

Managing Upper Murray Creeks and Woodlands

Floodplain wetland restoration after fire

About Floodplain wetlands and fire

Wetlands provide habitat for many species, including frogs, fish and a range of aquatic insects. Wetlands naturally go through wet and dry cycles and this is an important part of the ecological value and role of wetlands.

In the wider landscape they also have a role in water filtration before water flows into waterways. They also provide flood mitigation services in the landscape - water is able to flow out of the creek and across the floodplain, slowing it down and storing it in wetlands where the excess nutrients are used by the animals and plants.

After the Black Summer Bushfires in 2019-20, there were several flood and high rainfall events and a lot of sediment accumulated in many wetlands, changing their form and habitat features

This is a wetland on the floodplain of the Murray River at Jingellic. It has a good cover of mature River redgum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), but the structure of the wetland has been impacted by sediment especially from the Bushfires, and the lagoon that was once at the base of the hill is no longer there. This changes the type of habitat in the wetland with less standing water and more swampy habitat.



Is changing the habitats a good or a bad thing?



Part of the role of wetlands is to buffer and store sediment from natural events like fire and flood.

If the change in habitat was threatening a special species or population, then intervention may be justified, but otherwise let nature take its course.

Wetlands can be very resilient as long as they have water!

Some of the actions that can be considered:

Suppression of willows and woody weeds

After a wet period, willow regrowth should be controlled, and removal of the mature ones considered if there is no risk of erosion. Other common weeds are Blackberries, Hawthorn and Privet - all should all be removed.

Strategic reintroduction wetland plants

of native tussock grasses on the dry parts - River tussock (*Poa labillardieri*) and Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) are recommended.

Reeds and rushes generally come back by themselves , although in a very degraded wetland there may be low diversity. Exotic pasture grasses can also suppress regeneration

Reintroduction of wetland plant species can also be done by transferring 'mud' from a good wetland into the site - wetlands naturally have good seedbanks to survive drying events. Of course there needs to be consideration of the impact on the donor site, but this can be a viable alternative to tubestock for some species.

Fencing to control stock access is always the first action!



Good wetland resources:

"Are there Plants in your wetland?" booklet

"Are there seeds in your wetland?" booklet

<https://www.sustainablefarms.org.au/resources/farm-dams-technical-guide/>



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