

Wednesday, 17 June 2009

### **CONSTRUCTION OF GOOLWA REGULATORS STARTS THIS WEEK**

Construction of environmental flow regulators in the Goolwa Channel, Finniss River and Currency Creek will commence this week to manage the risk of further acidification in the Lower Lakes area.

Minister for the River Murray Karlene Maywald said the project would raise water levels in Goolwa Channel and the two tributaries, limiting the exposure of acid sulfate soils to the air and to protect the area as an ecological refuge.

“The Goolwa Channel, Currency Creek and Finniss River are part of nationally important Ramsar wetlands and support valued plants, animals and ecosystems,” Minister Maywald said.

“Failure to protect at least some of these wetlands could result in important plant and animal species becoming locally extinct, and would severely limit the potential for these fresh water communities to re-colonise the Lower Lakes region when conditions improve,” she said.

“The main regulator in the Goolwa Channel near Clayton will be about 400m long and 40m wide. It will be constructed as an earth-fill embankment.

“The Finniss River regulator will be about 900m long and 10m wide and the Currency Creek regulator 320m long and 10m wide. They will be constructed as low-level rock fill embankments.

“The three structures will be in place by late July to capture winter inflows down the two tributaries.

“Initially, 27.5 GL will be pumped from Lake Alexandrina to bring the new pool up to a level of about 0.3m AHD. It is planned that this season’s tributary inflows will then raise the pool level to 0.7m AHD.

“Once at 0.7m AHD, additional flows from the tributaries will be siphoned over the regulator near Clayton to flow to Lake Alexandrina. When this year’s flows cease, the water level will fall from 0.7m AHD to about 0m AHD (sea level) over summer before next season’s inflows commence.

“If the drought continues, seasonal inflows from the tributaries should be enough to sustain the new pool indefinitely, no further pumping would be required.

“The regulators will be temporary, and will be removed when River Murray flows improve and the Lower Lakes recover.

“Construction of the three temporary regulators will take place from the shoreline and all necessary provisions will be put in place to minimise impacts on the environment or local communities.

Public information sessions outlining the construction schedule and details will be held this Thursday, June 18, at the Clayton Bay Community Hall, from 2-3pm, and at the Alexandrina Council Chambers in Goolwa from 4-5pm.

The project was referred to the Federal Government for environmental assessment under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*. The Federal Government determined the project required no further environmental assessment under the Act, but must be undertaken in a particular manner meeting certain conditions.

The project has also been approved by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, and received Aboriginal Heritage Approval following extensive discussion between the State Government and local Aboriginal groups.

The general community was also consulted, with public workshops held at Goolwa and Clayton in early 2009.

People living within the Currency Creek and Finnis River area are reminded that there are currently pools of acidic water in these tributaries and precautions should be taken. Water in some areas is unsuitable for human contact and livestock consumption. Landholders are advised to provide alternate water supplies for stock and to restrict livestock access to the acidic water as a precaution.

For further information contact the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation on 08 8204 8605, or visit [www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/murray/drought/gcll.html](http://www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/murray/drought/gcll.html)