



Western Murray Land Improvement Group

Striking a Balance

M E D I A R E L E A S E

For release 4th February 2021

A COMMUNITY ASSET WORTH RECOVERING

Community-led strategic session for Koondrook Perricoota Forest planned for late February

Western Murray Land Improvement Group (WMLIG) in partnership with Murray Local Land Services (MLLS) held a second community tour of the Koondrook-Perricoota (KP) Forest on Sunday. The tour provided the opportunity for community members to visit three sites within the forest, including the Pollack Swamp Inlet, Pollack Lagoon, and the Smokehouse Lagoon. The purpose of both mid-December's and Sunday's tour was to demonstrate the positive effects that managed environmental watering has had in the Pollack, to raise awareness of the current poor condition of the broader KP Forest, and to lead a bottom-up community-led approach for a shared vision of the forest.

Sunday's tour also celebrated the 50-year anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Convention, named in honour of the small Iranian town of Ramsar where the Convention was signed in 1971. Jamie Hearn from MLLS explained that the Convention aims to conserve and prevent the loss of wetlands on a global scale. It encourages the designation of sites that are rare or unique and hold the criteria of protecting biological diversity and threatened species. There are 2,400 Ramsar sites around the world. The New South Wales Central Murray Forest which encompasses the KP Forest is one of just 66 designated sites in Australia.

Some of the recent positive outcomes at the Pollack were outlined by KP team Environmental Consultant Dan Hutton and Fish Expert Dr John Conallin. These included the reappearance of local water bird populations such as herons, cormorants, and egrets. Ibis are currently nesting and most recently Hutton reported the safe arrival of endangered Little Bittern chicks. Small-bodied native fish such as native western carp gudgeons, smelt, and murray-darling rainbow fish now outnumber European carp with only several found within the set of nets pulled from the Lagoon for a demonstration.

Once again, community members shared their memories and visions throughout the day. Alan Mathers recalled his memories of the Pollack, a deeper, more open swamp, which was once "wide enough to bring a boat through" in the 1950s and 1960's. Overcrowding, woody floor debris and threatening environmental events such as hypoxic black water events



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surfaced as concerns. The generation of local employment and engagement via indigenous groups was also highlighted as a priority.

On Monday, the Joint Indigenous Group (JIG) which was formed in 2010 and consists of representatives from Barapa Barapa & Yorta Yorta people (the two Traditional owners of KP forest), together with representatives from the Deniliquin and Moama Local Aboriginal Lands Councils met with a range of other stakeholders. Stakeholders included WMLIG, MLLS, the Koondrook Perricoota Alliance, Forestry Corporation of NSW, and the local timber industry. The purpose of the meeting was to start early discussions about a bottom up, locally driven approach to land management in the KP Forest.

As a result of community interest and a desire to provide input into the future projects of the KP Forest, a community meeting is planned for late February. This session will provide community members with an opportunity to be part of local decision making and form social connections. To preliminarily scope out a community vision and objectives for the forest as well as topics of interest for seminars in the future, a short survey will be available via the WMLIG website and Facebook page. Hard copies of the survey will also be available for pick up from 27 Thule Street Barham. All community members are welcomed to participate in this anonymous survey. Further details of February's community meeting will be provided in due course.

Sunday's tour was funded by Murray Local Land Services (MLLS), through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and Forestry Corporation of New South Wales.

To learn more about the Pollack Swamp Enhancement Project visit our website www.westernmurraylig.org/the-pollack.

END



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MEDIA RELEASE

Photos that can be included:

The tour gathers at the Pollack Swamp inspecting small-bodied fish



A Murray-Darling Rainbow Fish surrounded by other native species





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Little Bittern chicks caught on camera in the Pollack Swamp. Photo credit: Dan Hutton.

