LANDSCAPE SOUTH AUSTRALIA MURRAYLANDS AND RIVERLAND



Information for New Land Managers

Whether you're conducting a farming business or pursuing a rural lifestyle, all landowners have certain responsibilities and a duty of care to look after the land. Living in a rural area should be a good experience for all land users and by taking care of your land, you will make your neighbourhood a clean, safe and enjoyable place to live.

This webpage summarises some of these responsibilities, and provides contact details for landowners to seek more information and assistance. Click the headings below to explore this page, or browse the topics by scrolling.

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Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board Staff (#murraylands-and-riverland-landscape-board-staff)staff)
Support for Land Managers (#support-for-land-managers)

Managing Soil

Owners of land have a responsibility under the *Landscape South Australia Act (*2019) to manage their land and prevent degradation.

Just as vegetation, topography, wind conditions and rainfall varies throughout the region, so do soils. The physical, chemical, and biological attributes of soils can vary significantly, not just across a region but also across a property and within paddocks.

Your soil types and the local environmental conditions will affect how you will need to manage your land. Different farming activities can affect the stability of the soil including tillage methods, grazing pressure and impacts from pest plants and animals. In the Mallee, soil types tend to be sandier and rainfall is low so maintaining an adequate amount of vegetative cover on your land is very important to limit the potential for wind erosion and soil loss. This is achieved by preventing over-grazing, using minimum tillage when producing crops, and minimising other impacting activities (like making tracks, motorbike riding) in areas that are susceptible to soil erosion. Traditionally, late summer to early autumn is when ground cover is sparse and the risk for erosion is at its greatest.

Find out more about the resources we offer to help manage soil acidity (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/land-and-farming/soils/soil-acidity) and salinity (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/publications/measuring-salinity), which are increasing problems in the Mallee.

Managing Horse Properties

Property owners with horses face a number of land management challenges. Horse SA (https://www.horsesa.asn.au/) holds regular courses and field days to help owners manage their land more efficiently.

Native Vegetation Act

There are legislative requirements that landholders must be aware of while undertaking any activities on their land. These include the protection of trees and native vegetation through the *Native Vegetation Act (*1991). The Interactive Guide for Native Vegetation (https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/native-vegetation/resources-and-support/clearing-decision-tool) is an online tool that helps you decide if and how you need to apply to clear native vegetation. If you are still unsure, contact the Native Vegetation Unit who will help you with your enquiry.



Native Vegetation and Biodiversity Management

The Murraylands and Riverland region has a significant number of important biodiversity areas including remnant patches of native vegetation on private and public land, wetlands and native grasslands, woodlands, mallee and forests. These areas support a diverse range of plants, animals, birds and fish. Some areas of remnant vegetation are protected by heritage agreements which are a voluntary but binding agreement between the landholder and the Minister for Environment and Water to ensure the vegetation is managed for conservation purposes.

Roadside vegetation is often the last refuge for threatened and rare plant species and provides important habitat for a wide range of species. Find out more (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/native-plants-animals) about managing biodiversity, native plants, native animals and birds. For information on managing native vegetation on your land, or to find if there is a group in your area that you might connect with, please contact your local district officer (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/contact-us).

Roadsides – Care and Control

Activities carried out by landowners on roadsides such as the removal of soil, collection of firewood and revegetation must not be undertaken without the consent of the local council. Local government is responsible for the protection of native vegetation on roadsides. Councils will work collaboratively with property owners on any work that needs to be done on roadsides adjoining your property (e.g. access to paddocks).

The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board is responsible for control of pest plants on roadsides in the region. Roadsides are prime areas for weed infestation as weed seeds can be transferred in soil and mud on vehicles. This is often a source for new incursions.

If you are interested in looking after the roadside, here's what you need to know:

- The costs of any control activities can be recovered from adjoining landholders. The MR Landscape Board takes a regional risk-based approach to weed control, including on roadsides. How weed control is enforced or undertaken is dependent upon the situation and the relative risk of the weed.
- Landowners have opportunity to undertake roadside pest control themselves to minimise their costs or where they have identified the pest as a priority. Speak to your district officer (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/contact-us) about the priority weeds for the region.

Weed Control

Controlling weeds is important as they cause both economic and environmental damage by reducing agricultural production, out-competing native species, and contaminating crops. It is important to ensure existing weed infestations are regularly monitored and controlled, and new infestations are found and treated early before they become established. Landholders have a legal responsibility to control declared pest plants on their property.

Weed identification can be challenging. If you have a weed or plant on your property and you are unable to identify it, or are unsure how to treat it, you can contact the closest landscape office, or read one of our weed fact sheets (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/pest-plants-animals/pest-plants). PIRSA's website (https://pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds/controlling-weeds) also contains information to help identify the best management strategies for weeds, including herbicide recommendations and dose rates. Prior to purchasing a property, it is a good idea to inspect the property for weed infestations and consider the amount of work and expense there will be in controlling these weeds.

