



Newsletter

President - Trevor Clark

The season continues though summer with good flows down the creek system. It's March and we have Burrinjuck and Blowering dams near full, so will we have floods or go into a dry period? Time will tell.

It's been a busy time for YACTAC with a number of projects progressing on the creek system. While Better Bidgee and Reconnecting River Country are just starting, the SDLAM Modernisation is getting to the pointy end with the Concept Plans for the replacement of the Hartwood, Wanganella, Piccaninny and Caroonboon weirs just released. YACTAC, with special mention to Bob Crawford, will continue to work with the SDLAM Project Team to ensure the best outcome for the creek system. Focus areas will be:

- Modelling of flows
- Weir design
- Base flows
- Operating rules for weirs and weir pools.

There will also be some infrastructure upgrades in Wanganella Swamp and Wilson's Anabranh. There is a lot of on-ground activity at the moment with representatives from 3Rivers undertaking survey and Geotech works. If landholders have any issues please let us know.

This project needs to be completed by June 2024 so any savings can go towards the SDLAM target of 605GL. The projected savings from the Modernisation works are around 8GLs. It's important that we get this right as what we get will likely be in place for the next 100 years!! Thank you to Tanya who not only has a hand on the different projects but also continues to sit at meetings including NSWIC, WaterNSW - CAG and ROSCCO, EES, DPE, CEWO etc.

Andrea has been busy running a number of projects enhancing the creek including the Refreshing River Management joint LLS project (10 years), willow removal, monitoring with CSU for MER, the first ever release of the fruit-feeding weevil for the biocontrol of sagittaria, Colombo Creek fish habitat and others in the pipeline. Well done Andrea!

Lastly, I would like to thank the landholders for allowing YACTAC to enter their properties with government and agency officers. It is important to show off the assets of the creek system and visits inform the many discussions with the agencies. Last week we visited Bundure, Wilson's Anabranh, Hartwood Station, Wanganella swamp, Hartwood weir, Tarabah weir etc, so a big **Thank You** to all those landholders, it is very much appreciated.



Gwen McLaughlin, Andrew Weavers and Trevor at Wiraki.



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EMAIL OPTION

- Take advantage of the links to additional information.
- Please contact Tanya on **0408 833 801**

WaterNSW

Monthly YCS Operating meetings

- High flows continue throughout the YCS, with around 2000ML/day at the Yanco offtake.
- Environmental water orders have ceased.
- No inflows from the Finley escape.
- Darlot has a minimum of 50ML/day rule, but it is currently running around 500ML/day.

Supplementary Water

- Discussions are continuing to encourage WaterNSW to amend their current practices around the split between supplementary water orders and other ongoing orders in the system, when a supplementary event is called.

Customer Advisory Group

- Input into the agenda for these meetings is being recognized.
- Next meeting is later this month.
- New technology WAVE pilot update to be presented. This is a portal for customers to engage with WaterNSW to update contact details, pay bills, lodge applications etc.
- IVT options paper and grandfathered licences will be discussed.
- Volumetric limits on BLR is being worked on.
- Water Sharing Plan updated.

NRAR

- Metering compliance continues.
- Works smaller than the work approval will no longer be in breach. There are policy changes proposed to be passed into law. Water users will be required to inform WaterNSW.
- NRAR is not looking into slight discrepancies (imperial v metric).
- Compliance 74% in Murrumbidgee.

Executive Officer - Tanya Thompson

In 2018 there was a need to put more effort and time into advocacy for our creek system. This came about because of the Murray Darling Basin Plan and the requirement for a volume of water to be recovered, ironically for the environment. At that time the Yanco Creek System was the subject of many conversations, some of which suggested it should reflect an irrigation channel – dry in the winter, or ephemeral like it used to be in the 1800s. I was told at the time by a bureaucrat that it would be a long and winding road but I had no idea how long and how frustrating the road would be. In 2022 the Yanco Creek System, and by default YACTAC, is begrudgingly involved in three NSW projects directly related to the Murray Darling Basin Plan: Modernisation of the Yanco Creek, Better Bidgee and Reconnecting River Country. It takes up most of my time and can seem like ground hog day! Same topic, different people, same delay, no decision. The Modernisation project is federally funded and will be completed by June 2024. The Better Bidgee and Reconnecting River Country are not funded and are working towards a business case.

