Aquatic ecosystem condition

EPA condition assessments

South Australia's
Environmental trend and condition report card 2018

STATEWIDE

Trend
Getting better

Condition
Fair

Reliability
Very good

Trend

The condition of aquatic ecosystems has been improving since the end of the millennium drought (2001–2009).

This assessment analyses data gathered by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) between 2008 and 2016 on water-dependent plants and macroinvertebrates (waterbugs), water quality and sediments in rivers, streams and lakes across South Australia (excluding the River Murray).

Aquatic condition is getting better in one natural resources management region (Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges [AMLR]), is stable in five regions (Eyre Peninsula [EP], Kangaroo Island [KI], Northern and Yorke [NY], South Australian Murray–Darling Basin [SAMDB] and South East [SE]) and is unknown in two regions (Alinytjara Wilurara [AW] and South Australian Arid Lands [SAAL]). Although most of the regions were classed as stable, all but the SAMDB show signs of improvement, contributing to the overall state trend of getting better (top figure).

Condition

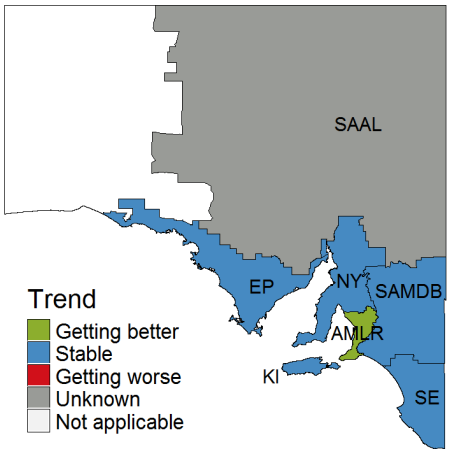
Overall, aquatic ecosystems are in fair condition.

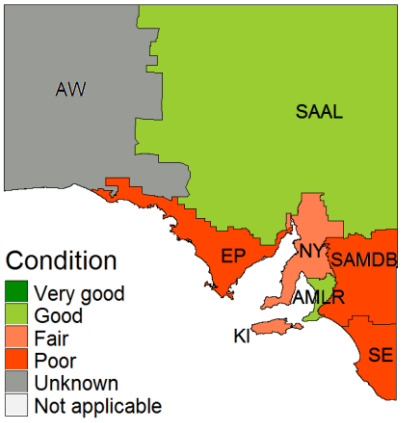
The overall condition of the state's aquatic ecosystems is fair, although the condition varies among regions (bottom figure).

Improvements in condition are related to improvements in rainfall and water availability in the state's rivers, streams and lakes since the end of the millennium drought.

The condition of aquatic ecosystems is unlikely to continue to improve in a meaningful way without additional management of the pressures on ecosystem condition.

The condition of South Australia's aquatic ecosystems is fair and improving





Why is aquatic ecosystem condition important?

Inland aquatic ecosystems are important for environmental, social, cultural and economic reasons, including supporting ecological food webs, improving water quality, absorbing pollutants, and providing habitat for animals and plants.

Aquatic ecosystems help people connect with nature, and provide mental and physical health benefits.

What are the pressures?

Aquatic ecosystems 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; changes in water quality due to excessive nutrients, sediments and nutrients from agricultural run-off and wastewater discharges; weeds and pest animals; and grazing and trampling of vegetation.

What is being done?

Water quantity is managed through water allocation plans under environment legislation. Water quality is addressed through managing point source and diffuse pollution, and activities such as fencing out livestock and revegetation projects.

Native vegetation legislation protects riverine and wetland habitat from further clearance.

Programs are in place to manage existing weeds and pest animals, and prevent new ones from establishing.

For further information see: technical information