

24 November 2021

SA collaboration reviving vital River Murray wetlands

More than 360 hectares of historic wetlands in South Australia's Riverland will open to visitors for the first time this week, as works progress on a major conservation project led by Nature Foundation together with SA Water.

One of eight reserves managed by Nature Foundation, the Murbpook Nature Reserve – which houses the wetlands – is on the western bank of the River Murray between Blanchetown and Morgan and was acquired as part of a vegetation offset requirement for SA Water's zero cost energy future initiative.

The reserve will host a guided bird walk on Friday 26 November between 10am and 3pm, providing keen birdwatchers with the first opportunity to explore.

Nature Foundation Chair Jan Ferguson OAM said the reserve is an important conservation site for 17 threatened fauna species and two rare flora species.

"Recognising the urgent need to help preserve the biodiversity of the wetlands and floodplains of the River Murray, SA Water's investment will allow us to permanently set aside the Murbpook Lagoon property for its primary purpose of growing and enhancing biodiversity conservation," Jan said.

"Through our Water for Nature Program, we'll introduce a wetting and drying cycle for the wetlands, to improve the chances of survival for this significant habitat, which is so important for native wildlife.

"Murbpook Lagoon is also believed to include sites of significant cultural importance to First Nations groups, and we've commenced discussions with Traditional Owners to identify how they would like to build on their connection with the lagoon, protect its cultural heritage and be involved in its ongoing restoration."

SA Water's zero cost energy future initiative saw more than 360,000 solar photovoltaic panels at around 35 of its sites across the state, including four locations in the Murray Mallee region.

SA Water's Vegetation Services Specialist Shaun Kennedy said establishing the Murbpook Nature Reserve achieved sustainable environmental and social outcomes.

"Vegetation offsets are an important part of ensuring a responsible balance between large-scale infrastructure projects and maintaining native vegetation, and our partnership with Nature Foundation enables us to meet environmental obligations, while preserving and enhancing a large area of river habitat," Shaun said.

"Our energy initiative is of a size and scale not seen before in the water industry, and our team has carefully designed the project to minimise potential impacts to the natural environment.

"We also know the importance of maintaining a healthy river ecosystem, with the River Murray playing a central role in the delivery of clean, safe drinking water to our 1.7 million customers across South Australia.



"Our strategic direction is underpinned by initiatives like our zero cost energy future which are helping lay the foundations for a greener tomorrow and support healthy communities.

"We want to demonstrate proactive environmental leadership and leave a positive footprint on South Australia's natural world, so we are excited to be working on such an important project that will make a difference in the Riverland region."

For more Information about the Murbpook Nature Reserve and for details on the upcoming guided bird walk, visit naturefoundation.org.au.

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For further information contact SA Water's media team on 08 7424 2477