



Community-Led Action Plan **Merbein Common** 2022-23



Acknowledgement of Country

Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) acknowledges and respects Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities and organisations. We recognise the diversity of their cultures and the deep connections they have with Victoria's lands and waters. We value partnerships with them for the health of people and Country.

Mallee Catchment Management Authority Board, management and staff pay their respects to Elders past, present and emerging and recognise the primacy of Traditional Owners' obligations, rights and responsibilities to use and care for their traditional lands and waters.

Thank you

Mallee CMA would like to thank everyone who took part during the survey response period. Your responses have provided valuable insights to your priorities and vision for the future in this plan.

About us

The Mallee CMA oversees hundreds of wetland sites of great diversity and natural beauty. These wetlands are primarily concentrated along a 760km stretch of the Murray River, between Vinifera and the South Australian border.

Mallee CMA

Community-Led Action Plan Merbein Common 2022/23

Mallee CMA, Irymple, Victoria

For further information on this plan, contact:

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Merbein Common is home to countless living things. I love being involved in working on ways to protect it

Community member



Introduction

Merbein Common is one of our region's most loved wetlands.

This flagship waterway is important to First Nations people, many community groups and recreational visitors for its cultural and historical significance, as well as its nationally listed flora and fauna species. Back in 2016, the 'There is Nothing Common about Merbein Common' project was launched, delivering significant improvements to the habitat condition and recreation opportunities of this flagship waterway site.

Then in 2022, this Community-led Action Plan was developed to further guide the wetland's management.

The plan details our goals to deliver significant improvements in habitat condition by rationalising tracks and repairing key access roads, controlling priority pest plants and establishing native vegetation.

This plan was reviewed and updated in May 2023, based on community survey results and responses.

Merbein Common snapshot



km2 of woodland, shrubland
and wetland areas



Wetlands, lakes and
billabongs



Community submissions
on future goals

About Merbein Common

Location

Merbein Common is located at the northern-most end of the Merbein township and 15 kilometres downstream from the regional city of Mildura. Merbein Common is a mixture of box woodland and chenopod shrubland, covering 14.8 square kilometres. It includes eight wetlands that promote vegetation and an abundance of wildlife.


Natural Values

The wetlands within Merbein Common are predominantly oxbow lakes (Billabongs) and ephemeral wetlands, being fed by the Murray River. These Billabongs are inundated year-round and provide valuable habitat to a wide array of bird and fish life.

Community

Merbein Common is loved by community groups for its historical, social, ecological, and recreational features. The wider community participates in activities such as walking and cycling along the several tracks and paths, camping at the numerous accommodated areas, launching and boating from the many boat ramps along the Murray River or enjoying the scenery and wildlife.

Engaging with the community that lives around Merbein Common, 'Friends of' groups, Landcare, community groups, First Nations peoples and visitors has been vital to understanding what the community values most about this site and provides scope for the delivery of future works that meet community expectations.



“Engaging with the community has been vital to understanding what the community values most about this site”

A photograph of a park sign for Merbein Common. The sign is partially obscured by a text overlay. The background shows a dry, open landscape with sparse vegetation and trees in the distance.

Merbein Common



We acknowledge the
Traditional Owners of this land

Park Information 13 1963 | www.parks.vic.gov.au

Parks

*The plan aims to provide an overview of
the most valued actions... that would
further enhance this area*



About the Community-Led Action Plan

Objective

The Community-led Action Plan aims to provide an overview of the most valued actions identified by surveyed community members and future project opportunities that would further enhance this area and encourage visitation.

The Community-led Action Plan summarises the community's views on:

- How important certain future works activities are for the flagship site.
 - The priority in which works should be conducted.
 - The vision for the future.
 - Concerns and issues that matter most to the community.
-

Listening to the community

Scope

Hard Copy and online surveys were made available to the community from February to April 2023 as A4 survey sheets, social media links and distribution within community groups and agencies. Surveys were also available at the Sunraysia Farmers Market and the Red Cliffs Market.

Responses

Robust engagement ensured many responses were received for the community survey during the survey period from a passionate and involved audience.

Alongside the responses from general community, the following stakeholders were also engaged for inclusion and comment on this survey:

- Sunraysia Bushwalkers
 - Mildura Birdlife
 - Mildura 4WD
 - Christie Centre
 - Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Community Council
 - Scout groups
 - Aboriginal community members
-

Comments and challenges

Comments and ideas for future works were identified through the survey responses. Survey results inform the Mallee CMA on what activities and actions could enhance the well-being and amenity of the flagship site.



“There were many responses over the survey period, from a passionate and involved audience”

Hearing Community Voices...

