



Biodiversity

The Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project will change some aspects of the region's landscape.

The pipeline, which will provide a secure supply of quality water throughout the Wimmera Mallee, will bring changes to the way water is moved around the region:

- > Channels will no longer run each year.
- > The pipeline will end wasteful loss of water from the existing open channel system.
- > Decommissioning channels will encourage a return to natural drainage.
- > Water will return to natural waterways.

Landscape change

The landscape has changed dramatically from its original state before the days of European settlement. Agriculture and the development of regional infrastructure have contributed to these major changes.

The pipeline project provides an opportunity for the wider community to consider the different impacts our activities have on the region's landscape into the future.

Charting change

Digital aerial photography is an important tool in charting existing native vegetation today.

This advanced technology can chart the changes that are occurring and can help us understand where native vegetation is growing, particularly with biolink plantings. We can also use this technology to measure improvements and changes.

This information is helping pipeline and environmental planners in their investigation of where extra water might be needed across the region to help enhance natural biodiversity. This is particularly important in considering the situations where native plants and animals have become dependent on dams (*refer to 'Water for the environment' Fact Sheet for more detail*).

Alternate ways to supply water

A Birchip Cropping Group project is investigating alternate ways to supply water to areas where native plants and animals are dependent on farm dams but in ways which provide for the more efficient use of water. In some cases, simply installing a pond might be an answer. Project planners are aware of the need to maintain wet areas for important native species and the importance of providing natural passageways for native birds and animals. Investigations are also considering pest plants and animals.

Off-stream water

Wimmera, Mallee and North Central catchment management authorities will be responsible for allocating up to 1,000 megalitres (ML) of 'off-stream' water to the environment, as a result of water savings from the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline. This will allow wetland areas, which support and sustain wildlife that is dependent on these areas because of the existing channel supply system, to be preserved and maintained.

A set of criteria is being developed to maximise the environmental outcomes of this 1,000 ML as part of the Victorian Government's Environmental Water Reserve (*refer to 'Water for the environment' Fact Sheet for more detail*).

On-farm biodiversity

Landowners also have an opportunity to consider the region's biodiversity when planning the infrastructure needed to connect to the pipeline. Support is available to landowners through a 'whole farm planning' approach to help them maximise economic and environmental benefits of the pipeline. Both the Department of Primary Industries and catchment management authorities have information and support for landowners who are planning for the future.

Farmers seeking information about the design and implementation of on-farm reticulation can refer to the On-Farm Water Reticulation Guide, available from GWMWater in hard copy or on CD.

Farmers can also consider the environment in deciding where to place water troughs. Careful placement and configuration of troughs will enhance biodiversity. Farmers could consider accessibility by birds, routes for moving livestock and fencing options to enhance revegetation. Financial assistance for revegetation and remnant vegetation protection work on farms is available through catchment management authorities.

Further information regarding biodiversity is available by contacting the **Horsham Piping It Office** on **1300 659 961** or by dropping into the office at **42-44 Kalkee Road**.

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