



LBLAP news

Winter 2009

Loxton to Bookpurnong Local Action Planning Committee Inc

Wetland Management Plan for Ajax Achilles?

Ajax Achilles is one of three wetlands that have been prioritised for management plans to be completed by the SAMDBNRMB Wetland Planning Officer.

Ajax Achilles is a wetland consisting of two connected lagoons and located immediately above Lock 4.

It is an area that falls under the area of interest of the Bookpurnong Lock 4 Environmental Association (BL4EA), a group that LBLAP works closely with.

Ajax Achilles (*named after two old barges that were taken out of service and are still on site*) is a wetland that has been continuously inundated since the introduction on the Lock system in the 1920s. As a result, the wetland has significantly degraded over that time. That said, the wetland and adjacent small floodplain between it and the main river,

are in reasonable condition when compared to many others in the SA section of Murray, although lagoon water quality is poor and becoming worse.

Because it is in reasonable condition, LBLAP Committee believes that it's important to better manage the wetland now, as it will be easier than most other wetlands to return to a condition resembling pre-Lock days.

BL4EA Joint Chair, Jason Size said "we're happy to see at least the first steps being taken to potential rehabilitation of Ajax Achilles, although we'd much prefer something more concrete by way of a commencement date for work on the Management Plan".

Whilst Ajax Achilles has been listed as one of three priority wetlands, it is possible that priorities may have moved before the Planning

Officer commences work on those plans. "We'd be extremely disappointed if that happened" Jason said.



BL4EA Joint Chair, Jason Size



Reveg—Moorook Tree Planters

"We'd much prefer something more concrete by way of a commencement date"

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Revegetation Back on the Agenda

Funding for revegetation work has seemingly dried up over the past year or so. However, there is possibly a light on the horizon.

The Murray Forest Project announced by the SA Government a year or so ago, may well turn out to be a source of funding for people seeking to revegetate areas with natives. If you'd like to investigate

the possibility of assistance with a reveg project on your property (*big or small*) please give the office a call soon.

The possibility of using that same source of funding to reveg vacant fruit properties has also been put out to the community for expressions of interest, but there has been very little interest in that scenario.

FarmReady Industry Grant—Climate Change



Our application for Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Farm-Ready funding referred to in the Autumn Newsletter was ultimately successful.

Funding is for up to \$160,000 over 2 years to investigate possible local area strategies relevant to growers to counter or best work with Climate Change.

The Pyap to Kingston and the Bookpurnong Lock 4 Land & Water Management Planning Groups will work with CSIRO and LBLAP to

investigate possible options.

The modelling undertaken by CSIRO utilising this information, will ultimately lead to the development of a software tool. That tool could assist local area growers in conducting “what-if” Climate Change investigations of their own. They could input various potential combinations of factors into the program, which would return potential strategies and/or outcomes, hopefully leading to more informed decision making.

A spin off benefit to the two

Land & Water Management Planning Groups, is that there is 0.3 FTE funding for 2 years associated with the project. That will mean that the LBLAP Land & Water Management Officer they have worked with for some time (*Lauren Burdett*) will be able to continue in that coordinator role for each of those groups.

With thanks again to CSIRO and Jeremy Nelson and Michael Cutting of SAMDBNRMB for their considerable input into this application

Other Funding Matters

Caring for Our Country

We recently learned that one of our funding applications under the federal ‘Caring for our Country’ program was successful.

In fact, we feel particularly fortunate to have won this funding, as only 1 in 20 applications were successful.

The successful project is a joint project with Berri Barmera LAP, working closely with SAMDBNRMB and DEH staff to run a 2 year pest plant and animal control program on the Katarapko Wetland and adjacent properties.

However, it’s almost certain that there will be no CfOC funding toward Land & Water Management Officers post 30 June 2009.

To that end, the LBLAP Management Committee has undertaken to guarantee the LWMO position up until 30 June 2010 and fund any shortfall out of Committee funds if necessary.

