



Newsletter

President - Bob Crawford

Your team; YACTAC Board, Tanya and Dale have been flat out trying to track and understand the machinations, deliberations and decisions of the MDBA, DPIE and WaterNSW. Our efforts to determine minimum flow parameters (at both the start of system and the end of system) such that our natural resource management strategy is satisfied, has been challenged constantly. The uncertainty of change and variability of opinions has meant that we have had to adapt the narrative of the Yanco Creek System (YCS) objective.

Our objective, to reclassify the operational surpluses of our system into a coherent series of natural and integrated flow events culminating in a measurable flow connected to the Murray system, remains viable. Once the YCS has used these flows to conserve our environment they can pass through into the Murray system to further conserve that system.

I am confident that common sense will prevail eventually and you will be able to resume your normal practice of being the most efficient producers of food and fibre in the world in a happy, connected and vibrant environment.

I must thank all our members for helping the team, stay the course. Next year looks promising but I am wary to put too much gloss on our expectations.

I will close by wishing you all a happy and enjoyable time over the Christmas break.

Bob Crawford



Yanco Weir Maintenance

At the AGM members were informed of the proposal by WaterNSW to commence maintenance on the Yanco Weir gates, with the potential to reduce flows in the top section of the YCS.

Whilst I would like to state that WaterNSW has developed a plan to undertake maintenance without disruption to creek flows, this is not the case. Despite repeated attempts to gain a commitment from WaterNSW to review methods of ensuring flow is not disrupted during scheduled maintenance, no progress has been made. YACTAC has strongly suggested a bulk head be installed, yet WaterNSW has not progressed this discussion, which is appalling.

However YACTAC will continue to pursue this topic, in the interests of members and circulate any progress made as soon as it becomes available.

MPII - Murrumbidgee Private Irrigators Inc

Years ago MPII shared resources and lobbied on behalf of YCS irrigators, this is no longer the case and has not been the case since 2015. Last month MPII issued membership invoices to people along the YCS. YACTACs suggestion is to not pay that membership.



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EMAIL OPTION

- Would you prefer to receive this newsletter via email to take advantage of the links to additional information?
- Please contact Tanya on **0408 833 801**

Murrumbidgee Environmental Water Allowance Reference Group - MEWARG

- The Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (MER) program is a continuation of the LTIMP. The Murrumbidgee is 1 of 7 selected areas in the MDB that will continue to be monitored until 2022.
- Wanganella Swamp watering has used 800ML of a 2.7GL budget.
- EWAG meetings continue to be a useful forum for keeping a YCS focus for environmental flows.
- E-water was delivered to several wetlands under a drought contingency using a very small proportion of the usual e-water volumes.
- Recently constructed water storages in the lower Murrumbidgee to capture supplementary flows en-masse are seen as a risk.

WaterNSW Operations

- Surpluses in the YCS are less than projected, sitting around 2%.
- Irrigator demand has decreased.
- More water is entering the Colombo (2/3) than the Yanco (1/3).
- Billabong (formally Finley) Escape is delivering 250ML/day to meet MDBA orders.
- Current operation guidelines favour using DC800 and Billabong Escape rather than just the Yanco Offtake.
- No update on the Yanco Weir maintenance. YACTAC has submitted a formal complaint.

Tour Yanco Creek System

- YACTAC will be hosting a tour of the system on 4 March 2020. The tour will be open to members and non members.
- It is planned to visit some infrastructure sites and important environmental sites.
- More information will be available in February 2020.

Environmental Manager - Dr Dale McNeil

Billabong/Yanco/Colombo Strategic Plan

The YACTAC strategic plan is going through the drafting process with the board. The next draft will be discussed at the February board meeting after which it is scheduled to be distributed to members for feedback.

We have been developing our partnerships with Local Land Services and Murrumbidgee Landcare. Programs on farm dams and silverleaf nightshade control have recently been delivered in the upper section of the YCS.

We are developing a much bigger collection of works under a funding bid being developed with Murray LLS as part of a river connections consortium, partnering with Holbrook Landcare, Riverina LLS and others to get funding for a big swag of NRM activities in the region.

Frog and Wetland Surveys

YACTAC, Charles Sturt University and the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists have conducted a week of frog surveys throughout the mid and upper Yanco Creek and Upper Colombo.

The surveys were conducted to:

- Assess where frog populations are holding on through drought conditions
- Assess how important farm dams and irrigation channels are as drought refuges for frogs
- To see if the endangered Southern Bell frog is still hanging on in the area and whether they are persisting in creek or dam habitats.

We found Southern Bell frogs at two sites: 'Broome' and 'The Yanco' – they were in both creek and dam habitats, showing the importance of farm dams to the survival of the species.

We commonly found four other frogs: Peron's Tree frog, Spotted Grass frog, Barking Marsh Frog, and the Eastern Sign Bearing Froglet.

YACTAC will build on this survey with further searches in January 2020 and will also develop a community monitoring program in the New Year.

There is an extremely useful Frog ID app that can be found at: <https://www.frogid.net.au/> - or on the App store under Frog ID. I recommend this app, it's great for searching images, hearing the calls, and even has a built in recorder so you can record your frogs and the recording will be sent to the museum who will listen and get back to you with which frogs they can hear. Awesome!

Enhanced native vegetation in and around farm dams support frogs. Please contact me if you are interested in finding out more, mcneil.dale@gmail.com or phone **0428 101 318**.

Yanco Offtake

A proposal has been submitted to WaterNSW for the Yanco Offtake to be utilised more, rather than relying on Coleambally Irrigation's DC800 and Murray Irrigation's Billabong Escape to input water into the YCS. WaterNSW operations currently use the two inputs further downstream to increase flows in the mid and bottom section.