The community feedback received has identified a list of priorities the community sees as most important in the future wellbeing of Merbein Common.



Controlling pests:

The control of pest plants and animals was identified as a key priority for the community.



Fencing and protection:

The survey showed prevention of rubbish dumping in Merbein Common was a key issue for the community.



Upgrading the walking track:

The community wants comfortable, accessible walking tracks maintained throughout Merbein Common.

Community Priorities



Vegetation Rehabilitation and Plantings

The vegetation of Merbein Common is recognised as ecologically significant by flora and fauna enthusiasts.

Consultation for this action plan suggests the wellbeing of native birds and their habitat is a concern for community members interested in vegetation rehabilitation and plantings. Dead trees are noted as being felled for firewood. Too many trees being set aside for firewood presents a risk to long-term habitat opportunities for birdlife.

Priorities

- Re-establish an understory canopy to replace the loss of old-growth canopy trees.
- Consider rehabilitation in areas that are commonly occupied by birdlife.

Controlling pest plants and animals

Invasive pests pose an enormous risk to the health of the environment and to community resources. Locals have identified feral foxes and cats are a persistent threat to endangered wildlife.

The consultation for this action plan suggests introducing controls for pest animals for Merbein Common is a primary concern.

Priorities

- Develop suitable controls to eradicate priority pest animals.
- Assess the impacts of pest plants.



Upgrade and maintain walking tracks

Merbein Common hosts an extensive length of nature trails that direct locals around the four priority wetlands: Cowanna Billabong, Brickworks Billabong, Catfish Billabong, and the Blackbox Track Lagoons.

Feedback gathered through the community survey suggests there should be some consideration for the development of dedicated cycling areas and locations to stop and enjoy the natural values.

Priority

- Identify opportunities for further improvements for cyclists.

Community Priorities

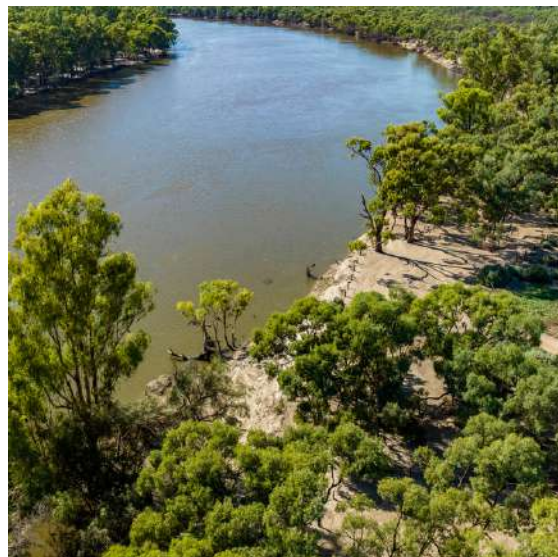
Installing signage

Several significant signage projects have been completed within Merbein Common over recent years and are easily accessible across the Common. These signs present knowledge-sharing opportunities and reflect the nature values and historical significance of Merbein Common..

Community consultation identified opportunities to promote awareness and respect for the flagship waterway's vegetation, wildlife, and heritage.

Priorities

- Consider the implementation of vegetation identification signage.
- Assess the display of cultural knowledge and awareness across Merbein Common.



Fencing, restrictions and protection

Merbein Common is well-regarded by the community and identified in legislation as a priority floodplain and flagship site. The protection of waterways and Cultural Heritage is vital to maintaining the heritage and historical values that this flagship waterway site represents.

Community consultation has identified the presence of illegal dumping of general waste and instances of littering. Action to address the issue of rubbish is a priority concern for Merbein Common.

Priorities

- Support land manager initiatives to reduce littering and dumping.
- Consider the development of administrative controls to reduce littering and dumping.

Providing recreation facilities and all-abilities access

Accessibility should be taken into consideration in the development of future work priorities.

The consultation for this action plan suggests that establishing targeted camping areas for patrons will increase the use and opportunities for activities.

Priority

- Support land manager with areas for camping.



Community Priorities



Upgrading roadways and access tracks

The flagship waterway site is host to a network of tracks that provide opportunities for visitors and the local community to camp, observe and enjoy the scenic reserve.

The primary access tracks throughout Merbein Common have been maintained and upgraded several times, including the accommodation of all-weather tracks to minimise environmental, cultural, and health and safety risks.

Survey results identified the need to manage the access and use of four-wheel drive vehicles and motor bikes in Merbein Common. Some community members commented on limiting access to non-upgraded tracks after days of heavy rain.

Priorities

- Improve all-weather capabilities of roads and tracks.
- Allowing safe access by vehicles while protecting Cultural and ecological values.

