River Red Gum Conservation Action Plan

Overview

Achieving our vision to:

Increase the resilience of natural assets in the River Red Gum Landscape and maintain ecosystem services in the face of climate change and other stressors

The River Red Gum Landscape includes a variety of dry and riverine forests and woodlands, and freshwater and saline wetlands supported by the Murray River along a corridor which follows the river's trajectory.

Parks and reserves include:

- Barmah National Park
- Gunbower National Park
- Hatta-Kulkyne National Park
- Murray-Sunset National Park (part of)
- Warby-Ovens National Park
- 117 other parks and reserves managed by Parks Victoria

The landscape includes traditional lands of the Barenji, Ngintait, Nyeri Nyeri, Wergaia, Latji Latji, Wadi Wadi, Wamba Wamba, Tatti Tatti, Wergaia, Barapa Barapa, Yorta Yorta, Waywurru, Dhudhuroa, Bangerang, Taungurung, and Yaithmathang peoples. The First People of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation and the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation have recognised rights in parts of the landscape, the latter with co-management and joint management arrangements over certain parks.

Global Practice

Conservation action planning is an internationally recognised process developed by The Nature Conservancy, and used by many conservation managers around Australia. Adaptive management is a critical component of the model.

The Plan provides directions for environmental conservation management for the next 15 years. After 5 years, the plan will be reviewed, and progress will be evaluated against outcomes identified for the conservation

Dancing Brolga, Lake Murphy Wildlife Reserve.

Doctors Swamp Wildlife Reserve

Conservation Assets

Eight ecosystems, and four internationally-listed significant wetlands (Ramsar sites), have been identified as conservation assets in the River Red Gum Landscape. Within each of these assets, a range of nested assets, such as threatened species and important ecological assemblages, have also been identified.

Condition

The plan also identifies a range of key ecological attributes (components that are believed to best reflect the health of the asset). The plan describes their current condition (very good, good, fair, poor) and the trend in condition (improving, stable, declining), and sets the anticipated future condition of each key ecological attribute. These measures then allow the overall condition of each asset to be assessed:

- Riverine Forests and Wetlands, Permanent Freshwater Wetlands, Saline Wetlands and Mixed Dry Forests (outside Ramsar sites) are in generally fair condition.
- Ephemeral Wetlands (outside Ramsar sites) are in generally poor condition.
- Plains Wetlands, Box Ironbark Forests and Chenopod Shrublands are in fair condition.

The four Ramsar sites (Hatta-Kulkyne Lakes, Kerang Wetlands, Gunbower Forest, and Barmah Forest) are in generally good condition.

Threats

Eleven threats to the conservation assets in the Park Landscape are identified in the plan. Eight of these are considered key threats and are therefore the priority threats considered in this plan. They are:

- Inappropriate hydrological regimes.
- Fire regimes and management.
- Recreational activities and resource extraction.
- Grazing by introduced herbivores and macropods.
- Invasive aquatic fauna.
- Introduced terrestrial predators.
- Invasion by introduced and native flora.
- Climate change.

The Conservation Action Plan identifies strategies that target our conservation efforts to achieve the best outcomes for ecosystems and species with the available resources.

Conservation strategies

The following conservation strategies will be undertaken to tackle these threats. They have been selected for their impact, feasibility and cost in achieving the desired conservation.

- **Terrestrial introduced predator control** – implement targeted control of foxes and cats at priority sites for threatened and migratory species, integrating available methods of control.
- **Manage aquatic pest animals –** implement best practice measures to reduce the impact of invasive aquatic fauna and allow for the improvement of the key ecological attributes of inundation-dependant assets.
- **Manage fire for healthy assets –** undertake communications and compliance activities to reduce the risk of human-induced ignitions, and where possible protect significant values from loss during fire events.
- **Manage total grazing pressure –** control herbivores using culturally appropriate methods to improve the quality of native vegetation, riparian zone integrity and protect culturally important sites across the Park Landscape.
- **Manage environmental weeds –** control environmental weeds through surveillance and rapid management intervention to prevent the establishment of new and emerging weeds and maintain established weeds at acceptable densities.
- **Manage water for conservation outcomes –** improve water regimes by implementing on ground actions and working in partnership with environmental water managers to facilitate the delivery of environmental water and increase extent of natural flood events.
- **Establish collaborative partnerships to coordinate management strategies and address key knowledge gaps –** research and management activities are integrated, so management effectiveness is improved.
- **Planning for climate change in the River Red Gum Landscape –** planning for climate change and facilitating transition to drier conditions and increased severe weather events, is incorporated into land management practices to facilitate the adaptation of ecosystems to drier conditions.

Performance measurement

For each strategy, component actions and monitoring indicators have been developed. These will be used to track the achievement of threat mitigation objectives and conservation outcomes defined for each of the assets.

Implementing the plan

The Conservation Action Plan will be implemented by a regional team in partnership with Traditional Owners, and with detailed planning and design often assisted by restoration partners, researchers, other agencies, Friends groups and volunteers.

More information

Copies of the plan may be downloaded from the Parks Victoria website (www.parkweb.vic.gov.au)

10 Step Process:

Parks Victoria uses a ten-step process for conservation action planning:
the Plan covers the first seven steps in the process