Fortunately, part of the LWMO role has already received funding from elsewhere. 0.3 FTE as outlined in the previous FarmReady article.

Project Manager Role

CfOC also has no program specifically for Project Management, with any contribution toward this role expected to be a component of other projects. Because there has been such a change of focus for CfOC targets this year, that could mean some areas losing their experienced Project Manager.

SAMDBNRMB has recognized this as a deficiency and committed to fund up to 1.0 FTE per LAP for the two years to 30/06/2011. That’s probably more security for those positions than there has been for some time.

SA Community Grants

The Minister Environment and Conservation, Hon Jay Weatherill MP advised us early June that we had been successful in our application for funding for site survey and installation of Gauge Boards at Yatco. These will assist those people undertaking regular monitoring at the site, both community members and SAMDBNRMB staff alike.

Funding - it’s the ongoing bugbear of all LAPs. *Nothing much’s changed since last Newsletter*

Funding - it’s the ongoing bugbear of all LAPs

Field Days

If you have any queries on any of these projects, or indeed any natural resource management issue in the Loxton to Bookpurnong LAP area, please call and see our representative at the Riverland Field Days. We are located within the SA Murray Darling Basin NRM Board marquee.

LBLAP 'Donated Gift Recipient' Status and Membership Drive

LBLAP is putting in place procedures and protocols that will enable it to set up a separate, sister organisation with accredited Donated Gift Recipient (DGR) status. Such status would enable that organisation to accept tax deductible donations, but more importantly, allow access to a much larger range of potential funding. *Many funding bodies only accept applications from DGR accredited organisations.*

One of the criteria for DGR accreditation, is a minimum

membership base of 50 and, for a range of reasons, the LBLAP membership database was in very poor state. We needed to put effort into this area to build numbers.

We recently undertook a widespread mailout to known past members or persons who had expressed interest in the organisation over the years. We've had an excellent response to that mailout and, as a result, we now have over 80 members on our register.

We've still got some changes

that have to be made to our Constitution and passed at a General Meeting, but the process is progressing nicely.

We're hopeful that the DGR accreditation may also be a boon for other organisations in the LBLAP area, as it may also enable them to access DGR linked funds by applying using the LBLAP DGR entity as a conduit, if appropriate.

Many funding bodies only accept applications from DGR accredited organisations.

Climate Change Forum—Mildura —Date Palms, Murray Cod Farming, Pomegranates?

Director of Riverland Futures Task Force, Peter Ackland, and LBLAP Project Manager, Craig Ferber, recently attended a public forum in Mildura.

Attendees and target audience were local growers who had an interest in possible new crops that might better handle possible upcoming Climate Change regimes or simply because of low demand and pricing for existing crops.

The aim was to ascertain what interest there was, if any, in investigating different crop types further.

Whilst there was no push for a particular "different" crop, there were three speakers who were hands on with different crops already.

One of those was our own Chairperson, Dave Reilly. Dave presented on the laboratory, trial plots and Date

Palm plantation he and his wife Anita have set up over the past few years.

Date Palms

Dave and Anita (D&A) were motivated to get into a "different" crop some years back by their own Climate Change situation. Lack of flooding for the past 16 years has led to an increasing salinity issue with the Gurra Lakes, their source of irrigation water. That was having a major detrimental impact on their vines and crop yields.

A search of crops that would tolerate high salinity, led them to Date Palms and with the extensive investigations, training, importing and trialing that D&A have been involved in, they and their company must now be at the forefront of the Date Palm industry in Australia. They've supplied plants to growers scattered around



LBLAP Project Mgr, Craig Ferber with LBLAP Chair and Forum Presenter, Dave Reilly and Director of Riverland Futures Task Force, Peter Ackland

Australia, but believe that, because of climatic conditions, the Riverland is an ideal location to grow Date Palms.

