



Australian Government



MURRAY-DARLING BASIN AUTHORITY

The Living Murray

Planned works at
Hattah Lakes

THE LIVING MURRAY

The Living Murray is one of Australia's largest river restoration programs, a major step towards ensuring that the Murray is a healthy working river into the future.

Six sites along the River Murray have been identified as priority icon sites, including Mulcra Island (part of the Chowilla Lindsay-Wallpolla icon site) and Hattah Lakes.

Under The Living Murray, a program of works is being developed at each of the icon sites to make sure that available environmental water is used efficiently and ecological benefits are maximised.

The Living Murray is a joint initiative funded by the New South Wales, Victorian, South Australian, Australian Capital Territory and the Commonwealth governments, coordinated by the Murray–Darling Basin Authority.

HATTAH LAKES

The Hattah Lakes, located between Mildura and Robinvale in north-west Victoria, is a large floodplain and wetland system set within a mallee landscape, consisting of shallow lakes, creeks and temporary swamps, bordered by riverine woodlands.

The lakes form part of the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, and provide important habitat for a variety of fish, frogs and waterbirds, including migratory birds from as far away as Siberia. The lakes contain many sites of Indigenous cultural heritage and are popular for recreational activities such as kayaking, fishing and bushwalking.

The Hattah Lakes rely on regular flooding to maintain a healthy ecological environment. However, river regulation and a drier climate mean that the frequency and duration of flooding of the Hattah Lakes has reduced significantly over time. The lakes are now rarely filled and as a result the plants and animals that depend on them are under serious threat.

The future health of the Hattah Lakes relies on the development of a water management option capable of delivering managed flooding to the lakes.

The Living Murray proposal for the Hattah Lakes will use water management infrastructure, such as 'environmental regulators' and a pumping station to create the regular flooding the lakes need to maintain a healthy environment.

The proposed infrastructure has the flexibility to provide water to the lakes under a range of seasonal conditions and allocations, and will make the most of limited amounts of water.



*Drought-affected tree at Hattah Lakes icon site ©MDBA
Photo by Corey Brown*



A parrot in the Hattah Lakes icon site ©MDBA Photo by Corey Brown



*Bird-watching at the Hattah Lakes icon site ©MDBA
Photo by Corey Brown*



*Fishing on the River Murray within the Hattah Lakes
icon site ©MDBA Photo by Corey Brown*

Planned works

The works proposed for the Hattah Lakes under The Living Murray program aim to increase the frequency of natural inflows to the lakes by lowering the bed of Chalka Creek, which is the main inlet to the lakes.

Three new regulators and three levees will be constructed to retain environmental water within the lakes and surrounding floodplain, and an existing regulator will be refurbished to provide some flexibility in management of smaller volumes of water in the most southern lakes. Lastly, a pumping station will be constructed near the confluence of the River Murray and the Chalka Creek to deliver water to the lakes during extended periods of low river flow and will allow flexibility to top up small natural floods.

The infrastructure will allow restoration of a more natural flooding regime to the Hattah Lakes, with small floods provided every 2 to 3 years and larger floods every 8 years (when water is available). This will restore the role of the lakes as a drought refuge for waterbirds and other wetland-dependent species, provide important breeding habitat for waterbirds and support threatened flora and fauna species.

Progress to date

This project is a joint initiative of the Mallee Catchment Management Authority, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Murray-Darling Basin Authority, Goulburn-Murray Water and Parks Victoria.

Investigations are currently underway to inform the development of the project, including flora and fauna, hydrological, soil and salinity assessments, and the development of a cultural heritage management plan in consultation with Indigenous stakeholders. Construction is expected to begin in late 2010, pending the necessary environmental and planning approvals.

Ongoing community engagement will keep community stakeholders and other interested parties informed and involved in the development of this important project, which will ensure the future health of the Hattah Lakes for generations to come.

Further information

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For more information on The Living Murray, visit the Murray-Darling Basin Authority website: www.mdba.gov.au

Cover image: Lake Hattah ©MDBA
Photo by Corey Brown



