

## 21.05 ENVIRONMENT

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This Clause provides local content to support Clause 12 (Environmental and Landscape Values) and Clause 13 (Environmental Risk) of the State Planning Policy Framework.

The Council Plan 2009-2013 makes the following commitment in terms of environmental issues:

*Ours will be a community that:*

- *Is proactive on environmental initiatives and opportunities;*
- *Creates and maintains a healthy and sustainable environment;*
- *Provides responsive and appropriate management of resources;*
- *Is environmentally aware and educated in sustainable living;*
- *Where there is conservation of land and natural vegetation;*
- *With an enhanced natural environment and biodiversity;*
- *Where pest plants and animals are controlled; and*
- *That promotes the region's natural resources and biodiversity.*

### 21.05-1 River and wetland health

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#### Overview

The Murray River is a key economic and social driver of the Rural City. Extensive development along the river has brought with it a series of problems including: increased salinity and nutrient levels; reduced water availability downstream; out breaks of blue green algae; pollution of the river; changes to flood regimes; the threat of flood waters overtopping levees, and the loss of habitats and flora and fauna species.

International, National, State, Regional and Local initiatives have been established in the past to address these issues. Council recognises the importance of managing the Murray River and is committed to working with other authorities, agencies and organisations to develop and implement appropriate policy and management controls. There are significant amounts of riparian land within the municipality which have environmental, ecological and economic importance. Past development however has damaged or altered these areas. For environmental reasons, it is now widely recognised that native vegetation removal, stock grazing and urban development should be discouraged in riparian areas.

Recharge to the regional groundwater and local perched water tables occur throughout the cleared dryland area and the irrigated zone. The key solution in arresting rising salinity and nutrient levels in the river is to control the water table and the drainage of saline and nutrient rich water from the irrigation and urban areas. The Mallee CMA is continuing to develop strategies and plans in response to this and other environmental protection and enhancement issues.

#### Objective 1

To improve river and wetland health within the Rural City of Mildura.

#### Strategies

Strategy 1.1 Support the development and adoption of common river management controls along the Murray River.

- Strategy 1.2 Encourage drainage works and schemes that redirect rainfall run-off, minimise irrigation drainage and assist in the reduction of salinisation of land.
- Strategy 1.3 Limit nutrient level increases in ground water and surface water systems.
- Strategy 1.4 Treat stormwater prior to outfall by implementing the principles of water sensitive urban design (WSUD).
- Strategy 1.5 Discourage the discharge of irrigation run-off directly into the Murray River and its tributaries, except where recommended under the relevant Salinity Management Plan.
- Strategy 1.6 Discourage the development of drainage evaporation ponds in wetlands and floodplain areas, except where recommended under the relevant Salinity Management Plan.

### **Implementation**

The strategies in relation to environment will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

### **Reference documents**

- Mallee Regional Catchment Strategy (Mallee CMA 2003-2008)
- Site Salinity Management Guidelines 2009

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## **Flora and fauna**

### **Overview**

Most of the large areas of remaining native vegetation are on public land. Due to the extent of agricultural clearing and development over the past 150 years, much of the municipality's and surrounding region's remnant vegetation is in severe decline or threatened with further degradation. The conservation of the remaining Mallee flora and fauna is, therefore, a high priority. A multitude of scattered remnant vegetation pockets exist on freehold land, roadsides and numerous smaller conservation reserves. Roadsides, Bushland, Flora and Fauna and other reserves contain a significant proportion of remnant vegetation, particularly understorey and ground flora. Roadside vegetation often forms linear corridors that act as important biolinks between more substantial areas of vegetation between the river and inland environs. It is therefore a priority to maintain and restore connectivity to the fragmented landscape to provide for the long term survival of many species.

### **Objective 2**

To protect flora and fauna within the Rural City of Mildura.

### **Strategies**

- Strategy 2.1 Encourage the retention and regeneration of native flora.
- Strategy 2.2 Discourage native vegetation removal, stock grazing and urban development in or adjoining riparian areas.
- Strategy 2.3 Reinforce existing wildlife corridors along road and railway reserves with supplementary revegetation in adjacent private lands.

- Strategy 2.4 Protect and reinforce significant environmental nodes or biolinks on private land.
- Strategy 2.5 Maintain and improve the condition of waterways and wetlands in support of flora and fauna habitats.
- Strategy 2.6 Encourage the location of services on private cleared land in both dryland and irrigated areas, rather than on vegetated roadsides.
- Strategy 2.7 Support common management techniques along public land boundaries for the protection of native vegetation and the control of fire, pest plants and animals and erosion.

### Reference documents

- The Mallee Native Vegetation Plan, Mallee CMA

## 21.05-3

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### Flooding

#### Overview

The Murray River has a history of flooding of low lying areas. Flooding has the potential to cause significant property and agricultural damage. Floodplains should be protected from inappropriate development to ensure their capacity to convey and store floodwaters is unhindered. Flooding also has a significant environmental benefit for the redgum forests and fauna that rely upon it.