Some of the pluses for date palms are:

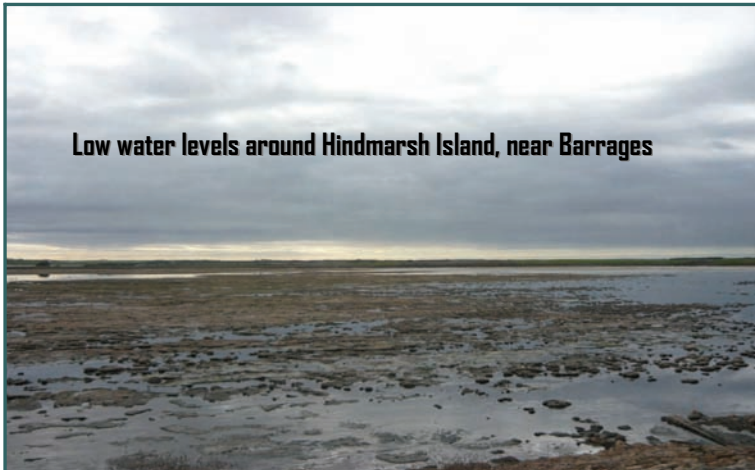
- Once established, could provide a canopy protection for another crop type.
- Will survive in "mothball mode" without water. *Grower could theoretically*

lease water out if water was overpriced, and return to crop again next year.

- About same costs per hectare set up to vines.
- Huge world market with good prices obtainable, particularly for top quality fresh fruit

Story continued page 5

Lower Lakes Tour—May 2009



Low water levels around Hindmarsh Island, near Barrages



Looking over Goolwa Channel from Hindmarsh Is Bridge

**there are many
community
perspectives and
opinions and one
action will not
please everyone.**

At the end of May, a group of irrigators and members from the Renmark to the Border and the Loxton Bookpurnong LAPs participated in a bus tour to the Lower Lakes. Aably chaperoned by LWMOs Lauren Burdett and James Butler, the aim of the tour was to gain a better insight into the plight of the Lower Lakes and the impacts on landholders and local industry.

The three day tour took the group to view significant environmental impact

sites around the region such as low water levels, acid sulphate soils and river bank slumping. The group visited the Goolwa and Hindmarsh Island Barrages and the proposed weir site at Wellington. They also heard from locals who discussed the problems they face on their properties such as increasing ground water salinity and water scarcity. They also observed some techniques that are being employed to deal with these issues including groundwater desalination

and aquifer storage and recovery.

The group were given an insight into the many issues facing the region and some of the methods government is trialling to help the situation. However, the tour group noted that there are many community perspectives and opinions and one action will not please everyone and it also may not help 'solve' the environmental issues.



Groundwater Desalination, Langhorne Creek



Cracking, Pomanda Point

Climate Change Forum—Mildura —Date Palms, Murray Cod Farming, Pomegranates? *Cont from pg 3*

Continued from page 3

- Major demand is in Northern hemisphere, which gives Australia off-season marketing advantages.

Minuses are:

- About 4 years to a crop
- High price of initial plants (*but about same cost per hectare to set up and after a few years, plants will throw “pups” which are genetically identical to parent and which can be harvested and planted*).

If you'd like further information, see website www.gurradowns.com.au for the story and contact details.

The second presenter was from Red Cliffs and spoke on Aquaculture and specifically farming Murray Cod.

Murray Cod Farming *

Situated outside of Red Cliffs in Victoria's Mallee country, *Thurla Farms* is a family farm business run on an industrial scale. In addition to Murray cod, the 1600 hectare property produces asparagus, wine grapes, avocados, grains and livestock.

The Murray cod experiment was originally devised merely as a way to minimise yabby damage in the property's three irrigation dams. How-

ever, it soon became clear the fish had a more lucrative role to play in the farm business.

The Victorian Government established aquaculture trials at *Thurla Farms* which primarily aimed to add value and sustainability to irrigation water through the development of multi water use systems such as integrated aquaculture systems.

An innovative approach was taken by *Thurla Farms* to name the commercial fish production system *Murray Gold PL* to grow their Murray cod business and to develop the industry more generally throughout North Western Victoria.

