



Australian Government



Lower Murray region

Overview



The Lower Murray region of South Australia covers around 142,500 hectares – about 9% of the Murray-Darling Basin.



Water-based recreation attracts tourists to the area around the River Murray, Lower Lakes, riverine and dryland conservation reserves.



The Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth are recognised as a wetland of national significance and listed under the Ramsar convention.



The unique environment of the Coorong rose to international prominence with the release of the Storm Boy book and film.



Agriculture industries include dairying, horticulture, cereal cropping and grazing. The area produces premium wine, pulses, lamb and canola.



As the driest state on the driest inhabited continent on Earth, South Australia relies on the River Murray to provide safe drinking water to Adelaide and regional towns from the Eyre Peninsula to the South East of the state.



It is a critical social, spiritual and cultural location for Traditional Owners, including Ngarrindjeri, Maru, Peramangk and Ngargad Nations.

Legend

- State border
- Basin border
- River/creek
- Town/city
- Capital city
- Water storage/lake
- ▨ National Park
- ▨ Ramsar site
- Irrigation area
- Major water pipeline



Lower Murray region

Key information



More than 70,000 people live in the Lower Murray. The largest urban centers include Murray Bridge (pop 14,500), Goolwa, Strathalbyn and Mannum.



Horticulture, cereal, cropping and grazing industries along the Murray River corridor support several irrigation communities, from the Riverland region in the east, to the Lower Lakes in the south.



Rainfall in the Lower Murray ranges from 700 mm on the eastern slopes of the Mt Lofty Ranges to 300 mm in the South Australian Murray region.



First Nations on-country business development includes Goolwa Pipis (native plant cultivation for food and fibre products), First Nations astronomy, and Coorong Cultural tours.

Around the region

1

The Coorong is a Ramsar listed wetland of international significance and the only estuarine wetland in the Murray-Darling Basin. It is threatened by reduced natural flows and is supported by actively managed water for the environment from the River Murray and the South East.

2

The Murray Mouth filled with sand and closed for the first time in recorded history in 1981. It has required regular dredging since then, and almost continuously for the last 15 years.

Keeping the Murray Mouth open ensures that excess silt, nutrients and salt are flushed out of the Basin's river systems.

3

Construction of five Barrages was completed in 1940, creating a 7.6 km-long barrier to maintain fresh water in the Lower Lakes. Fishways were later built to support fish movement, assisted by water for the environment.

4

Irrigation areas in the Lower Murray are predominantly located around Langhorne Creek (north-west of Lake Alexandrina), Tailm Bend, Murray Bridge and Mannum, along with private development extending upstream through to Swan Reach.

5

Tributaries in the eastern Mount Lofty ranges are small and ephemeral, contributing very little to flows in the Murray.

6

South Australian communities outside of the Basin rely on water from the Murray, which is pumped and piped to towns and cities including Port Augusta, Whyalla and Adelaide.

This consumption is regulated under the Basin Plan through state water resource plans.

Feature creature: Congolli



Congolli fish (*Pseudaphritis urvillii*) faced extinction during the Millennium Drought but the release of water for the environment under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan has seen their numbers bounce back.

They are small bodied, diadromous fish, which means they need to spend different parts of their lives in both fresh and salt water. To allow diadromous fish free movement purpose-built fishways and fish ladders have been built into the barrages.

They are also known as freshwater flathead, sand trout, sandy whiting or topong. They are culturally significant to the Ngarrindjeri people and an essential part of the foodweb, providing prey for larger fish like mulloway and eating plants, crustaceans and small fish.

Fresh water or salt water?

The Lower Lakes were historically fresh water, fed by natural flows from the River Murray which travelled through the Murray Mouth into the Southern Ocean.

In 1933 construction started on five barrages totaling 7.6km at the end of the River Murray, to maintain fresh water in the Lower Lakes. The barrages prevent the flow of sea water into the lakes during storms, high tides, and during dry periods when the water level in the lakes falls.

Priorities

The many wetlands and riverine ecosystems in the area means it is particularly sensitive to declining flows which have caused the mobilisation of acid sulphate soils.

Environmental priorities for this region include:

- delivering water for the environment to increase ecological outcomes
- mitigating the impact of acid sulfate soils.

Who does what in the Lower Murray region?

South Australian Department for Environment and Water - (08) 8207 7700



Allocates water to entitlement holders, coordinates delivery of water for the environment



develops and implements water resource plans for South Australian regions of the Murray-Darling Basin, including South Australian River Murray, Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges and Murray Region



develops and implements projects designed to adjust the sustainable diversion limit



works with local communities and Traditional Owner groups.

SA Water - 1300 729 283



Manages the operation and maintenance of infrastructure, including barrages, locks and weirs.

New South Wales and Victorian State Governments



Supply an equal share of water to South Australia, as per the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement.

Murray-Darling Basin Authority - (02) 6279 0100



prepares, implements, monitors and reviews the integrated plan for the sustainable use of the Basin's water resources



operates the River Murray system and delivers water to users on behalf of partner governments



researches and monitors the quality and quantity of Basin water resources and the condition of its associated rivers, wetlands and floodplains



creates and shares information about the Basin's water resources and dependent ecosystems.



Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder - (02) 6274 1111

Manages the Australian Government's water entitlements and allocations of water for the environment.



Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment - 1800 803 772

Responsible for efficiency programs, and working with Basin states.



Local connections

Your nearest MDBA office is **Murray Bridge** 3 South Terrace, Murray Bridge, SA 5253

We also have an office in **Adelaide** 10 Corbett Court, Adelaide, SA 5950

Connect with us.

The MDBA has offices in Adelaide, Albury-Wodonga, Canberra, Goondiwindi, Griffith, Mildura, Murray Bridge, Toowoomba, and regional engagement officers around the Basin.

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