











Project Progress Report		
Murrumbidgee Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Program		
Project Leader:	Skye Wassens	Phone: 0404 495 578
Report period:	1 January – 31 March 2021	

Project Health Summary

Indicator	Traffic light	Comment
Overall Rating		<i>Traffic light question: Is this Project going to achieve its objective as committed?</i> Yes
Time (schedule)		<i>Traffic light question: Is this project (and its elements) forecast date of completion tracking to the baseline schedule?</i> Yes
Scope (change)		<i>Traffic light question: Is this Project delivering outcomes directly associated with the agreed project scope?</i> Yes
Engagement		<i>Traffic light question: What is the current status of the relationship with project and other stakeholders</i> Good
Safety		<i>Traffic light question: Has there been a safety incident, or have any inadequacies been identified in the safety planning (note, details on any incidents or inadequacies must be communicated to the CEWO as soon as practical)</i> No
Risks		<i>Traffic light question: Are there any risks that may impact our ability to achieve committed outcomes?</i> No
Issues		<i>Traffic light question: Are there any issues that may impact our ability to achieve committed outcomes?</i> Issues associated with COVID-19 measures may cause some pressure or delays but mitigation strategies are in place
 Tasks are completed or on track and there are no issues  Tasks are delayed or under pressure, but not influencing the outputs of the project  Tasks are delayed and are influencing the projects ability to meet its commitments		

Project Progress Summary

Activities completed in the previous period

Monitoring:

- Regular scheduled wetland monitoring conducted during January and March 2021.
- Dissolved oxygen logger replaced monthly in Carrathool reach of Murrumbidgee River.
- DPIE-EES January colony waterbird surveys conducted in the lower Murrumbidgee.
- CSU staff participated in the Summer NSW DPIE-EES bird surveys conducted in the mid-Murrumbidgee and Lowbidgee in February.
- DPI-Fisheries conducted larval fish monitoring in the Carrathool reach of the Murrumbidgee River has now concluded.

Community engagement:

- Instagram and Twitter social media accounts active.
- Newsletter Issue 6 distributed.
- Newsletter Issue 7 ready for submission to CEWO.
- Murrumbidgee MER Program page on ILWS website maintained and reports uploaded.
- CSU staff presented Webisode 2 of the Flow MER webinar series (March).

Indigenous engagement:

- Indigenous student appointed under the CSU Indigenous Australian Cadetship program participated in March monitoring trip.

Activities to be undertaken in the upcoming period

Monitoring:

- The dissolved oxygen logger deployed at Carrathool reach in the Murrumbidgee River will be retrieved for the season in April and final nutrient collection to be conducted.
- Depth loggers and weather stations will be downloaded and reset in April.
- Call recorders and temperature loggers will be checked and maintained in April and June.

Community engagement:

*Some activities have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, particularly face-to-face events such as landholder field days and Indigenous workshops. Alternatives to these events are being considered including online presentations and workshops and a Podcast series.

- Newsletter 7 distribution.
- Printing and distribution of 2021-2022 calendar scheduled for April 2021.
- Continue Instagram and Twitter social media accounts activity.
- Presentation to Leeton local government and tourism operators on May 4th
- Presentation to Nari Nari Tribal Council on May 18th

Summary of Progress towards Stage 2 Core Services Milestone 3

Milestone	Due Date	Complete/ Incomplete	Comment
Monitoring and research undertaken in accordance with the MER Plan	30/03/2021	Complete	
Submit Progress Report to the Department	30/03/2021	Complete	
Submit Quarterly Outcomes Newsletter to the Department	30/03/2021	Complete	
Organisation and/or attendance at any of the following meetings scheduled for this quarter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected Area Working Group meetings - Thematic Working Group meetings - CEWO MER Steering Committee 	30/03/2021	Complete	EWAG 31/3-1/4/21

Summary of Progress towards Work Orders Contingency

Work Order	Activity	Milestone	Milestone description	Due	Status
1	<u>Research</u> <i>Optimisation models</i>	1	Compilation of flow and inundation data	31/05/2020	Complete
		2	Develop ecological response models	31/12/2020	Ongoing
		3	Develop optimisation framework	03/06/2021	Ongoing
2	<u>Monitoring</u> <i>Vegetation and wetland assets benchmarking</i>	1	Wetland mapping and survey requirements	31/01/2020	Complete
		2	Undertake field surveys and provide Progress Report 1	30/04/2021	Complete
		3	Final Report	30/10/2021	Planned
3	<u>Communications & Engagement</u> <i>Communications Plan 2019-2022</i>	1	July 2019 - Dec 2019 activities		Complete
		2	Jan 2020 - June 2020 activities		Complete
		3	July 2020 - Dec 2020 activities		Complete
		4	Jan 2021 - June 2021 activities		Ongoing
		5	July 2021 - Dec 2021 activities		Planned
		6	Jan 2022 - June 2022 activities		Planned
4	<u>Monitoring</u> <i>Native fish movement, spawning and food webs dynamics in floodplains wetlands</i>	1	On completion of monitoring and sample collection	06/09/2020	Complete
		2	On provision of Progress Report	30/09/2020	To be completed
		3	Final Report	30/12/2020	Incorporated into Milestone 2, Work Order 8
5		1	On completion of monitoring	30/01/2021	Complete