As well as monitoring QA concerns, *Murray Gold PL* is also intended to be the Australian single marketing desk for the end product. Hopefully giving growers some control over prices received for their efforts.

Murray Gold P/L has developed and patented a series of grow-out cages for commercial Murray cod production. Each set of cages can hold 50,000 fish, which enter the system as 100g fingerlings and can grow to 1kg in seven months. Its a bit like a lot feeding system for livestock.

In 2008/09, *Murray Gold PL* produced 100,000 plate-sized Murray Cod, averaging 1kg each, with the product being sold to the domestic restaurant

trade and exported to Thailand, Singapore, Japan and Cambodia.

The feedback from export markets has apparently been very good.

Australia's biggest seafood exporter has told *Thurla* that he'll take every Murray cod they can produce over the next three years. The Asian market is huge.

The export market focus is based on the product differentiation of 'open-water' farmed Murray cod being premium quality and ideally suited for the high value food services sector in the Asia-Pacific.

The pluses are:

- the multiple uses of water (*up to 7 X*) before being used for irrigation.
- Fish residue and waste in water, becomes fertiliser on the irrigated crop.
- 1 kg of feed input converts to almost 1 kg of fish weight.

Minuses

- Land area required for holding dams.
- That land would need to be alongside existing plantings if intending to

reuse the water on existing plantings.

The last presentation made, was on pomegranates.

Pomegranates

The main uses for pomegranates are:

- Juice
- Juice for additives
- Fresh whole
- Fresh aruls in punnet
- Frozen aruls

American juice is being promoted quite heavily in Australia. You may have seen the "sexy" POM Wonderful bottles on Woolworths shelves and elsewhere, however, like all fruit, fresh is where the dollars are. *Fresh stores about 12 weeks.*

However, the presenter maintained that \$400/ton was available for juicing fruit and an added advantage with harvesting for juice, was that mechanical harvesting was possible.

Editor's Note — There is a lot of information on pomegranates on the web.

**Some of the content on Murray Cod Fishing was drawn from 'Taste Victoria 2008', accessible at www.business.vic.gov.au/busvicwr/_assets/main/lib60053/taste%20victoria%202008.pdf For some more detail on Murray Cod Farming, see story www.abc.net.au/local/photos/2008/09/11/2361808.htm*



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*We've updated our
website, check it out*

www.lblap.org.au

Covering 155,000 hectares to the south of the River Murray, the LBLAP area includes six irrigation areas - Kingston-on-Murray / Lock 3, Moorook, New Residence, Pyap, Loxton, and Bookpurnong / Lock 4 - some dry land located within the Loxton/Waikerie District Council boundary, and fifteen wetlands, including Katarapko Island, Yatco, Ajax Achilles, Pyap and Gurra Gurra Lakes .

The main areas of focus of LBLAP are:

- ◆ Irrigation and Drainage
- ◆ Flora and Fauna Conservation
- ◆ Climate Change
- ◆ Community Education Development and Awareness
- ◆ Wetland and Floodplains
- ◆ Water Quality
- ◆ Recreational.

If you have an interest in any of these areas or have any ideas for local projects that you believe should be undertaken in these areas, please contact our Office.

Membership of LBLAP is **FREE** and you can be as hands-on as you choose. If you know of someone who:

- ◆ would like to get involved with some monitoring - *friendships - afternoon in the outdoors*
- ◆ maybe has some ideas for the local environment
- ◆ would like to get involved at Management Committee level, or
- ◆ would simply like to be kept up to date with LBLAP activities

please pass this newsletter on to them or ask them to get in touch with LBLAP.

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- ◆ South Australian Government
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- ◆ Dept of Primary Industries and Resources of South Australia
- ◆ Central Irrigation Trust
- ◆ Department of Environment & Heritage
- ◆ SA Water
- ◆ CARE Team
- ◆ Yatco Wetland Landcare Group
- ◆ Bookpurnong Lock 4 Environmental Association

