

Pike River Land Management Group News

December 2006



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CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Last month at an official launch attended by 50 local residents/irrigators, the Minister for the River Murray, Hon. Karlene Maywald accepted the final version of our Land and Water Management Plan. This plan is the result of community input and reflects the views and aspirations of the community. I thank all that were involved especially those who attended community meetings and voiced their concerns. If you would like a copy of the plan please call Tahlee at the LAP office on 8586 4346.

On the same night a Memorandum of Understanding between the Minister for the River Murray, the SA Murray Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board and the LAP incorporating PRLMG was signed. This document acknowledges the leadership role in the community of the PRLMG, the role that PRLMG plays in fostering improved irrigation practises and that PRLMG represent the views of irrigators and the wider community. The MoU commits all parties to ongoing support and cooperation through an annual work plan, which must be adhered to. In signing this MoU the parties are committing themselves to co-operative actions with all the other parties. The document provides a formal framework for all parties to work together for a better river and of course a better local environment.

As a first step in this cooperative approach a meeting was held last week between all the parties where it was agreed that community concerns would be investigated. PRLMG believe that with the possible lowering of river pool levels immediate attention must be paid to the dredging of the Rumpagunyah creek inlets and clear inlet creeks at lock 5.

As a longer term solution to water management in the area studies to answer the following questions must be completed without delay;

- Can water be moved better (more efficiently/faster) in the existing channel of the upper Pike?
- Would a redesign of the channels/banks etc be a better answer?
- What water can be saved for the environment by a better flow management strategy?
- How can a fish way be incorporated into the water take offs (pipe culverts) at lock 5 and the Tanyacca?
- Would a pipeline supply be better than a redesigned channel?
- Would a pipeline provide better outcomes for irrigators if it was sited midway through the district?
- What power needs does a common pump site need and is the cost restrictive?

I will keep you informed of progress. If you have ideas or suggestions please talk with me or one of our local committee reps (see the last page).

Bruce Hewett (Chair)

Funding for activities ~ 2007

Every year the Renmark to the Border LAP applies for funding from the SA MDB NRM board through the Community Grants scheme. This funding is used for the day to day operations of the LAP and includes many of our on-ground projects within the region. As the Land and Water Management Plan (LWMP) was completed in time to identify actions to take place in the Pike River and Lyrup district, the LAP was able to write some activities from the LWMP into the 2007 application of the Community Grant. There was mixed success to the activities that were funded in the district. Those that were successful include;

- **Irrigator Information Tour** - this is the same as the one that was run last year and as it was very successful we have received more funding to run another one. This tour will take irrigators to look at projects and areas of interest in different regions. Last year we visited the Darling-Anabranh Pipeline project, Menindee Lakes and Lake Victoria.
- **Community Information Session** - A series of guest speakers will attend a community meeting to discuss topics of common interest and concern.
- **River Frontage Action Plan** - working with council we will develop a plan to protect and enhance the river foreshore from issues such as erosion and recreational impacts etc.
- **General ongoing activities** such as producing newsletters and crop surveys etc.

External funding will be sort after for those activities and projects that were not supported so that they will continue to meet the LWMP outcomes. The only activity not supported was the investigation and dredging of the Rumpagunyah Creek inlets.

Also, if you have any suggestions for places to visit for the Irrigator Information Tour or guest speakers for the Community Information Session please let the Tahlee at the LAP office on 8586 4346 know and we will try to incorporate your suggestions.

Willow Trees

A section of the lower Pike is in danger of closing because of the intrusion of willows to a narrow section of your river. The repercussions of total closure are enormous. Not only will water quality suffer but access to recreational areas will be closed.

The willows have over the years continued to spread outwards restricting flow and causing silt to build up. They then move further out into the river and the cycle continues.

Your committee has removed some of the smaller trees but the job needs larger machinery to do the job properly. An approach has been made to the NRM Board for assistance.

Unfortunately willows easily propagate from broken limbs, branches etc. All of us should be alert to any new willow shoots that appears downstream. It is easy to remove a new tree that is less than 1 metre tall. Simply pull on it at the base of the trunk and roots and all will come away. Don't just throw the tree onto the bank. Take it home and place in the rubbish for proper disposal.

More information on willows can be found on the CSIRO and dpi Victorian gov websites. If you go to Google type in willow tree removal and there is heaps to read.

ABS thanks farmers for 'best Ag census response ever'

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has thanked Australian farmers for their support for the 2005-06 Agricultural Census which the Bureau has distributed as " the best in living memory."

In a media release, the Bureau said, "well over 90% of the Census questionnaires, which were sent out to 190,000 Australian businesses, have been completed and returned."

Gemma Van Halderen, head of the ABS's Agriculture Program said: "We know resources on the land are stretched to the limit, so it's great to see that farmers can still take the time to provide the ABS with information that's essential to understanding Australian agriculture."

"Their response has been excellent, farmers really understand the importance of the Ag Census and know how much industry and government rely on accurate information on Australia's agricultural industry."

Agricultural Census data measures production in all agricultural industries, and supports the formulation and monitoring of agriculture policy.

