

24 November 2008

WILCANNIA REPORT HIGHLIGHTS RIVER REHABILITATION HOT-SPOTS

The Western Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) have released the *Murtee to Ten Mile Rocks Habitat Management Plan*, a report detailing an assessment of a sixty kilometre reach of the Darling River.

The Western CMA contracted the DPI to undertake the report as a basis for planning river rehabilitation activities.

The Department of Primary Industries assessed 29km upstream and 31km downstream of the Wilcannia Weir. They divided the reach into one kilometre sections or sub-reaches and conducted field assessments during June and July 2007.

The need for the report came out of a public meeting held in Wilcannia in December 2006, held to identify community priorities relating to the River and floodplain. The draft report was presented to the Wilcannia community for comment in November 2007. A copy of the final report is available at the Central Darling Shire Council offices or by contacting the Western CMA offices in Cobar or Broken Hill.

Western CMA Operations Manager, Russell Grant said "while the report won't put more water back into the river, it provides a basis for providing the best possible outcomes for fish habitat when flows return.

"Each sub-reach was assessed on the basis of river characteristics, riparian vegetation, large woody debris (or snags) and any important management issues that affected the habitat.

"The study found that 31km of the Wilcannia reach was considered to be a high priority for rehabilitation, based on the concept of protecting the better areas first.

"These were prioritised on the basis of refuge pools, recreational use, barriers to fish passage, concentration of snags, and the occurrence of threatened species.

"Fifteen rehabilitation activities were identified, including gully erosion treatment, re-snagging, log sills, fish passage priorities and controlling pest species.

"The report is extremely detailed. There is a summary of each one kilometre sub-reach, with a satellite photograph showing relevant features, and a recommendation of rehabilitation works and an indicative cost to implement the works," Mr Grant said.

The Western CMA is in the initial stages of negotiating a proposal with the DPI to implement some of the highest priorities identified in the report.

It will also seek funding from the Australian Government through the Caring for our Country initiative to implement works to improve the Darling River at Wilcannia over a longer time-frame.



MEDIA RELEASE



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Caption: The Darling River near Wilcannia.