#### Objective 3

To reduce the impacts of flooding within the Rural City of Mildura.

#### Strategies

- Strategy 3.1 Discourage further development, particularly residential development, within areas on the floodplain.
- Strategy 3.2 Restrict further development on land liable to flooding.

## 21.05-4

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### Public land

#### Overview

The municipality hosts approximately 40% of the total area of the Victorian Parks system. The major parks include the Hattah-Kulkyne, Murray-Sunset and Wyperfield National Parks, Big Desert Wilderness Park and the Murray-Kulkyne Park. All of these parks are subject of an overall management plan and contain highly significant landscape, flora, fauna and cultural values. They represent the least disturbed Mallee ecosystems in Australia. The qualities of the parks include:

- a large diversity of biota;
- a diverse range of ecosystems and landscapes unique in Victoria;
- large areas of essentially undisturbed vegetation including 1,000 species of native plants;
- over 300 species of birds;

- a greater diversity of reptiles than anywhere else in Victoria;
- over 3,800 known Aboriginal places on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register and many significant European historic sites;
- opportunities for recreational activities including solitude and self reliant recreation and motorised recreation; and
- seven wilderness zones.
- In addition to the Mallee Parks there are considerable areas within the municipality of riverine and dryland State Forests. Abutting the riverine State Forests is the Murray River Reserve, which includes a 60 metre wide permanent public purposes reserve running along the southern bank of the river.

In addition to these major parks and forests, there are hundreds of smaller conservation and other publicly owned reserves scattered across the Mallee that are vitally important in conserving biodiversity, the largest of these being the Annuello and Bronzewing Flora and Fauna Reserves. It is also recognised that public land cannot, on its own, achieve full conservation of biodiversity in the Mallee; freehold remnants are a vital adjunct.

#### **Objective 4**

To protect the environmental, landscape, cultural heritage and archaeological value of public land.

#### **Strategies**

- Strategy 4.1 Encourage the development of management plans for significant parks, forests and reserves.
- Strategy 4.2 Support appropriate opportunities for nature conservation, recreation and tourism.
- Strategy 4.3 Support tourism, in particular eco-tourism, as part of municipal and regional tourism initiatives in accordance with public land management plans.
- Strategy 4.4 Support the establishment of bio links between areas of significant public land.
- Strategy 4.5 Encourage fire breaks on cleared private land adjacent to public land, where appropriate.
- Strategy 4.6 Encourage the preparation of cultural heritage management plans to identify, manage and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage values associated with public land.

#### **Objective 5**

To improve the interface between public and private lands.

#### **Strategies**

- Strategy 5.1 Discourage urban or other intensive forms of use or development adjacent to public land that could have a negative impact on that land.

#### **Implementation**

The strategies in relation to public land will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

### **Policy guidelines**

- When deciding on planning applications for land that abuts the Public Conservation and Resource Zone (PCRZ) consider, as appropriate:
  - The existing use of the land;
  - Alternative land available for such an activity;
  - The preservation of, and impact on, the natural environment and landscape values;
  - Conservation of natural habitats, vegetation communities and visual amenity;
  - The maintenance of multi-age stands of vegetation;
  - The level of fire risk associated with the proposed development;
  - Planning Conditions and Guidelines for Subdivisions (Country Fire Authority 1991);
  - The comments of adjacent landowners and authorities that have management responsibility over adjacent land; and
  - Bee keeping sites as identified on site plans of the Department of Environment and Primary Industries.

### **Application of zones and overlays**

- Applying the Public Park and Recreation Zone to land on the north side of Fifteenth Street between Benetook Avenue and Cowra Avenue.
- Applying Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO1) along the Murray River Floodplain Corridor.
- Applying Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO4) around nominated industrial sites to separate incompatible land uses.
- Applying the Salinity Management Overlay (SMO) to undeveloped land zoned Residential 1 Zone and Low Density Residential Zone.
- Applying the Environmental Audit Overlay (EAO) to land on the corner of Woorlong and Woomera Avenues Cliffside.

### **Further strategic work**

- Prepare an appropriate planning scheme amendment to assist in the protection of Regent Parrot habitat. (Key responsibility – Mallee Catchment Management Authority, Department of Environment and Primary Industries and Council).
- Complete accurate mapping of all remnant vegetation in the municipality to enable its inclusion in the Vegetation Protection Overlay (Key responsibility - Department of Sustainability and Environment and Mallee Catchment Management Authority).
- Prepare a Surrounds Strategy for areas at the interface of public and private lands in order to maintain the integrity of boundary areas for parks and reserves (Key responsibility – Department of Sustainability and Environment).
- Complete the heritage assessment of the municipality through the commissioning of a heritage study for the former Shire of Walpeup (Key responsibility – Council).
- Introduce new flood mapping and controls with accurate data (Key responsibility – Mallee Catchment Management Authority).

**Reference documents**

- Siting & Design Guidelines for Water Diversion Works on or across Crown Land DNRE 2002
- Mallee Roadside Management Strategy, Mallee CMA 1998
- Mildura Rural City Council Roadside Management Plan 2010-2014