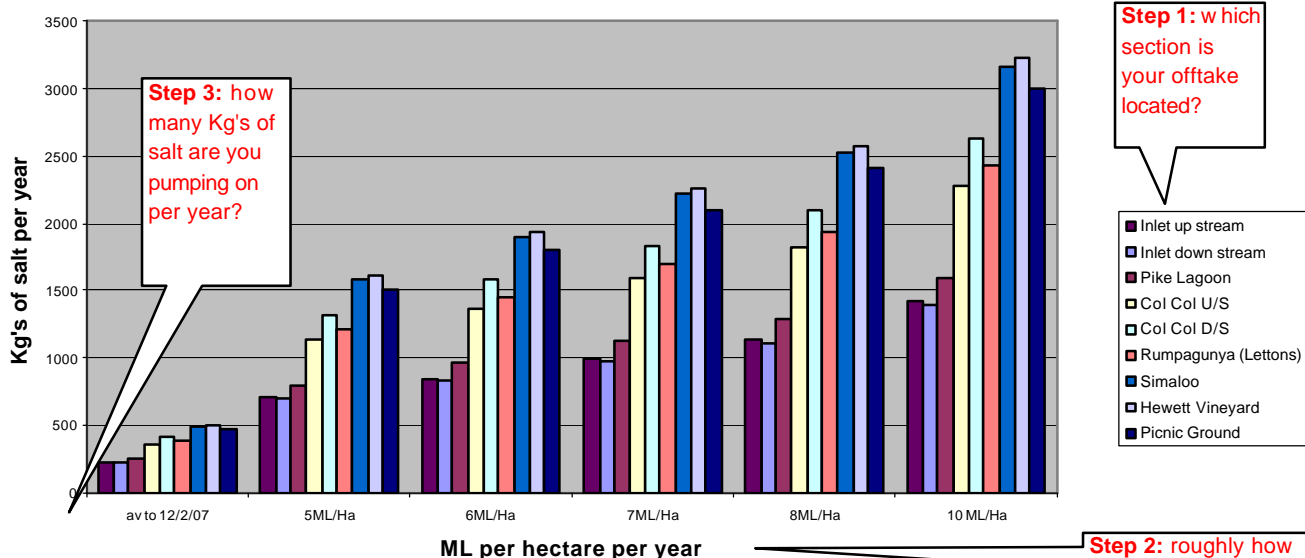
It is used by decision makers involved in producing, supplying, marketing and trading agricultural commodities. The Agricultural Census is held every five years.

As well, the 2005-06 Agricultural Census data will help inform natural resource policy relating to agriculture and assist the monitoring of social issues affecting rural communities.

Precise property location details, which were collected for the first time this year, will be particularly helpful for users of resource management and water data to obtain output by more flexible and relevant geographic regions. Processing of the census data is underway the ABS expects to release the first results in late February next year.

How much SALT do you pump on to your crops?

Average Salt import through Irrigation 2004 to 2007



Step 1: which section is your offtake located?

Step 2: roughly how many ML do you pump on your crop?

Step 3: how many Kg's of salt are you pumping on per year?

What is in the water you pump?

In 2006 the Renmark to the Border LAP took two series of water samples from various locations along the Murray River in Murtho and the Pike River system. These samples have been analysed and interpreted by the staff at the Loxton Research Centre. Water samples were taken from Customs House, Headings boat ramp, and the Paringa Bridge (in Murtho) and Pike Lagoon, the Col Col embankment, Hewett's property and the Lyrup Ferry (in Pike River/Lyrup).

Aspects the water samples were tested for included:

- **Electrical Conductivity (EC)** - which measures the ability for the water to conduct electricity. EC levels resulting on yield reduction is dependant on crop type and soil structure. EC relates to the amount of total dissolved salts, as TSS increases so does EC but different dissolved substances will affect conductivity differently.
- **Total Soluble Solids (TSS)** - refers to the amount of salt dissolved in water. Salts include substances that form common salt (Na and Cl), ions of Ca, Mg, K, nitrate, sulphate and bicarbonate. TSS is estimated from EC.
- **pH** - indicates whether water is acid or alkaline.
- **Potassium (K)** - K behaves much like Na but usually found in smaller amounts in water. High concentrations may induce Mg deficiencies or Fe chlorosis. An imbalance in K and Mg may be toxic but can be mediated by high Ca levels.
- **Iron (Fe)** - excess Fe is not toxic in aerated soils but can contribute to soil acidification and loss of availability of phosphorus and molybdenum.
- **Chloride (Cl) and Sodium (Na)** - High concentrations of both can cause foliar damage and increases in soil salinity. Na build up can also affect soils structure and permeability.
- **Calcium (Ca) and Magnesium (Mg)** - both counteract the affects of Na. Low salinity water (usually low in Ca and Mg) increases the deleterious effect of Na in soil.
- **Sodium Absorption Rate (SAR)** - measures the relative concentration of Ca, Mg and Na.

Results from the water samples indicated that there were adequate levels of almost all aspects for irrigation use (please see the insert for results tables from both sampling events). Calcium and Magnesium levels showed to be quite low and would need to be supplemented with gypsum applications direct to the soil.

It is important to remember that water element levels only has a small affect on crops grown. To get a full view and understanding on what is happening on your property it is recommended to regularly test your soil and plants for nutrient levels.

A report on the results will be written shortly and if you would like a copy of the report please contact Tahlee on 8586 4346.

LAP Case Study Contact Details

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