

Conserving Katarapko Floodplain



The SARFIIP program will enhance and protect the health of the Katarapko Floodplain

A priority environmental asset

The Katarapko floodplain is part of the Murray River National Park, which attracts up to 40,000 visitors each year for camping, fishing, canoeing, bird watching, bush walking and other activities.

The area is a complex mosaic of habitats including fast and slow flowing creeks, temporary and permanent wetlands, floodplain woodland, shrubland and open plains, and dune systems. These diverse habitats support numerous vegetation communities, over 40 kilometres of permanent waterways and 27 temporary freshwater wetlands. The floodplain also supports four nationally vulnerable species: Southern bell frog, Murray cod, Murray hardyhead and Regent parrot. A further 15 species have a threatened rating at state level including two reptiles and 13 bird species. The floodplain also features various sites of significance to Aboriginal and European heritage.

The Katarapko floodplain is part of the Katfish Reach project, which is a community environmental rehabilitation project working for a healthier and more productive aquatic floodplain ecosystem that everyone can enjoy. The project area is a priority floodplain for environmental flows, is recognised for having high conservation values, and a Demonstration Reach for Native Fish.

Demonstration Reaches are created to show the community the cumulative benefits of using a number of approaches to rehabilitate native fish habitat and populations.

What are the threats to this environment?

The impacts of over-allocation and use of the River Murray were compounded by the Millennium Drought between 2000 and 2010, putting additional stress on the river and its floodplains. More water is now returning, however, these flows have highlighted the fact that many areas are still in recovery.

The Katarapko floodplain is significantly affected by river regulation and the cumulative effects of past local management actions including the saline irrigation disposal basin on the floodplain, and water diverted around Lock 4. As a result, the conservation values of the floodplain are currently in decline.

River regulation has greatly modified the frequency, height and duration of flood events occurring within the area. The highest ranking threat to the ecological health of the Katarapko floodplain is the lack of environmental flows. This is causing the loss of species needed to reproduce and regenerate, loss of habitat, reduced exchange of nutrients and other important elements between the floodplain and river, and reduced flushing of salt from floodplain soils and freshwater recharge.

The SARFIIP solution

Katarapko Floodplain Inundation Measures form one of the four major components of SARFIIP.

Through the construction of environmental regulators and with additional water provided by unregulated flows and environmental water holders, SARFIIP enable more effective management of flows into and around the floodplain.

With relatively modest flows to South Australia, SARFIIP will enable floodplain inundation of the Katarapko floodplain to occur on a scale only otherwise possible under much higher flows.

This will help restore floodplain health, including the health of plants and animals dependent on the wetlands and floodplains of the Riverland, while making sure salinity impacts can be managed both short and long term.





The Katarapko Floodplain is part of the Murray River National Park, which attracts up to 40,000 visitors each year

SARFIIP solutions

The long-term management option to achieve improved environmental flows for the Katarapko floodplain is the construction of surface water infrastructure to enable the inundation of floodplain, creeks and wetlands by controlling water levels and outflows.

This includes new structures at The Splash, Piggy Creek, Sawmill Creek, Carpark Lagoons; as well as blocking banks and access tracks.

The new water regulators allow for variability of inundation heights and maximum floodplain coverage. Blocking bank construction and alignment will help to optimise the potential area of floodplain inundation.

The construction of this infrastructure will inundate more than 1300ha which will have significant benefits for the diverse habitat types and biodiversity. Vegetation communities to most benefit include Black Box, River Red Gum and Lignum.

Environmental monitoring

Environmental monitoring programs have been established to ensure the on-ground management actions are effective in achieving the required ecological objectives.

This includes:

- Surface water monitoring of flow, dissolved oxygen and salinity
- Groundwater monitoring
- Ecological monitoring includes tree health, understory vegetation, fish, frogs, waterbirds and in-stream habitats

Community support

SARFIIP and other projects in the Riverland have been driven by a partnership approach, with project ideas, local knowledge and guidance. The SARFIIP legacy and ongoing success is dependent on community involvement and support.

We are working in the Riverland with local stakeholders, including those represented on the Katfish Reach Steering Group.

The traditional owners and recognised native title holders, the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee, are also being engaged in SARFIIP to draw on their knowledge and protect their unique cultural heritage.

Katfish Reach project

The Katarapko floodplain is part of the Katfish Reach project, a community and government partnership approach. The Katfish Reach model provides opportunities for community and key stakeholders to be actively engaged and involved in planning, delivery and promotion of the project. For more information visit www.katfish.org.au

SARFIIP Funding

SARFIIP is a \$155 million program funded by the Australian Government and implemented by the South Australian Government to improve the watering and management of River Murray floodplains in South Australia's Riverland.

SARFIIP contributes to the implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan by supporting efficient environmental watering to protect and restore key environmental assets in South Australia.



Katarapko Floodplain

Further information

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources
T: (08) 8204 1910, www.environment.sa.gov.au

