Fact Sheet

mallee catchment management authority

Hattah Lakes Ramsar Site:

Securing the ecological benefits of appropriate watering regimes

At a glance

- The Mallee CMA has been successful in receiving funding under the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust for the restoration of, and reduction in threats to, the Hattah Lakes Ramsar site.
- Under the Regional Delivery Partners Program, a range of management activities, including controlling key pest plants and animals and River Red Gum thinning, will be undertaken. These activities will be supported through monitoring to help evaluate project delivery and future priorities.

Over the next five years (2023-2028), the Mallee Catchment Management Authority (Mallee CMA) will be working together with key stakeholders to secure the ecological benefits delivered by ongoing environmental watering programs and the late 2022 flood event which inundated the Hattah Lakes Ramsar site. On-ground control works will address key invasive species that are a major risk to important vegetation communities and biodiversity services critical to the Hattah Lakes Ramsar site's ecological character and the site's ability to respond to the favourable conditions that appropriate watering regimes provide.

Why are the Hattah-Kulkyne Lakes important?

Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, a one-hour drive south from Mildura, contains 12 interconnected wetlands which have been listed under the Ramsar Convention. The 1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance is an international treaty for the conservation of wetlands and this listing recognises the unique assemblages of flora and fauna found at the Hattah-Kulkyne wetlands.

What are the key threats?

The Hattah Lakes Ramsar site is threatened by a variety of introduced pest plant and animals. High grazing pressure, waterbird predation by foxes, soil disruption, environmental weeds, and River Red Gum encroachment on the lakebeds pose major threats to the biodiversity and waterbird breeding habitat that is critical to the site's overall ecological character.

These key threats impact the ability of native flora and fauna to respond to favourable watering events. Project delivery will be focused on habitat that has benefited from both environmental watering and the 2022 flood event, which inundated 5,203 hectares of the Ramsar site and its adjoining Black Box floodplain habitat. On-ground works will focus on three target areas and will protect 3,228 ha of Black Box floodplain habitat; 1,000 ha of vulnerable fringing woody vegetation that surround the Ramsar-listed lakes and 975 ha of lakebed herbland that contain diverse flora assemblages and provide waterbird breeding habitat.

See Map on following page.

What are we doing to address these threats?

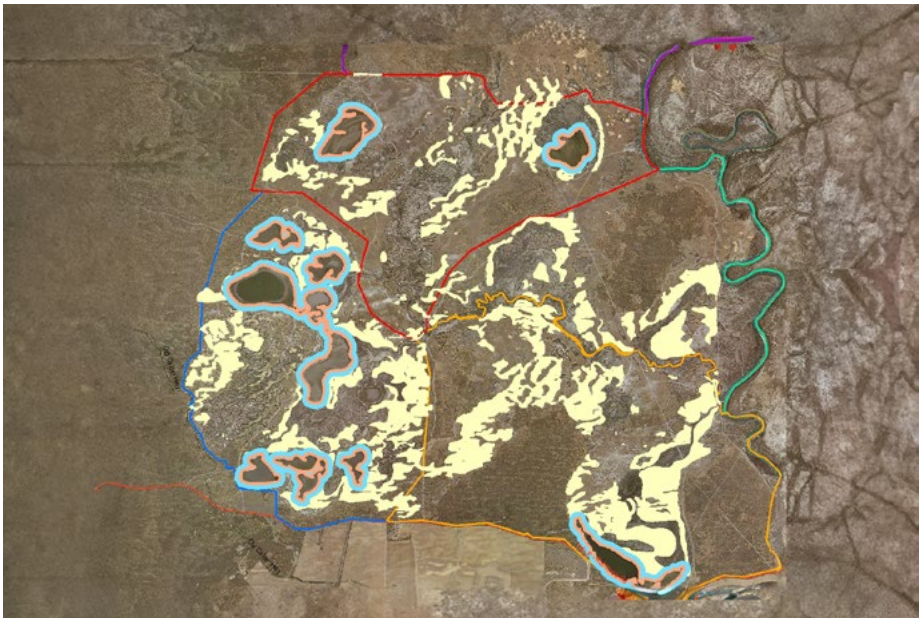
A suite of activities will be undertaken by the Mallee CMA, in partnership with key stakeholders, to address the key threats within the three target landscapes. Project activities include:

Integrated pest animal management (2023 – 28)

Annual pest animal control works will maintain/enhance the achievements of land manager (Parks Victoria) control programs through:

- Rabbit and feral goat control to protect 3,228 ha of Black Box floodplain habitat and 1,000 ha of fringing woody vegetation.

Regent Parrots found at the Hattah-Kulkyne Lakes Ramsar site Credit: Mallee CMA



Above: Map showing target areas at the Hattah Lakes Ramsar site

- Strategic fox control works to protect waterbird breeding habitat that borders the lakebed herbland vegetation of the twelve Ramsar-listed lakes.
- Feral pig control to reduce the incidence and impact that pigs have on the lakebed herbland target area.

Terrestrial weed control (2023-28)

Project delivery will target infestations of high threat weeds to contain, and where possible eradicate, the threat they pose to vegetation condition within the 3,228 ha Black Box floodplain and the 1,000 ha fringing woody vegetation target areas. Priority weeds for control are: boxthorn, bridal creeper, olive, prickly pear, wheel cactus, noogoora burr, tree tobacco, thorn apple, bathurst burr and angel trumpets.

River Red Gum management (2024 – 27)

Five hectares of invasive River Red Gum stands that have encroached onto the shallow areas of Ramsar-listed lakes will be thinned over three years. Red Gum stands have thickened to an extreme density since 1996, with very little growth in the diameter of trees.

These high-density levels restrict tree hollow development which is important for bird habitat, and the encroaching stands threaten vulnerable lakebed herbland vegetation.

Monitoring

The effectiveness and impact of on-ground works will be monitored, with monitoring results feeding into an evaluation and adaptive management process. Data will be collected on pest animal abundance and impact, weed density and vegetation condition. The monitoring will use the ecological field monitoring protocols developed by EMSA (Ecological Monitoring System Australia) for the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

Communications and engagement (2023 – 28)

A range of communication products (e.g. flyers, social media posts, Youtube clips etc.) and engagement activities will be conducted to improve community awareness and appreciation of the Hattah Lakes Ramsar site in relation to its values, condition and threatening processes.

How can I find out more?

For more information on this project, please contact the Mallee CMA Project Officer

Stephanie Robinson
0497 771 999 or

visit the Mallee CMA website at
www.malleecma.vic.gov.au

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