Installing recreational amenities

Recreational amenities fit within the works of a more critical nature, such as walking and cycling tracks, and upgrading and maintaining the walking trail.

Some survey comments support the establishment of targeted camping sites which require considerable thought for the future development of fire pits, toilets, and signage.

Priorities

- Assess the capacity for developing recreational amenities alongside popular camping locations.



The background of the slide is a photograph of a riverbank. In the foreground, there is a calm body of water reflecting the sky and trees. On the opposite bank, there is a line of trees and a small boat with a canopy. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box in the upper half of the image.

Taking Action...

The priorities identified by engaging with the community have informed the action plan.

This action plan is focused on achieving the outcomes most valued by the community.

Actions and outcomes for 2022-23

Priority 1: Vegetation Rehabilitation and Plantings



Priority 1a:

Rehabilitation of vegetation associated with track rationalisation.

Action

Seed bombing and mulching of rationalised tracks.
Action by - Mallee CMA

Priority 1b:

Consider rehabilitation in areas that are commonly occupied by birdlife.

Action

Undertake monitoring to inform rehabilitation where funding allows.
Action by - Mallee CMA

Priority 2: Controlling pest plants and animals

Priority 2a:

Assess and monitor pest plants and animals.

Action

There were 74 rabbit assessments and 25 weed assessments completed in the 2022-23 financial year.
Action by - Mallee CMA

Priority 2b:

Management of pest plants and animals.

Action

Collaborate with land manager to assist with weed and rabbit control where funding allows.
Action by - Mallee CMA



Actions and outcomes

Priority 3: Upgrading and maintaining the walking track

Priority 3a:

Identify opportunities for further cycling improvements.

Action

Upgrade to tracks for use by walkers and cyclists.
Action by - Mallee CMA

Priority 4: Installing signage which identifies features, facilities, and values

Priority 4a:

Consider the implementation of vegetation identification signage.

Action

Collaborate with Parks Victoria to identify suitable sites for signage as funding allows.
Action by - Mallee CMA

Priority 4b:

Assess the display of cultural knowledge and awareness across Merbein Common.

Action

Collaborate with Traditional Owners to reflect cultural values throughout signage in conjunction with the land manager where able
Action by - Mallee CMA



Priority 5: Installing fencing, restrictions, and protections for floodplain / natural riparian areas

Priority 5a:

Installation of fencing for protection of significant Cultural Heritage sites.

Action

Fencing installation.
Action by - Mallee CMA

Priority 5b:

Intervene in track degradation through fencing and restrictions.

Action

Installation of fencing and bollards to reduce the unofficial track network.
Action by - Mallee CMA



Actions and outcomes

Priority 6: Providing additional recreational facilities, and access for all abilities

Priority 6a:

Upgrade and improve access for camping.

Action

Track rationalisation and further defining access to the sites.

Action by - Mallee CMA



Priority 7: Upgrading roadway and access tracks

Priority 7a:

Improve all-weather capabilities of roads and tracks.

Action

Upgrade priority tracks as funding allows.

Action by - Mallee CMA

Priority 7b:

Allow safe access by vehicles while protecting Cultural and ecological values.

Action

Collaborate with the land manager to identify opportunities for future works.

Action by - Mallee CMA

Priority 8: Installing recreational amenities


Priority 8a:

Assess the capacity for developing recreational amenities alongside popular camping locations.

Action

Collaborate with Parks Victoria to identify opportunities for future improvements

Action by - Mallee CMA



Stakeholders from across the community are welcome partners in the preservation of this culturally rich flagship waterway site

Vision for the future

Working together

Mallee CMA is dedicated to continuing to improve the amenity of the Merbein Common and showcasing its history, heritage and knowledge-sharing opportunities.

Stakeholders from across the community are welcome partners in the preservation of this culturally rich flagship waterway site.

We recognise Merbein Common's future is dependent on the community's interest and involvement and would like to thank the groups who have contributed to this Community-led Action Plan:

- Sunraysia Bushwalkers
- Mildura Birdlife
- Mildura 4WD
- Christie Centre
- Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Community Council
- Scout groups
- Aboriginal community
- General community

How to get involved

The Mallee CMA is undertaking annual reviews of the Community-led Action Plan, informing the community of actions completed and re-evaluating the priorities identified.

We will be seeking community feedback as part of each annual review to recognise the value of independent views and appreciate the time commitment of our community members and advocacy groups.

If you would like to be involved and have your say on future Community-led Action Plans please sign up to our Engagement Register through our website:

<https://www.malleecma.com.au/engagement>



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