When planning your garden it is important to avoid the use of some exotic species that have a tendency to spread as environmental weeds. Grow me Instead (http://www.growmeinstead.com.au/) is a good source of information on invasive garden plants and alternatives for SA gardens. Dumping garden waste in reserves or bushland is an illegal activity that can result in the spread of weeds.

Biosecurity

Biosecurity is everyone's business and the biosecurity of your property is important. Seeds of caltrop, innocent weed, broomrape, silverleaf nightshade and other weeds can enter your farm via fodder, grain, livestock, vehicles, soil and machinery movement.

You can protect your property from the spread of weeds by:

- making sure vehicles and machinery are clean
- ensuring declaration forms are filled out (buyer beware)
- purchasing weed seed-free produce from vendors
- creating quarantine zones on your farm
- monitoring the quarantine zones for weeds
- controlling any introduced weeds immediately

To assist with biosecurity on properties carrying livestock, each property needs to have a Property Identification Code (PIC) (https://pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/animal_health/property_identification_code_pic). The PIC is used

to identify properties and associated livestock. It is critical in the case of disease outbreaks, bushfires and other animal emergencies that properties can be identified and livestock movements traced.



One Biosecurity (https://www.onebiosecurity.pir.sa.gov.au/Home) is the new online PIRSA farm biosecurity management program is aimed at sheep, beef and dairy cattle properties. More information on all aspects of biosecurity can be found on this website (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/pest-plants-animals) and at Farm Biosecurity (http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/) or PIRSA (https://pir.sa.gov.au/home).

Pest Animals

Pest animals in the Murraylands and Riverland region include rabbits, foxes, goats and wild dogs. It is important to control these pests as they can contribute to the degradation of your land and negatively impact your farming enterprise, particularly through predation of livestock. Landholders have a responsibility under the *Landscape SA Act* (2019) to ensure they take steps to reduce the impact of pest animals and control numbers on their land.

Rabbits (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/pest-plants-animals) in particular can quickly build up numbers and their grazing pressure reduces ground cover leading to erosion. Rabbit control programs should be undertaken during summer when rabbit numbers are at their lowest. Foxes and wild dogs can impact your livestock numbers including domestic animals (e.g. poultry). A coordinated approach with your neighbours is the best way of addressing the impacts of fox and wild dog predation and is more effective than going it alone.

FeralScan (https://www.feralscan.org.au/) assists in mapping sightings of feral animals across Australia. This includes mice, rabbits, cats, foxes, wild pigs, myna birds and mapping can be undertaken online or via a smart phone app. This information is used to document pest animal activity and can be used to make decisions on prioritising areas where control is required and funding is spent.

More information on controlling pest animals is available by contacting your local district officer or by browsing our pest animal webpages (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/pest-plants-animals/pest-animals).

Climate Risk

The Murraylands and Riverland region is predominantly a low rainfall environment receiving less than 350mm (14 inches) of rain annually. Rainfall timing and volume can be quite variable and impact significantly upon the productive capacity of local farming enterprises.

Annual rainfall is relatively stable, recording an average of around 310 mm per annum since 1959. Although the average annual rainfall has been relatively stable, it still fluctuates from year to year with natural variability providing a number of dry and wet years (BOM 2019). The variability between seasons is caused by global and regional climate drivers such as the Southern Oscillation Index and the Indian Ocean Dipole (http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso). Average annual rainfall can also vary over quite short distances due to factors such as nearby topography and distance from the sea.

Variable rainfall is not the only climate risk related issue faced by the region. In the past 30 years, there have been a greater number of days above 38C compared to the previous 30 years, impacting soil moisture availability and storage for subsequent crops. There have been more frosty nights through dry winter and spring periods when soil moisture is low and cloud cover is infrequent causing crop losses in frost prone areas. Local farmers have reported that the extent of areas impacted by frost on their farms are also increasing.

Decisions on the crop type, area of crop plantings, and crop management strategies may all be influenced by this variability and the associated risks posed to crop and livestock production systems. There are a wide range of management strategies that can be employed to manage climate risk on your farm including adopting agronomic practices that conserve soil moisture, increasing the diversity of crops and livestock and diversity of income streams, accessing and using information, tools and technologies that assist and guide management decisions, being prepared for dry years and drought and having a plan in place, and building the overall resilience of your farm to climate risks.

The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board supports land managers through a range of resources (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/land-and-farming)including access to our free weather station network (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/land-and-farming/tools-for-land-managers/weatherstations). PIRSA also has a number of useful resources (https://pir.sa.gov.au/regions-and-support/advisory-and-support-services) including decision making tools and guides to assist with managing business performance.

