



**VICTORIAN MURRAY FLOODPLAIN
RESTORATION PROJECT**

HEALTHY LANDSCAPES, STRONG COMMUNITIES

Keeping water on the floodplain and in communities

Initial concepts for the \$40 million plans to help restore two key Northern Victorian floodplains and keep irrigation water in the region are taking the next steps.

The Guttrum and Benwell forests and Gunbower National Park Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Projects (VMFRP) will reinvigorate two magnificent ecosystems, and build resilience in them to cope with a changing climate and river regulation.

The local projects involve using engineering works such as regulators and pump stations to achieve similar ecological benefits of a natural flood event, ensuring further water buyback from irrigators can be avoided.

The projects will allow the world-renown wetland vegetation and iconic river red gum forests, and everything that relies on them, to survive and thrive over time.

The two projects are being submitted to the state and federal governments' environmental referral processes.

The referrals are a key part of the consultation process, and outline key details of the projects, as well as how any environmental impacts will be managed while achieving significant ecological benefits.

"We have been working with the community, irrigators, adjacent landholders and Traditional Owners for a number of years now, to make these projects as efficient and effective as we can," VMFRP East project Manager Tim Shanahan said.

"We asked the community how they wanted to be consulted, and they told us they wanted us to work with the Gunbower Community Reference Group and the Koondrook Progress Association, and we have.

"We have met with every farmer adjacent to the project area and spoken with more, further afield. We have worked very closely with our Traditional Owners to ensure the key cultural areas of the floodplains are identified and protected."

The Guttrum and Benwell project has officially been opened for public comment on the Federal Government's page at <http://epbcnotices.environment.gov.au/> and will be made public soon on the State Government's <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/referrals-and-decisions>.

It is expected the Gunbower project will also be made public on both websites in the coming weeks.

"This is an opportunity for locals who want to know more, or who want to put in a submission about the projects," Mr Shanahan said.

"The Federal Government has a 10-day period for the public to make comment or put in a submission. This is the first opportunity, but by no means the last, to formally suggest any changes to the planning and construction parts of the projects.



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“VMFRP is the applicant and we don’t see the submissions, but this is the time to have input if you are concerned about impacts particularly to nationally threatened species, ecological communities and migratory species.

“From here, the relevant Ministers will determine what approvals pathway they want in the development stages of the projects. The pathway they choose will tell us the formal consultation pathway we need to take over the next one or two years.”

Mr Shanahan said it is important the community knows about these projects, and how they benefit both the floodplains and the local communities.

“We want to help the community understand the projects and answer any questions. The referral, and then subsequent approval and consultation process, gives the community and stakeholders opportunities to comment on the projects, and we think it’s important that information about the projects is made available now,” he said.

“We want to talk with the community so everyone understands the project and can ask questions.

“If there’s a better way to not only keep these forests alive, but restore them to better health, continue to be an asset to our communities and efficiently deliver water to the floodplain while keeping irrigation water in the region, we’d be happy to have it presented to us.

“We’re happy for anyone to give us a call on 03 5448 7124 or email us on tim.shanahan@vmfrp.vic.gov.au or shaun.morgan@vmfrp.vic.gov.au

“To be able to help these vital floodplains survive and build resilience in them to cope with dry conditions is important. And to be able to do it by keeping irrigation water in the region is even more so.”

The projects are two of Victoria’s nine environmental works projects as part of the agreed 605GL of Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) projects and help meet the legislated ecological targets of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

For more information about the projects, go to www.vmfrp.com.au

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For further information please contact
Anthony Radford, Communications Coordinator
m: 0409 720 610
e: anthony.radford@nccma.vic.gov.au

vmfrp.com.au

