

River Murray: fish passage

Permanently wet area accessible

South Australia's

Environmental trend and condition report card 2018



STATEWIDE



Trend
Getting better



Condition
Very good



Reliability
Excellent

Trend

The permanently wet areas of the River Murray that are connected and accessible to fish are getting better.

The areas of the River Murray main channel, from the South Australian border to the Southern Ocean, that are connected and accessible to fish have increased significantly since the early 2000s.

The increase was possible because fishways and fish ladders were established at former migration barriers, such as weirs, and at the barrages in Lake Alexandrina.

Overall, the abundance of native fish in the River Murray is improving. Although this cannot be solely attributed to the increase in fish passages, the ability for fish to migrate for feeding and breeding is known to be important.

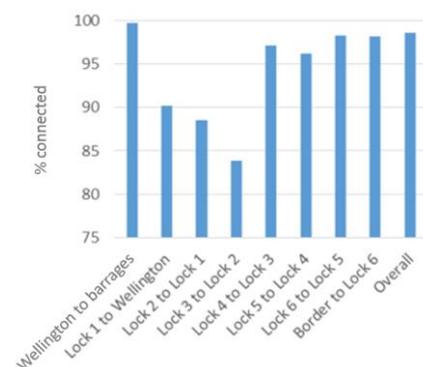
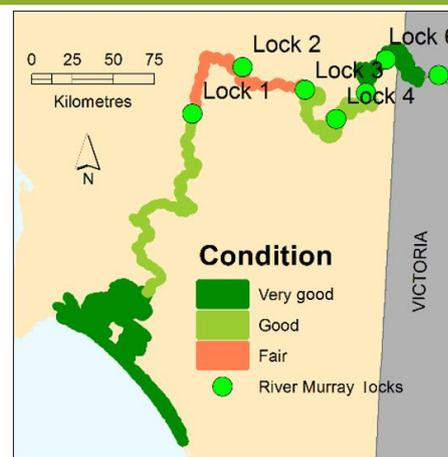
Condition

The condition of fish passages and the areas of the River Murray that are accessible to fish are rated as very good (top figure).

More than 98%, about 124,277 km², of the permanently wet areas of the River Murray is now accessible to fish because of the presence of fishways and fish ladders. The areas with the greatest connectivity are in the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth, and upstream from Lock 4 (bottom figure).

Further increases in the area accessible to fish, such as in the area between Locks 1 and 3, are anticipated from works to form better connections between the main river channel and its wetlands, anabranches and floodplains.

Fish can now move freely throughout most of the permanently wet areas of the River Murray



Why is River Murray fish passage important?

Native freshwater fish are known to move great distances in search of optimal habitat for feeding, breeding, shelter and to avoid predators, with some needing connection to the ocean to complete their life cycle.

What are the pressures?

A series of weirs were constructed along the River Murray to facilitate navigation for river vessels and to provide a more stable supply of water for towns and irrigators.

It is now evident that flow-regulating structures such as weirs and dams create barriers to fish movement, have had a detrimental effect on the health of native fish populations and have promoted pest species such as common carp.

What is being done?

South Australia and the Australian Government are investing in engineering works to support continued improvements in fish passage, especially between the main river channel and its wetlands, anabranches and floodplains.

The works currently fall under the Riverine Recovery Program and the South Australian Riverland Floodplains Integrated Infrastructure Program.

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



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