



**VICTORIAN MURRAY FLOODPLAIN  
RESTORATION PROJECT**  
HEALTHY LANDSCAPES, STRONG COMMUNITIES

## Gunbower floodplain community group off to a flying start

The first of two local Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project (VMFRP) community advisory groups has hit the ground running.

The Gunbower National Park VMFRP Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) includes community members and forest users from across the local area.

The members are:

- Ann Hodge – previous Chair of Torrumbarry Water Services Committee
- Audrey Dickins – Member of the Gunbower Island Community Reference Group, Gunbower Landcare and Gunbower District Development Group
- John Williams – Dairy Farmer at Torrumbarry
- Nicholas Rowlands – Dairy Farmer at Gunbower, Member of the Gunbower Island Community Reference Group
- Shannon O'Brien – Murray River Adventures Kayak and Canoe Tours based in Cohuna
- Stan Archard – Retired Irrigation Business Owner, Member of the Gunbower Island Community Reference Group
- John Toll – Mixed Farmer at Gunbower

The group, which met for the first time in late April, also includes agency representatives and Traditional Owners.

The Gunbower SAG will play a role during the statutory approvals process, which is looking to identify the best options for the projects.

VMFRP East Project Manager Tim Shanahan thanked the community members for putting their hand up to be involved.

“We welcome the involvement of the community members in further development of the VMFRP project and believe the project will be much better for them sharing their knowledge and raising any project improvements with us,” he said.

“We ask that any community members with queries about the project approach these people respectfully given they are volunteering their time to be involved.”

The first meeting saw each member talk about the reasons they became involved, and their aspirations for the forest.

“There were some concerns raised, which is great, along with an agreement that the health of the forest is declining and a real collective desire to work together,” Mr Shanahan said.

“This group is keen to see if the projects can be progressed in a way that achieves the best outcome for the forest and the community.

“We’re really happy with the people who have put their hands up to be involved in a productive way. There are a wide array of experiences, opinions, and values of the forest.

“These planned projects are a big investment in the local community and will help restore the floodplains and wetlands so future generations can enjoy and benefit from them as much as we all do now.”



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The Gunbower VMFRP project proposes works at Cameron's Creek and the upper section of the forest.

At Cameron's Creek, the project proposes to replace an existing small weir and river track bridge and regulating structure to enable the right amount of water at the right time to be delivered to the creek, Black Charlie Lagoon and Baggot's Swamp.

"Cameron's Creek has some of the best small body fish habitat we know of in the region, so a fish passage structure will be built when the existing weir is replaced," Mr Shanahan said.

Parks Victoria would prefer no irrigation from the creek in a National Park, so an alternative supply arrangement is being investigated, as part of the project, for the irrigators currently using the creek.

For the upper Gunbower forest, a pump station is proposed to be built on the Murray River to pump water into a former irrigation channel – Old Straight Cut – and supply water to semi-permanent wetlands and the lower lying areas of the forest that are dependent on regular flood events for the health of under and over storey vegetation.

Pumped water into Old Straight Cut is proposed to be controlled when entering Pig Swamp, the natural creek line that spills into the Emu Hole Lagoon area, and the forest.

In some locations, the existing levees will be used to fully contain shallow levels of water for the environment in the Gunbower National Park and they will be monitored and repaired where necessary.

The Gunbower National Park VMFRP project is one of nine in the North Central and Mallee regions aimed at efficiently and effectively delivering water to the water-dependant floodplains, all while keeping irrigation water in the community.

The projects, which are proposed to be delivered by June 2024, will restore and help build the resilience of the floodplains and wetlands to cope with climate change and low river flows, without water buy back.

Stakeholder Advisory Groups are already in place for the west and central VMFRP sites. For more information on these groups, email [info@vmfrp.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@vmfrp.vic.gov.au) or call Jodi Reynolds, Project Officer Communications and Engagement, on 0428 516 233.

More information about the VMFRP projects can be found at [www.vmfrp.com.au](http://www.vmfrp.com.au).

**ENDS —**

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