	<u>Monitoring Waterbird Monitoring (category 3)</u>	2	On provision of Progress Report	01/03/2021	To be completed
		3	Final Report	30/06/2021	Planned
6	<u>Monitoring Colonial Waterbird Drone Monitoring in Gayini Nimmie-Caira</u>	1	On completion of first drone monitoring and provision of Progress Report 1	18/12/2020	Complete
		2	On provision of Progress Report 2	31/03/2021	Superseded by Work Order 7
		3	Final Report	30/09/2021	Superseded by Work Order 7
7	<u>Monitoring Colonial Waterbird Monitoring (Category 1) in Eulimbah Swamp, Gayini Nimmie-Caira</u>	1	On provision of Progress Report 1	18/12/2020	Complete
		2	On provision of Progress Report 2	31/03/2021	Complete
		3	Final Report	30/09/2021	Planned
8	<u>Monitoring Phase 2 Native Fish Monitoring in Yanga N.P.</u>	1	On completion of initial monitoring, sample collection and provision of Field Report 1	28/02/2021	To be completed
		2	On provision of the Fish Age and Recommendations Report	31/05/2021	Linked with Milestone 3, Work Order 4
		3	On provision of the Final Report	30/09/2021	Planned

Critical Risks, Opportunities & Issues

Risk / issue	Action
COVID-19 - Fieldwork constraints (University travel restrictions)	Approval obtained for essential fieldwork travel (subject to University remaining open). Safety requirements for hygiene and social distancing during field trips established.
COVID-19 – Access requirements (Yanga NP, Gayini Nimmie-Caira)	COVID-19 risk assessment and job safety assessment documentation provided to meet requirement for approved visits to NSW NPWS sites. Access approved for Gayini Nimmie-Caira.

Outstanding Information (if applicable)

Information required (item)	From Whom	Date required	Urgency (High/Medium/Low)

Appendix 1

Summary of monitoring activities undertaken during January and March 2021 as part of the Monitoring and evaluating ecological responses to Commonwealth environmental water use in the Murrumbidgee River Valley

Zone	Site name	Estimated Status (March)	Water Quality	Ecosystem metabolism	Larval fish	Riverine fish	Tadpoles, fish and turtles	Frogs	Waterbirds	Vegetation
mid-Murrumbidgee	Gooragool Lagoon	½ full	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
	Mantangery Lagoon	¾ full	✓				✓	✓	✓	
	Willbriggie Lagoon (January only)	¾ full	X				X	✓	X	X
	Sunshower Lagoon	¾ full	✓				✓	✓	✓	
	Yarradda Lagoon	½ full	✓				✓	✓	✓	
	Yarradda West Lagoon (March only)	Full	✓				✓	✓	X	
	McKennas Lagoon	Dry	X				X	X	✓	
	Coonacoocabil Lagoon	¾ full	✓				✓	✓	X	
South Redbank	Mercedes Swamp	Dry	X				X	X	✓	
	Two Bridges Swamp	Full	✓				✓	✓	✓	
	Piggery Lake	½ full	✓				✓	✓	✓	
	Waugorah Lagoon	¾ full	✓				✓	✓	✓	
Nimmie-Caira	Nap Nap Swamp	¾ full	✓				✓	✓	✓	
	Avalon Swamp	Full	✓				✓	✓	✓	
	Telephone Creek	Full	✓				✓	✓	✓	
	Eulimbah Swamp	Full	✓				✓	✓	✓	
River sites	McKennas (Carrathool zone)		✓	January- March 2021	January- March 2021					
	Bringagee (Carrathool zone)									
	Yarradda (Carrathool zone)									

Appendix 2

About the Murrumbidgee Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (MER Program)

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (MER) Program for the Murrumbidgee River system is funded by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (2019-2022) and is being delivered as a collaborative partnership led by Charles Sturt University (Institute for Land, Water and Society) with NSW Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries), University of NSW, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (Environment, Energy and Science) and Riverina Local Land Services.