Water

The vision for water resources in the Murraylands and Riverland region is that they are healthy, valued, have thriving ecosystems and are able to support communities.

Mallee Prescribed Wells area and Peake Roby Sherlock area

Important water resources in South Australia are protected and managed by being ‘prescribed’ under the *Landscape SA Act (*2019), which means that the water resource must be sustainably managed to provide security for all water users, now and into the future. Water allocation plans

were adopted for these two underground resources in 2011 and 2012, and have been reviewed to be Murray-Darling Basin Plan compliant.

Meter readings, annual water use reporting, and providing regular salinity samples need to be completed by licence holders to monitor the resource, and give early warning to any possible effects of use.

River Murray

Management of the River Murray is complex and takes into account use by irrigators, stock and domestic users, industry, and environmental water for wetlands and other water dependent ecosystems.

A Water Allocation Plan for the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse was adopted by the Minister for Environment and Water in 2020. More information can be found on managing water in the Murraylands and Riverland region here (http://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/water).



Approvals need to be obtained for water harvesting or any water affecting activities.

Bushfire Management

Bushfires are a part of living in Australia and It is important that you have a bushfire plan. Making decisions when a bushfire is threatening your property is too late.

Preparing your property to reduce the impact of fire is an important step to ensure you are bushfire ready and to help minimise the spread of fire if one should start. It's important to reduce fuel loads,

and create and maintain fire breaks, and if burning off is part of your plan then you need to make sure that you have the experience and equipment to manage the fire including extra help to ensure that the burn doesn't get out of control. Make sure you contact the council before commencing any burn off as a permit may be required.

For information on what to do on days of high bushfire risk, visit the CFS website (http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au/).

Being Involved in Your Community

Getting to know your neighbours is an important and enjoyable part of living on the land. Having a good open relationship with them will make it easier to raise any land management issues with them, work together on coordinated baiting programs for pest animals, and share information that may be useful to your neighbours. In an emergency you may need to rely on your neighbours so it is important to understand each other's circumstances and be able to contact them quickly.

There are many agricultural bureau groups, land management groups, Friends of Parks groups and Landcare groups across the Murraylands and Riverland region as well as Local Action Planning (LAP) groups. Most of these meet regularly and are a great way to discuss local issues that might be encountered in farming. Joining groups like these is a good way to learn new information, volunteer some time or just meet with like-minded people. If you would like to join one of these groups please contact your local landscape office, or find out more about Landcare Australia. (http://www.landcareaustralia.org.au/)

Landscape South Australia Act (2019)

Sustainable management of our landscapes is the responsibility of all South Australians. By working together, we can support our landscapes to thrive and help create healthy and resilient communities, prosperous long-term businesses and flourishing native species and ecosystems. Underpinning this approach is the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019,* which puts community at the heart of sustainably managing their region's soil, water, pest plants and animals, and biodiversity.

The role of administering the Act is shared amongst eight regional landscape boards and one metropolitan board, Green Adelaide. These boards operate across nine regions and support local communities and land managers to be directly responsible for managing their region's natural resources. They partner with government and regional communities to deliver a strong, back-to-basics system that's autonomous and flexible in response to their regions' needs.

Landscape Board Committees

The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board operates a number of committees within the region, each providing an important link between the local community and the landscape board. Members are local people who ensure that there is community input into the development and delivery of the Regional Landscape Plan.

These committees help people in the community to care for the environment and use natural resources sustainably by building awareness, skills and networks. Find out more about the landscape board's committees (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/about-us/murraylands-and-

riverland-landscape-board).

Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board Staff

Murraylands and Riverland Board staff deliver a diverse range of programs and projects on behalf of the landscape board from sustainable agriculture (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/land-and-farming) through to water management (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/water/managing-water-resources). Our staff are available to offer advice and assistance to landholders across a range of topics - contact your local landscape office to find out more.

Support for Land Managers

- The Regional Landscape Plan (https://cdn.environment.sa.gov.au/landscape/docs/mr/final_2021-2026_board_landscape_plan_web_ready.pdf) identifies five priorities as part of a simpler planning framework to connect the landscape plan to the state landscape strategy, the landscape board's annual business plan, and the water allocation plans.
- Find out what workshops and events are scheduled for the region (http://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/get-involved/events).
- Use our weather station network (http://www.awsnetwork.com.au/) to help you make informed farm management decisions. Weather station data is recorded every 15 minutes and refreshed online every hour. The network gathers data from 40 sites across the region and access to all information is free.
- We have a range of fact sheets (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/land-and-farming/tools-for-land-managers/fact-sheets) covering topics including land management and pest control.

More information

Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board

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