

# Wetlands: percentage cover



## Biodiversity | Inland waters

South Australia's environmental trend and condition report cards 2023



Trend  
**Unknown**



Condition  
**Unknown**



Reliability  
**Good**

STATE

### Trend

The statewide trend in percentage cover of wetlands is unknown.

This assessment uses data from the South Australian Land Cover Layers 1987–2020 for 9 South Australian landscape regions with wetlands (e.g. inland water bodies and associated vegetation). Due to recent changes in the sensors and accuracy of satellite data it is currently not possible to assign a trend to percentage cover of wetlands. Methods to deal with changing satellite technology are evolving and it is likely that future reporting will be able to retrospectively apply trends to percentage cover of wetlands for the current reporting period.

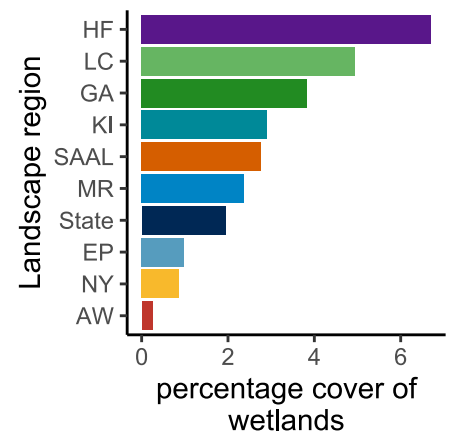
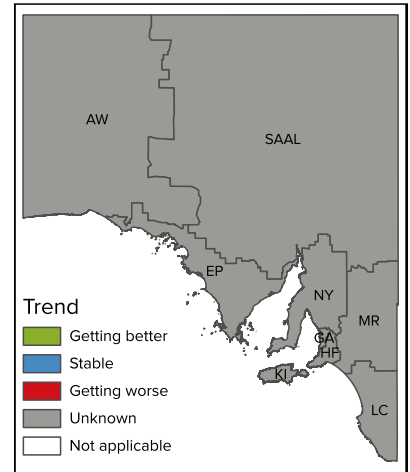
Extensive reduction in wetlands occurred prior to satellite observations. For example, in the south-east of the state, more than 1.6 million hectares of wetlands (over 50% of the area) were converted to agricultural land by various drainage schemes.

### Condition

The condition of wetlands percentage cover is unknown, as there are no agreed statewide benchmarks.

In 2020, the percentage of wetlands cover was 1.9% statewide. This is based on an estimated extent of 1,903,100 hectares (ha). Regional estimates were: 6.7% in Hills and Fleurieu (HF, 31,000 ha), 4.9% in Limestone Coast (LC, 132,300 ha), 3.8% in Green Adelaide (GA, 4,900 ha), 2.9% on Kangaroo Island (KI, 12,800 ha), 2.8% in South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL, 1,453,400 ha), 2.4% in Murraylands and Riverland (MR, 114,600 ha), 1.0% in Eyre Peninsula (EP, 49,500 ha), 0.9% in Northern and Yorke (NY, 33,000 ha), and 0.3% in Alinytjara Wilurara (AW, 71,600 ha) (bottom figure).

In 2020, wetlands percentage cover was 1.9% statewide, but there is insufficient information to determine a trend.



### Why are wetlands important?

Wetlands play important roles in our landscapes. They can contain high biodiversity, 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 consequences of extreme weather, such as delaying floods and reducing their impacts, absorbing pollutants, and improving water quality.

### What are the pressures?

Wetland extent is affected by a range of pressures, including changes in water regime due to dams, consumptive use, and changes in rainfall and land use. Climate change now adds to these pressures. The condition of wetlands, and the plants and animals dependent on them, are impacted by weeds and pest animals, grazing and trampling by stock, as well as excessive nutrients, sediments and pollutants from agricultural run-off and wastewater discharges.

### 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. Direct restoration activities are also undertaken in some high priority wetlands by the South Australian and Australian governments and non-government organisations. Improved scientific knowledge is improving decision-making.

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



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