The Murrumbidgee MER Program is designed to provide a robust framework to evaluate the ecological outcomes of Commonwealth environmental water within wetland and river systems downstream of Narrandera, NSW. Monitoring activities target multiple taxonomic groups and ecological processes with a focus on indicators of high ecological and community significance, such as large bodied native fish, waterbirds, and endangered species.

Monitoring activities within wetlands are focused on the responses of fish, frogs, tadpoles, turtles, waterbirds, vegetation, along with the changes in water quality associated with black water and algal bloom risks, and hydrology measured before, during and after environmental watering. The riverine component includes intensive monitoring of native fish breeding and fish community responses to environmental watering actions, along with stream metabolism (stream productivity) and water quality associated with black water and algal bloom risks, and hydrology.

The Murrumbidgee MER Program is being undertaken across three key ecological regions within the Murrumbidgee, the lower Murrumbidgee River channel and adjacent mid-Murrumbidgee wetlands between Narrandera and Hay, and the Lowbidgee floodplain downstream of Maude, that is further divided into separate monitoring “zones” representing areas with common ecological and hydrological attributes (Figure 1).

The framework includes 12 fixed monitoring sites across three key wetland types, oxbow lagoons of the Mid-Murrumbidgee, lignum-black box wetlands through the Nimmie-Caira system and river red Gum-spike rush wetlands through the Redbank systems and three fixed sites across the Carrathool zone of the Murrumbidgee River channel. Copies of the Murrumbidgee Monitoring and Evaluation plan are available at:

<https://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo/publications/mer-plan-murrumbidgee-2019>

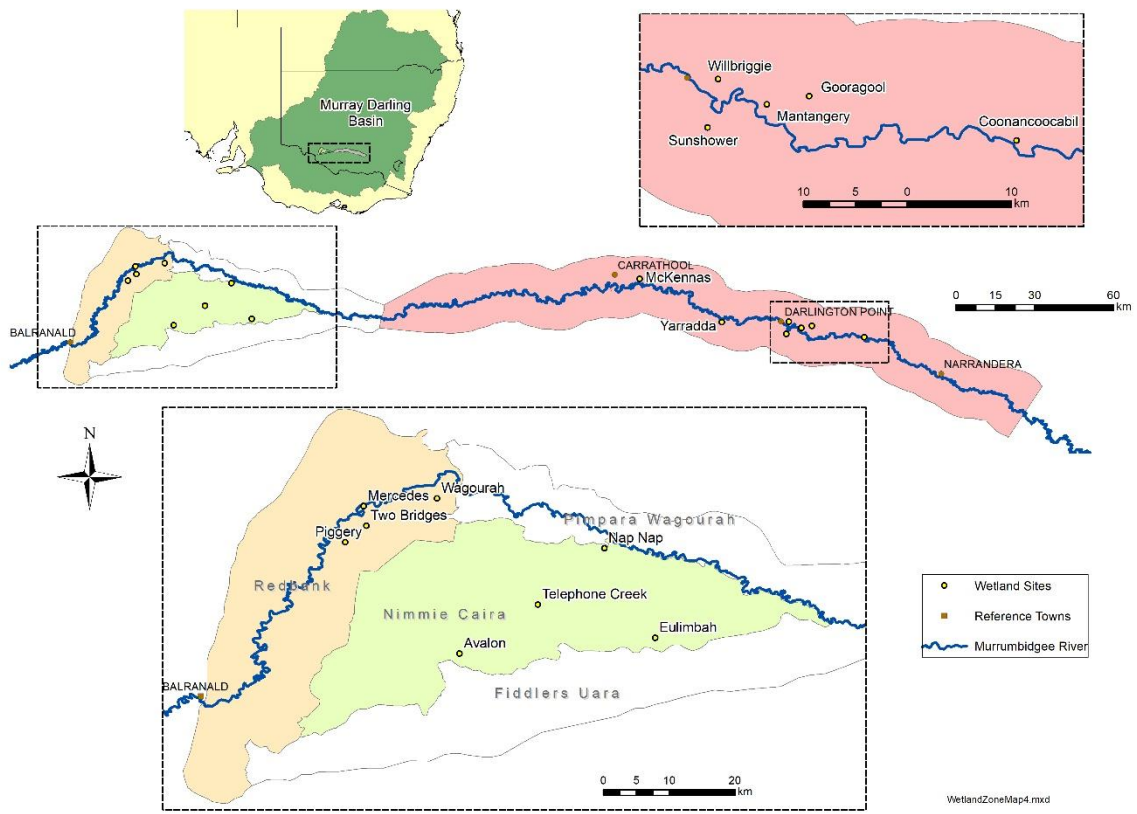


Figure 1. Distribution of wetland zones in the Murrumbidgee Selected Area and locations of key wetlands.