



Newsletter

President - Trevor Clark

It is with deep sadness that we learned of Bruce Simpson’s passing. Bruce served many years on the YACTAC board including in the position of secretary and chairman around 2000. He was highly regarded, not only within the community but at all levels of government and society. His passion and knowledge of the irrigated agriculture sector, including the Yanco Creek System, set a high bar. Our thoughts go out to his family at this distressing time.

I'd like to welcome Bronwyn Thomas to the YACTAC team. Bronwyn will be working in administration (including Xero) and as a Project Officer. Her first project is titled *Chicks in the Sticks*, a fun day for the ladies to get together with some great speakers lined up. The ladies are the backbone of most farming enterprises and play an important role along our creeks, so please go and enjoy a day out.

With Bronwyn coming on board, it will allow Tanya to concentrate on advocacy. Some of the reviews and submissions required in the near future include:

- Water NSW operating license, Snowy License review
- Productivity commission review of the National Water Initiative
- IPART costs and pricing, setting charges for the next five years and setting the levy for the Yanco Creek System
- Renewable energy projects – wind farm and solar
- SDLAM project, Reconnecting River Country (constraints)
- Regional Water Strategy, Flood Plain Harvesting
- Restoring our Rivers amendment adoption and I'm sure there are many more to add to the list, all of which will have an impact on our creek system in one form or another.

The electro fishing has been interesting, highlighting the number of European Carp in our system and what a pest they are. Whilst European Carp numbers stay high, we will continue to have water quality issues along with the loss of our aquatic plants in the creek system. Without filters (aquatic plants) the once clear water creek now runs with higher turbidity levels leading to higher levels of phosphorus and nitrogen, which was the cause of the latest fish kills at Menindee.

YACTAC is extremely fortunate to have someone of Tanya's capabilities to advocate and represent the creek system during this time. Tanya also chairs the Murrumbidgee CAG and works closely with WaterNSW and represents YACTAC at EWAG.

Cheers Trevor



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President’s messages 1

Executive Officer’s update..... 2

Restoring Our Rivers..... 2

NSWIC Policy 2

WaterNSW 2

Project Officer’s update 3

Electrofishing..... 3

Snowy Hydro License 3

EWAG 3

Refreshing Rivers..... 4

Golden Perch release 4

EMAIL OPTION

- Take advantage of the links in the emailed version of the newsletter for additional information.

WaterNSW

- Pricing 2025-2030 meetings were again held with sobering outcomes. It appears WaterNSW may have significant increased roles from 2025 if approved by Minister Jackson.
- WaterNSW proposed charges for the Murrumbidgee Valley are currently projected at an increase of over 60%. This is being strongly opposed by all on the Murrumbidgee CAG.
- It is early days but we are sending a strong message to WaterNSW, IPART and the Minister that increases of this nature will not be accepted.
- A tour of Burrinjuck Dam has been set for late in April.
- Changes to the existing Customer Advisory Groups are proposed, with one online and two regional meetings per year.
- Southern Operations Team worked closely with YACTAC to resolve low water levels over the past few weeks.
- With drier and warmer conditions the demand for irrigation water has increased. It is essential that water orders are placed to meet your requirements.

Facebook

Follow the 'Yanco Creek System' page on Facebook.

Instagram: YANCO2024

Executive Officer - Tanya Thompson

We finished off 2023 with some confronting news when the Restoring Our Rivers Amendment Bill was passed and realization that buy backs were once again in the mix to meet the MDBP targets. 2024 has hit with a kick and bang. The NSW Water Minister Hon. Rose Jackson presented at this weeks NSWIC meeting stating that NSW had signed up to the extension of the SDLAM projects but was not in favour of buy backs. As always the devil is in the detail, as there was a Commonwealth purchase of water entitlements just last month in the Murray, and other valleys, to meet one of the many targets of the MDBP. There will indeed need to be buy backs to meet the MDBP's targets and it will be a significant volume from many valleys.

Additionally \$100m has been allocated for First Nations water and they intend to go into the market to purchase water within a few months, according to Sheryl Hedges –DCCEEW.

Restoring Our Rivers

It has been officially announced that the **SDLAM Yanco Offtake (regulator)** will not be progressed due to the lack of broad community support and small water savings. Time to rejoice.

Reconnecting River Country is funded until May 2024 to undertake early works and studies. Whilst it will not be completed by Dec 2026 it was agreed to support this work and potential water recovery is to be considered in the 2026 Basin Plan Review.

SDLAM Yanco Modernisation project received additional Commonwealth funding and with a new deadline of December 2026. The SDLAM Yanco team are intending to submit the EIS in May and once that process has been completed community consultation sessions will be conducted. The major works are at the Hartwood Weir and Wanganella Weir, where existing infrastructure will be replaced by regulators. Additional works on the infrastructure around Wanganella Swamp, Wiraki and Cheverells Creek are also being proposed. The Stakeholder Advisory Council met last month to discuss progress and were shown a scale model of the proposed Hartwood regulator with fish passage. Further meetings will take place during 2024 and if you have any questions or concerns, please contact **Tanya** or **Trevor**.

Direct information about the project can be found on this website link: [SDLAM Yanco](#)

NSWIC Policy update

Trevor and I attended the NSWIC meeting this week and several policies were updated along with the opportunity to meet several key people in both the state and federal departments. This platform provides a unique opportunity to speak directly with people who make decisions that affect the irrigation sector and broader rural community.

