

FACT SHEET

MOKOAN – RETURN TO WETLANDS



Produced by Goulburn-Murray Water, Department of Sustainability and Environment and Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority

THE IMPORTANCE OF WETLANDS

A wetland is an ecosystem affected by water. While some wetlands are only wet for a short part of the year, others remain frequently inundated by water. There is great diversity in wetland systems due to differences in their location, origin, water regime, vegetation and soil characteristics.

Wetlands are an essential element of our catchments. Not only are they vital for biodiversity conservation, they also provide other valuable functions in and around the surrounding environment. These functions include filtering sediment and nutrients from water, control of some agricultural pests and providing recreational activities such as fishing, boating, duck hunting, birdwatching, swimming and bushwalking.

The wetland 'buffer', the area of dry land surrounding the wetland, is also an essential part of the wetland system. It provides feeding and breeding habitat for wetland fauna, contributes to wildlife corridors to link natural areas, buffers impacts to wetlands from surrounding land uses and can act as a filter to improve the quality of water coming in to the wetland from the catchment.



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The original Mokoan wetlands consisted mainly of shallow freshwater marshes. This was typical of floodplain wetlands along many of Victoria's major rivers.

The rehabilitation of the Mokoan wetlands will be one of the biggest wetland restoration projects in Australia and is likely to attract world-wide interest. Approximately 6,673 hectares of the 8,839 hectare site will be part of the rehabilitation area. This will take in the original wetlands, the ecologically important grasslands, surrounding woodlands and drainage lines as well as the area subject to periodic flooding.

The wetland rehabilitation program at Mokoan will commence during the draw down phase planned for 2008/09. The reclaiming of a 'drowned' wetland system makes this a unique rehabilitation project and a valuable learning opportunity.

A program of monitoring important environmental aspects of the system will start well before the draw down of the lake. This will enable the health of the system and key wetland functions to be tracked before, during and after the rehabilitation phase. A key will be to track the progressive change of all components of the wetland system as it is rehabilitated.

The monitoring will assist in determining the most appropriate rehabilitation methods, including natural rehabilitation processes, or where management intervention may be required.

Above: The common froglet is another animal found in wetlands.

Far Left: The original view of the Mokoan wetlands.

Left: Parts of Lake Mokoan contain valuable habitat, which will be protected and enhanced.

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MANAGING A COMPLEX SYSTEM

The Winton Wetland is a complex system that includes not only a 'wet part' but also areas that may occasionally be inundated and the surrounding dry land. All of these areas need to be managed appropriately to maintain a properly functioning system.

Conserving the natural water regime of wetland systems is important for maintaining wetland functions. A wetlands water regime refers to the length, frequency and season of inundation of the wetland. The types and extent of flora and fauna species found in a wetland will depend on the water regime.

Vegetation management is also an important issue, especially for the Winton Wetland complex. Vegetation management techniques will vary in line with natural regeneration processes and environmental conditions. The types and level of management undertaken will influence the quantity, density and diversity of regrowth. Techniques used to maximise the response of vegetation will include weed control, grazing, burning and environmental planting.

Above: Some of the water birds, which utilise the Mokoan wetland for feeding and breeding.

Water birds are not the only animals which utilise the wetland and its margins (Short beaked-Echidna).

Below: Lake Mokoan wetlands



Pacific black duck



Short beaked-Echidna



Little Black Cormorant

RETURN TO WETLANDS, ONGOING MANAGEMENT

The recovery of Mokoan to a fully functioning wetland system will take many years, following initial works that are required to facilitate the rehabilitation process. Ongoing management of the site will involve protecting and enhancing its natural, cultural and scenic values, providing and maintaining visitor facilities, and monitoring the rehabilitation process. The control of pest plants and animals will also be a key challenge for wetland managers.



Nankeen night heron



Sacred Kingfisher

