

# River Red Gum Forests Investigation

## INFORMATION SHEET

### Parks and biodiversity conservation

Public land in the investigation area comprises 22 percent of the land area in the River Red Gum Forests Investigation Area that existed prior to European settlement. Many of the forest and wetland ecosystems have been cleared, fragmented or degraded over the last two centuries. Many ecosystems are poorly represented in the existing parks and conservation reserves system.

National parks and conservation reserves are accepted by national, state and international governments as the cornerstone strategy for protection of biodiversity - these views are reflected in national and international agreements and conventions.

VEAC recommends 15 new or expanded parks along the Murray, Ovens and Goulburn Rivers, to protect threatened riverine forests and wetlands and provide a long-term future for recreation and tourism based on the natural environment.

In summary there are:

- Five new national parks to protect threatened red gum and riverine ecosystems and threatened flora and fauna:
  - Barmah National Park – the largest and most important River Red Gum park and wetland in the world
  - Gunbower National Park – extensive Black Box and River Red Gum forests and wetlands
  - Lower Goulburn River National Park - key river corridor and Kanyapella Basin
  - Warby Range-Ovens River National Park - most ecologically intact natural river system
  - Leaghur-Koorangie National Park – significant wetland complexes
- Significant additions to two existing national parks – Terrick Terrick National Park and Murray-Sunset National Park; small addition to Hattah-Kulkyne National Park
- A new Murray River Park, extending from Wodonga to Mildura, covering more than 1000km of the River Murray frontage
- Four new or expanded parks along the River Murray combining existing parks and new areas – Kings Billabong, Murray-Kulkyne, Gadsen Bend and Nyah-Vinifera Parks
- Two new regional parks located close to regional centres – Kerang and Shepparton
- Twenty nine substantially new and 21 expanded or retained nature conservation reserves to improve the protection of depleted and fragmented ecosystems.

The recommended new parks and conservation reserves protect important endangered, vulnerable or depleted Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) as well as habitat for threatened flora and fauna. They meet nationally agreed benchmarks for the protection of the pre-European extent of all major ecosystems<sup>1</sup>. This has been achieved by increasing the current extent of River Red Gum forests, wetlands and associated ecosystems in reserves from 5.7 percent (69,640 hectares) to 14.2 percent (73,240 hectares) of the original extent of native ecosystems.

---

<sup>1</sup> The targets are 100% of the current extent of rare or endangered EVCs; 60% of the remaining extent of vulnerable EVCs; and at least 15% of the pre-1750 (pre-European) extent of remaining EVCs.

The recommendations improve the protection of threatened ecosystems and species by: including key areas in parks and conservation reserves; removing many of the impacts associated with grazing and timber harvesting; highlighting the need for appropriate environmental water flows, which are essential to ensure the long term survival of riverine forests and wetlands.

Parks also mitigate against the potential impacts of climate change by maintaining and enhancing vegetated corridors or biolinks along the major river corridors.

Biodiversity conservation is not restricted to parks and reserves. A range of recommendations have been made to ensure improved sustainability across all public land, for example:

- the cessation of grazing from most public land
- the need to establish more appropriate flow and flooding regimes to sustain the health of riverine forests
- the re-establishment of crucial habitat such as maintaining mosaics of coarse woody debris on the forest floor for woodland-dependent fauna, of at least 50 tonnes per hectare
- the maintenance of habitat and avoidance of disturbance to key sites within state forests for colonially nesting waterbirds, such as endangered egrets
- the establishment and consolidation of biodiversity corridors to link blocks of public land.