being implemented to manage wetlands include community engagement; controlling pest animals and weeds; fencing; reducing nutrient and sediment run-off; and, where possible, restoring more desirable patterns of flow and water levels.

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



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