



Kings Billabong Regulator – Community Update 4

June 3, 2011.

Community Advisory Group meets to set values, vision and objectives for Kings Billabong

The Kings Billabong Operating Plan Community Advisory Group (KBOPCAG) has held a productive second meeting, with members working together to develop a list of key values and objectives to inform the Operating Plan for the Kings Billabong Regulator.

The values and objectives discussed at the meeting will help ensure the Operating Plan can strike a balance between the wetland's social, economic and environmental values and functions. (i.e. allow for the billabong to remain an important community asset, as well as meet its requirements as an irrigation storage, while still improving the environmental value of the wetland).

Summary of KBOPCAG Meeting 2

Meeting held May 31, 2011.

I. Developing community values, a shared vision and objectives

- Meeting participants worked with consultant Lance Lloyd, of Lloyd Environmental, to list the key values of Kings Billabong from the community's perspective. Values mentioned included irrigation; recreation value; natural aesthetics; fish and bird habitat; and cultural values.
- These values then led to the discussion of key words that could be used to develop a shared vision for Kings Billabong. Words discussed included resilience, sustainability, health, community asset, economic and balance. One suggested vision was "*A healthy and sustainable multifunctional wetland that enhances biodiversity values, with recreational and community experiences*".
- Meeting participants then revisited the 2006 Lloyd report on Kings Billabong and discussed how the community objectives listed in that report could be altered to suit the billabong now and into the future. Community objectives will be included in the Operating Plan for the Kings Billabong regulator and sit alongside the ecological objectives for the wetland. Again, the purpose of having both types of objectives in the operating plan is to meet the balance required between Kings Billabong's social, economic and environmental values and functions.
- Lance Lloyd will now consider the community values, vision and objectives in the formulation of a draft Operating Plan for Kings



Billabong, which will be presented to the advisory group for further discussion in coming months.

II. Discussing community concerns

- Following the release of updated research into Kings Billabong at the first meeting of the advisory group (on April 18, 2011), a number of queries were raised by the community.
- It will take time for the advisory group to work through these concerns, but a start was made at the second meeting, with Lance Lloyd discussing key concerns such as the water regime, feral pig populations, cumbungi management, mosquito management, Growling Grass Frogs, and the monitoring program currently under development to effectively manage risks and values of Kings Billabong during operation of the regulator.
- If you would like more information on the discussion of these issues, please see a member of the advisory group for a copy of Mr Lloyd's presentation (available as part of the draft minutes from Meeting 2), or contact Lauren Murphy at the Mallee CMA on Lauren.murphy@dpi.vic.gov.au or 5051 4331.

The next meeting of KBOPCAG will be held on Monday, July 4, 2011. Another Community Update will be issued following that meeting.

Additional information

Fish monitoring to be undertaken at Baggs and Jennings Bridges

Following the recent high flows in the Murray River, the regulator gates at Baggs Bridge and Jennings Bridge were closed to capture raised the water levels in both Ducksfoot Lagoon and Butlers Creek for an extended period. During July, the regulator gates will be opened to release water, allowing the water level to match current river heights. At this time, the Murray Darling Freshwater Research Centre will be conducting fish monitoring to help in the understanding of what species are there, and what triggers encourage fish (both native and pest) movement each way between the wetland/creek and the Murray River.

Impressive array of birdlife at Psyche Lagoon

Sunraysia Bird Observers Club members Doug and Betty Woods have reported an influx of bird life at Psyche Lagoon. The following is an excerpt from a Letter to the Editor the Woods's wrote to "The Rainbow Bird" publication:

The drying and wetting cycle in wetlands needs no further proof of its benefits than by looking at the example happening right now at Psyche Lagoon near Psyche Pumps.

This desolate, dry, salty lagoon has not been worth surveying for years now. Since the flooding of our river, the flushing and subsequent flooding of this lagoon, a dramatic and



exciting change has happened. On the 29th of April 2011 until this present date (29th May 2011) a feeding frenzy on small fish is taking place with more species and greater numbers of water birds than I have ever seen in the 50 years of surveying this site. Some have never been seen before.

All the species of Grebes: 3 Great-Crested, 85 Hoary-Headed and 110 Australasian Grebes all in a feeding line with fish in most mouths. A big group of Cormorants: 200-plus Little Black, 90 Little Pied, and 18 Great all doing the same thing. 20 Darters either fishing or spreading their wings to dry on the stumps. 33 White-Faced Herons, 19 White-Necked Herons (a visitor from up north) and 20 Great Egrets all paddling around in the shallows with heads down along with a pair of Whistling Kites.

One lone Spoonbill along with Caspian Terns and 40 never-before-seen Gull-Billed Terns.

Migratory Red-Necked Avocets and Black-Winged Stilts were also present.

To top it off on the 29th of May 2011 the first Buff-Banded Rail ever seen in this area ran across the road.

Our Kings Billabong is certainly worth looking after.

Who receives these Community Updates?

- The Community Updates are produced by the Mallee CMA to keep the entire community up to date about the Kings Billabong Regulator project.
- The Community Updates are posted on the Mallee CMA website on the day of release (www.malleecma.vic.gov.au)
- Community Updates are emailed to the database of people interested in this project (names and emails were given to the Mallee CMA on the night of the February 8 Community Information Session).
- If you would like to be added to this list, please contact Lauren Murphy on 5051 4331 or email to lauren.murphy@dpi.vic.gov.au).

- Ends -