

Unsustainable Recreation



Background

The Mid Murray LAP Region is characterised by majestic cliffs and floodplain wetlands, with agricultural holdings and communities of itinerant and permanent shack dwellers.

The Region's great natural beauty, superb climate and close proximity to metropolitan Adelaide attract many thousands of tourists and recreationalists year round. In an unrestricted environment, such influxes (up to 10 times the normal population per yr) have had a significant impact upon the natural environment. Contributing factors include:

- Unrestricted recreation (land and aquatic) – precipitated through unfettered access to the river, riparian and crown lands. Impacts include:

- trampling/destruction of vegetation;
- a proliferation of access tracks on the floodplain;
- accumulation of litter and toilet wastes at popular camping and picnicking sites;
- excessive use of firewood leading to a complete removal of fallen timber and cutting of live timber;
- noise nuisance from trail bikes, radios, power boats, jet skis and generators in remote and otherwise quiet locations;
- vandalism of landholders' property and equipment; and
- compromised safety, particularly on the water (MMLAPC 1999, RMCWMB 1999).

- Inadequate infrastructure – the lack of clearly defined camping areas with adequate facilities such as toilets, fireplaces and parking / camping bays contribute to many of the problems reflected upon above.

- Shacks – some 80% of all River Murray shacks fall within the Mid Murray LAP Region. The resultant influx of people particularly during peak holiday periods, can have the following detrimental effects:

- an increase in point source nutrient accessions arising from leaking septic tanks (although the Mid Murray Council is encouraging shack areas to develop Septic Tank Effluent Disposal Schemes (STED) schemes to remove effluent from the floodplain);
 - a proliferation of access tracks on the floodplain;
 - noise nuisance from trail bikes, radios, power boats, jet skis and generators;
 - trampling/destruction of indigenous vegetation; and
 - introduction of exotic pest plants and animals.
- Houseboats and marinas – marinas are often sited on wetlands (i.e. Kia marina near Mannum) and apart from an undesirable aesthetic impact their placement alters the water depth and currents, and they contribute to noise, hydrocarbon and heavy metal pollution. Houseboats have unrestricted access to the River banks and therefore contribute to many of the problems cited under unrestricted recreation.

Links to other Issues

- Natural Habitat Degradation – compaction/erosion of soils, the destruction of native vegetation through shack development, unrestricted recreation and inadequate infrastructure have collectively contributed to localised natural habitat degradation.
- Declining Water Quality – increased nutrient loads potentially arise from shack developments, unrestricted recreation, inadequate infrastructure and house boat grey water disposal. Houseboats and other aquatic craft also have the potential to discharge hydrocarbons, this particularly being so with craft powered by two-stroke engines.

Extent and Severity

Information regarding the extent and severity of unsustainable recreation is somewhat generalised and has a land-based focus. The reader's attention is therefore drawn to a number of references that may provide a little more insight into this subject. They include:

- PPK Pty Ltd 1998, Sustainable Recreation Area Management Report, prepared for the Mid Murray, Mannum to Wellington and Riverland West Local Action Planning Associations.
- Department of Lands for Murraylands Region 1984, Easter Recreation Survey, River Murray (1983 and 1984), a report prepared for Craft Services, Department of Lands for Murraylands Region.
- Market Equity SA 1997, South Australian Houseboat Industry Study, a report prepared for the South Australian Houseboat Industry.
- Murray Valley Management Review 1986, Murray Valley Resource Management Plan: Recreation Facilities Inventory.



Unrestricted recreation has led to an accumulation of litter and toilet wastes at popular camping and picnic sites.



Unrestricted recreation has also created a noise nuisance from trail bikes, radios, power boats, jet skis and generators.