

Wetlands

Percentage cover

SA trend and condition report card 2020



STATEWIDE



Trend
Stable



Condition
Fair



Reliability
Excellent

Trend

The statewide trend in percentage cover of wetlands is stable.

This assessment uses data on wetlands (e.g. inland water bodies and associated vegetation) from the South Australian Land Cover 1987–2015 dataset.

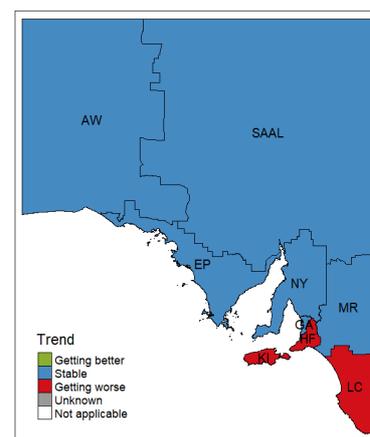
Across landscape regions, the trend in percentage cover of wetlands is stable in six regions (Alinytjara Wilurara [AW], Eyre Peninsula [EP], Northern and Yorke [NY], South Australian Arid Lands [SAAL], Murraylands and Riverland [MR], and Green Adelaide [GA]) and getting worse in three regions (Hills and Fleurieu [HF], Kangaroo Island [KI] and Limestone Coast [LC]) (top figure).

Extensive reduction in wetlands occurred before 1990. For example, in the south-east of the state, more than 1.6 million hectares of wetlands (more than 50% of the area) were converted to agricultural land by various drainage schemes.

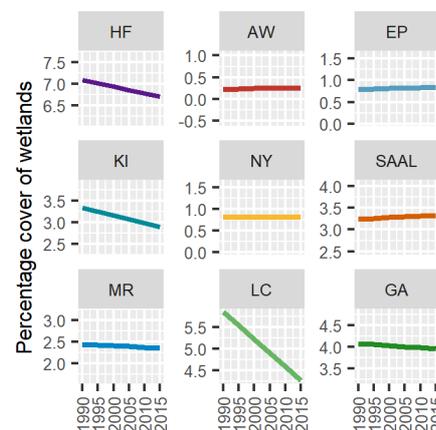
Condition

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

Across South Australia, the extent of wetlands in 2015 was estimated to be 2,176,430 hectares. At the regional level, estimates were 31,000 hectares in HF (6.7% of the region), 74,360 hectares in AW (0.26% of the region), 41,860 hectares in EP (0.83% of the region), 12,760 hectares on KI (2.9% of the region), 30,510 hectares in NY (0.81% of the region), 1,752,370 hectares in SAAL (3.3% of the region), 113,600 hectares in MR (2.3% of the region), 114,920 hectares in LC (4.3% of the region) and 5,050 hectares in GA (4% of the region) (bottom figure).



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



Why are wetlands important?

Wetlands play important roles in our landscapes. They 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, providing a range of environmental, social, cultural and economic services. These benefits to society include mitigation of the impact caused by extreme weather, such as delaying floods and reducing their impacts, absorbing pollutants, and improving water quality, while providing habitat for animals and plants.

What are the pressures?

Wetland extent is affected by a range of pressures, including changes in water regime because of dams, consumptive use, and changes in rainfall and land use. Climate change now adds to these pressures. In addition to loss of extent in some areas, the effects of excessive nutrients, sediments and pollutants from agricultural run-off and wastewater discharges; weeds and pest animals; and grazing and trampling of vegetation by stock affect the condition of wetlands and the plants and animals dependent on them.

What is being done?

Legislation protects native vegetation from clearance and guides the sustainable management of water resources. Water allocation plans seek to balance consumptive needs with environmental needs and restore desirable patterns of flow and water levels. The effects of climate change are exacerbating the impacts of consumptive use, challenging the ability of water allocation plans to achieve their objectives. Climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies also address wetland loss.

Improved science helps improve planning and implementation.

For further information, see [Technical information](#)



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