SDLAM - Modernisation

We have been consistently demanding details and last week the advisory groups received concept designs of potential re-regulation weirs. In our opinion the concept designs leave a lot to be desired and YACTAC didn't hold back on suggestions for improvement. If you would like details just ring either Trevor Clark or myself.

SDLAM - Community sessions

Earlier this month there were five community sessions held for interested locals to attend. YACTAC strongly suggested hosting these in the areas easily accessible by the people who would be impacted: Morundah, Jerilderie, Conargo, Wanganella and Moulamein. There was a smaller attendance compared to February 2021, which we can only assume means people feel represented by YACTAC and other local representatives on the Yanco Stakeholder Advisory Group. Information was presented and questions answered. If you would like additional information please contact YACTAC.

Black Water event averted over summer

Sometimes no news is actually good news. Late in December and throughout January we averted a black water event by actively monitoring low dissolved oxygen (DO) readings in the Yanco Creek and working closely with various government departments along with CICL. Keith Thompson recorded a DO reading of 2.29 on the Yanco Creek near the Coleambally Irrigation CCD outlet on 23 December, which required immediate action to avoid a black water event. YACTAC, EES, CEWO, Fisheries, WaterNSW, CICL and others worked together to organise a delivery of environmental water to input higher oxygenated water into the system, via Coleambally Irrigation's CCD and DC800 escapes. Monitoring was undertaken up to 3 times a week, at 5 sites, for 6 weeks. This action saved countless aquatic animals living in the Yanco Creek system.



Yanco Creek - black water on the right, CICL flush on the left.

Project Officer - Andrea Mitchell

Realising the fruits of our labour:

Australia's first release of a fruit-feeding weevil for the biocontrol of sagittaria

Fifty small and mighty fruit-feeding weevils were released at the Sagittaria biocontrol workshop in early March. Senior Research Scientist, Dr Raelene Kwong, from Agriculture Victoria spoke to an attentive crowd about the development of the biocontrol from identification to release. The long process took over 17-years of concerted effort from declaring *Sagittaria platyphylla* a Weed of National Significance (WoNS), then sourcing three possible biocontrol agents (weevil species) from USA, to releasing the fruit-feeding (*Listronotus appendiculatus*) into a "nursery" site at Edward River, Deniliquin.

YACTAC organised the workshop as part of its on-going commitment to the project. Unfortunately, the release did not occur in Yanco Creek System (YCS) due to unseasonably high waterflows resulting in no suitable "nursery" sites.

Eleven organisations attended the workshop including: Agriculture Victoria, Murray Local Land Services, Yarkuwa, Edward Wakool Angling Association, Rice Growers Australia, Murrumbidgee Irrigation, Murray Irrigation and the Edward River, Murray River and Berrigan Shire Councils.

The project is being led by Agriculture Victoria in collaboration with NSW Department of Primary Industries. YACTAC is an industry contributor, along with Murrumbidgee Irrigation Limited (MI) and the NSW Environment Trust.



Andrea and Dr Rae Kwong releasing biocontrol weevils.

Refreshing River Management (RRM) - Central Billabong

Three important steps have been undertaken to progress the 10-year Refreshing River Management project (Central Billabong):

- Griffith University (GU) have completed the first stage of local community consultation with a key theme of deep care and love of the YCS clearly evident. Through social marketing (process of engaging, co-creating and building) GU have teased out enablers and barriers to river management and will be providing a summary report later in March.
- John Conallin and Dan Hutton, from JC Consulting have been engaged to develop a water management plan. They hail from Deniliquin and have a wealth of experience in natural resource management and developing community first plans. YACTAC look forward to working with them over the year.
- **Target Area Advisory Group (TAAG) members are currently being sought.**



YACTAC is seeking community members willing to commit to approximately four meetings per year to help guide the RRM project.