Y-Spy

The Peron's Tree Frog hides in the bark of redgums and like to sit up on trees and logs to call. They have a maniacal cackle



Peron's Tree Frog

Executive Officer - Tanya Thompson

Well we welcomed Henry Gregory in the last newsletter and are saying goodbye in this one. Henry is leaving the district and is therefore not able to continue with YACTAC. We wish him well in his future endeavours.

Many members joined 'Can the Plan' rally in Canberra and are actively involved in behind the scenes discussions with all levels of government. Keep up the good work!

There was a flurry of meetings held in late October and November with YACTAC members being represented and your views pushed. There will be a lull over the next six weeks with meetings being ramped up again in February.

We would like to see less effort being put into meetings but that is not what is needed at the moment. Every meeting, committee, advisory group is important so resources are being thrown into attending and advocating on your behalf to keep the creeks flowing long into the future.

SDLAM—Stakeholders Advisory Group

Two of the three advisory groups are up and running: Technical and Community. YACTAC is represented by Bob, Mark, Dale and Tanya. Tours have been held through the top and middle sections as well as preliminary protocol and process meetings.

The people involved in these groups have an understanding of the task ahead, however it must be said that WaterNSW still refuses to be engaged. We are pushing for WaterNSW to be involved as they have data that can't currently be accessed. Our focus is to ensure the SDLAM projects meet expectations, are valid and don't impact third parties. In our view WaterNSW's participation is essential.

Whilst YACTAC has faith in the local SDLAM team the same can not be said for the groups involved at higher levels. The department stated (in writing) their approach would be: holistic, co-designed, guided by advisory group, involve regular community contact, ensure integrity and be delivered through a local project team. Your representatives will do everything they can to ensure the department follows that approach. We have a meeting in January with Tracey MacDonald and Daniel Blacker to discuss the shortcomings and disappointment in proceedings so far.

Detailed discussions with the Technical Advisory Group will start in February. If you have any suggestions for works along the creek system that could save water, please contact Tanya.

Wanganella Watering

In the winter and spring newsletters we discussed government water being allocated to Wanganella Swamp. An agreement was reached with DPIE-ESS (formally OEH) to co-fund infrastructure to make the watering possible. YACTAC has donated \$10,000 to infrastructure and the department covered the remaining costs.

The purpose of the event was to re-establish aquatic plants such as cumbungi, water primrose and others across a large area so that when floods occur water can be held within the system for an extended period of time, like it was in the 1990s, when the area was a drought refuge for threatened species.

The timing of this event was held up due to a number of factors, however since watering there has been an immediate effect with broilgas visiting on 14 December. A fantastic outcome!

This is the first watering event in the YCS this year and we pleased to get water into the system, no matter what the timing, as it will highlight what our system has to offer birdlife, aquatic and wetland species. Wanganella Swamp is an excellent drought refuge and one we want to keep alive.



Broilga in Wanganella Swamp

NSWIC

- SnowyHydro
-Cloud seeding produced equivalent to ~23Gl of additional water.
-A review of cloud seeding in 2020 is scheduled.
-Snow depth above average but it did not give inflows into the system because of warm, windy, dry conditions.
- Sussan Ley - policy position
No more water recovery
- NSWIC to alter membership access

WaterNSW

- WaterNSW preparation for IPART pricing determination will see consultants running customer forums - 44 participants across the state, 7 meetings.
- WaterNSW has suggested unbundling of government charges: DPIE Water, NRAR, WAMC, WaterNSW.
- Proposal to change the current charge framework.
- Cost share review to change % of costs applied to impactors.
- 20 year infrastructure to investigate:
 - Raising Blowering Dam
 - New buffer storage near Gundagai
 - Expand Bundidgerry storage
 - Tomullen upgrade
 - Balranald Weir upgrade

YACTAC Website

Google: landcare YACTAC

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

**YANCO CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES
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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.



Creek Weed Control

Matt Wooden is now working under the Berrigan Shire banner and started work on the top section of the Colombo Creek on 3 December. The Colombo Creek has now been inspected and sprayed where necessary. Work has now moved on to the Billabong Creek and will continue for the next month or so.

Matt is aware of areas of organic status and individual preferences of some landholders. Matt has been involved with YACTAC for a number of years now and his knowledge and efforts greatly assist us. Matt will contact you before commencing work on any property.

Matt Wooden: 0429 664 509



Landcare

Silverleaf Nightshade Control

A field workshop on Silverleaf Nightshade control was held at Morundah supported by YACTAC and delivered by Murrumbidgee Landcare. The workshop included presentations from Australia's leading scientific authorities on the weed. It is a very difficult weed to control and feedback from the workshop is that science is still trying to get ahead of the problem.

Water Metering Compliance

Dates for compliance have been pushed out, new dates are:

- 1 December 2020 - 500mm pumps
- 1 December 2022 - remaining works that require a meter

Pumpers with WaterNSW (public) owned water meters such as those in the Yanco Creek System are in a much better position than landholders of privately owned water meters. More details will be forthcoming in the February.

Important:

- You **MUST** check your **Works Approval Licence** to see what size pump is listed. If the WAL has a 500mm pump listed then what size pump you have installed (i.e. 300mm), is irrelevant. Compliance date 1/12/2020.
- I urge everyone to dig up your **Works Approval Licence** and **check details** against WaterNSW records. There has been discussions about the accuracy of WaterNSW records. If different contact WaterNSW.
- If you have a **pump** that you don't use and are thinking about **registering it as inactive**, so you don't have to worry about compliance, then don't be too hasty. **Once registered as inactive you may not be able to reactive it. Not recommended.**

Details can be found on this website: https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/279433/metering-roadshow-what-we-heard-2019.pdf