A key policy is that NSWIC do not support buy backs and seek alternative measures to meet the MDBP target. The team work hard to gain ground and do have the ears of both state and federal ministers or their advisors.

Project Officer - Andrea Mitchell

This quarter I have been involved in a diverse range of activities aimed at promoting environmental sustainability and community engagement including Chicks in the Sticks, Hartwood Wetland Field Day, Women's Yarning Circle and baseline water quality monitoring. The highlight this summer has been witnessing the growth and progress of recent wetland plantings, indicating our restoration efforts are working!

If anyone is interested in having a Natural Capital Profile completed for their property, give me a call or email.

For more information <https://www.refreshingrivers.org.au/rewards#naturalcapital>

Trialling electrofishing carp in the Billabong Creek, Conargo

The use of electrofishing is part of an integrated approach to improve waterway health under the Refreshing Rivers Program.

Electrofishing targeting carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) occurred in September and late December 2023 on a five kilometer stretch of Billabong Creek at Conargo. Carp was the dominant fish species recorded with a tally of 266kg (adults) in the December event.

Dr John Conallin conducted scientific monitoring during the electrofishing activity. The results showed carp accounted for 75% of abundance and 85% biomass in September with 70% of abundance and biomass in December. There were larger numbers of Golden Perch, Murray Cod and Silver Perch recorded in December than in the September's electrofishing event.

The use of electrofishing is part of an integrated approach to improve waterway health under the Refreshing Rivers Program. A revegetation event was also conducted to help improve habitat quality and bank stabilisation.

YACTAC President, Trevor Clark, is strongly supportive of the delivery of this key project to lead to a much healthier waterway for our native specific flora and fauna.



Andrea, Dr John Conallin and crew electrofishing.

Snowy Hydro License

- The Snowy Hydro license is being reviewed prior to renewal.
- Rules around the movement of water within the upper catchments and dams may be updated during this process.
- The Murray valley will be more affected than the Murrumbidgee valley.

EWAG

- A meeting was held in Leeton last month.
- Environmental water was released as a pulse through the Murrumbidgee River and Yanco Creek. The flow didn't achieve the height expected.
- WaterNSW is harmonizing the dam levels at Burrinjuck and Blowering, with Tombullen remaining full for the coming months.
- Water for the Environment—W4TE is a new initiative through the Reconnecting River Country Program.
- Wanganella Swamp didn't receive any water due to the SDLAM program and issues with infrastructure that was damaged due to flooding.
- An autumn pulse will be ordered.

YACTAC Website

Google: landcare YACTAC

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

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

**PO Box 53
HOWLONG NSW 2643**

Upper Section Committee:

Tom Holt	0417	422	630
Lawrence Simpson	0448	189	001
Glen Baxter	0428	852	623

Mid Section Committee:

Sam Armytage	0427	534	622
Katie Gordon	0408	612	467
Bernie Pinnuck	0439	028	719

Lower Section Committee:

Bob Crawford	0427	875	955
Trevor Clark	0429	691	010
Colin McCrabb	0428	847	558

Executive Officer

Tanya Thompson 0408 833 801
e: eo@yactac.org.au

Project Officer

Andrea Mitchell 0419 841 834
e: env@yactac.org.au

Admin/Project Officer

Bronwyn Thomas 0427 433 123
e: info@yactac.org.au

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

Baseline Data Collection for Refreshing Rivers

Refreshing Rivers has been actively collecting baseline data on creek water quality using a multiparameter water quality probe and taking water samples at seven sites for laboratory analysis.

YACTAC Project Officer Andrea Mitchell, Murray LLS Project Officers Josh Campbell and Rachel Faulkner sampled sites at Yanco weir, Morundah, Jerilderie, Conargo and Wanganella.

Parameters used to assess water quality:

1. pH Levels: Indicates acidity. A change in pH can alert to changes such as salt introduced upstream.
2. Dissolved Nutrients: Monitors levels of nutrients. Excess phosphorus and nitrogen from fertilisers can inadvertently cause algae to grow, causing algal blooms.
3. Chlorophyll A: Measures algae levels. Too many algae reduce sunlight and oxygen levels risking algal blooms.
4. Turbidity: Assesses water clarity, vital for aquatic plant and animal survival.
5. Dissolved Organic Carbon (DOC): Monitors organic carbon levels. When organic material breaks down, it produces carbon. DOC is great for plants, but too much can create anaerobic conditions, causing fish kills and algal blooms.
6. Salinity: Indicates salt levels. High salinity can cause erosion and wide-spread damage to the ecosystem.
7. Temperature: Crucial parameter affecting other properties like dissolved oxygen and pH.

Refreshing Rivers base line comprehensive approach to monitoring and restoration is foundational for the health and sustainability of the waterways involved.

Golden perch fingerlings released

YACTAC were out in the New Year releasing 27,000 Golden Perch (*Macquaria ambigua*) fingerlings as part of the Refreshing Rivers Program. Leigh Logan from Tara Native Fish Hatchery, delivered over 50,000 Golden Perch and Murray Cod fingerlings for the Edward River Council, Jerilderie Fishing Club and YACTAC's combined order.

The fingerlings were spread in the Billabong Creek from both sides of Wanganella Weir, at Conargo and Jerilderie, as well as in the Colombo Creek.

Local community members have worked with experts in a multi-pronged approach to increase native fish species and improve waterway health.

Funded by NSW DPI's Two Dollars-for-One Dollar Native Fish Stocking Program and Refreshing Rivers Program.



K Charlton releasing fingerlings into the Yanco Creek System