Think 10 years. What legacy would you like to leave towards a healthier creek environment locally?

The Colombo Creek, near the Yanco Creek confluence.

NSWIC

- The general meeting hosted various departmental presentations:
- MDBA: 20 NSW WRPs are not accredited - all WRPs to meet 55 requirements, Rules based PEW volume to be protected, HEW doesn't over-ride PEW, BDL changes, FPH to be re-estimated, under usage being examined, 605GL must be met.
- DPE- Regional Water Strategies: draft Murray and Murrumbidgee to be released by June 2022, no input from broader community or IOs, only consulted with councils and local water utilities.
- Minister Keith Anderson (Tamworth): wants to get the balance right - healthy rivers, farms and communities.

NSW Environment Minister

- Justin Clancy invited YACTAC to meet with James Griffin in Albury.
- Trevor Clark has been invited to Sydney later this month to discuss landholder/environmental partnerships.

EES - Environment

- YACTAC proposed a motion to review bank slumping due to fluctuating river heights.
- Environmental flows have ceased, after a very good season.
- Bird breeding on Wanganella Swamp was hampered by fluctuating water levels.

YACTAC Website

Google: landcare YACTAC

<https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/yanco-creek-and-tributaries-advisory-council>

**YANCO CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES
ADVISORY COUNCIL INC.**

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Please contact us to discuss any matter regarding the creek system, riparian areas or concerns you may have.

If you know of any change of ownership of property please send details to the Executive Officer, so our records can be kept up to date.



Project Officer - Andrea Mitchell

Yanco Creek environmental monitoring 2021- 2022 with CSU (Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (MER))

I was out in the field with Charles Sturt University in December 2021. Water levels were higher than in October at both the Wanganella Swamp and Broome wetland. The lake at Rhyola had filled since the October survey and flooded surrounding wetlands, similarly water flooded the Bundure wetland and surrounding wetlands.

Wetland monitoring surveys were conducted in YCS between Morundah and Moulamein at Bundure, Broome, Wanganella Swamp and Rhyola. Fyke nets were set overnight at both wetland and near-by creek sites. Night-time frog and morning bird surveys were conducted at all netted sites.

Waterbirds: pink-eared duck, hoary-headed grebe, black-fronted dotterel, grey teal, pacific black and wood duck, black-winged stilt, Eurasian coot, white-faced heron, straw-necked ibis and black swan, pacific black ducks, black-shouldered kite, Australian white ibis, Clamorous reed warblers, azure kingfishers, royal spoonbill.

Fish: Murray-Darling rainbowfish, unspiked hardyhead, smelt, golden perch, redfin perch, silver perch, shrimp, yabbies, carp, gambusia and weather loach.

Frogs: giant banjo frog, Peron's tree frog and spotted marsh frog, barking marsh frog, eastern sign-bearing froglet.

Turtles: Macquarie River, eastern long-necked turtles.



Fyke nets in the Yanco.

You can find more information or join the MER newsletter mailing list on this link, also a detailed list of waterbirds, fish and frogs can be found there: [Murrumbidgee MER - Institute for Land, Water and Society \(csu.edu.au\)](http://Murrumbidgee MER - Institute for Land, Water and Society (csu.edu.au))

Colombo Creek Fish habitat project

The Colombo Creek Fish Habitat project is in the beginning phases. One property has committed to protecting and revegetating approximately 2.3 kms of creek frontage, trees have been ordered and the area has been fenced. We also plan to run a planting day and carp event mid-year.

YACTAC is looking for another property along the Colombo Creek suitable for fencing and revegetation.

Wind down the Willows project

On-ground willow removal at Colombo Creek will be delivered as part of the recently secured Murray-Darling Healthy Rivers Program Small grant. The plants have been ordered and a workshop will be held in about June. We will keep you posted on the YACTAC website. The willow removal contractor is waiting for high flows in Colombo Creek to subside before commencing work.

If you would like to be involved or know more about YACTAC projects please contact Andrea.