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Some of the information included in the report has been taken from the *Murray Mallee Local Action Plan – 2002 - 2005*. Copies of the Plan are available by contacting the Association.

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Chairperson's Report – October 2004 Extracted from 2004 Annual Report

The past year has seen many changes and challenges that have involved many of our committee in a “steep learning curve” in many directions, both in the management of Murray Mallee Local Action Planning Association (MMLAP) and in the wider sphere of Natural Resource Management (NRM) legislative and administrative reform.

At the local level we have had to adjust to moving from having a Project Officer and two Implementation Officers, to a temporary period of no I.O.’s and no full time P.O. when Jem, Claudette and Shane moved on to new phases of their careers, to our current situation of operating with Ben Simon as Project Officer. It goes without saying how grateful we are as a Management Committee for Ben’s commitment and plain hard work that has resulted in a rejuvenated MMLAP.

My thanks must be recorded not only to Ben, but also to all committee members for their contributions and support during the past year. I would particularly like to thank Keith, Malcolm and Judy for their willingness to participate in the difficult task of interviewing, selecting and reviewing our P.O. positions. We also owe a debt of gratitude to James Pinkney for his effective and efficient work to keep our LAP on course during our “no man’s land” period.

There have been many positives in 2004. The *Mallee Futures Program* is again “on course” and interest in, and submissions for grants have resulted in the full funding allocation being used. The Murray Mallee Soil Conservation Board grant of \$60,000 for rehabilitation projects has also been successfully committed. Our thanks to Giles Forward for his work in the initial grant inspections and to Ben for his tireless final implementation inspections.

We have also made significant advances in “Capacity Building” in many areas. Ben has been involved in education programs at Karoonda and Lameroo schools, to name two, and has organised workshops, such as the “Fire Forum” at Murray Bridge, and postal information and updates have been extensive. Add to this a presence at Karoonda Fair and Pinnaroo Show and we can be assured that “the face of MMLAP” has been seen. As this goes to print, a “Mallee Enterprise Tour” has been organised on Monday Oct 18th. Other successful field trips have taken place. Our thanks to Malcolm in particular for his role in these.

In the wider NRM arena our LAP Committee has been actively involved in Stakeholder Forums at Berri, Mannum, Tailem Bend, and Lameroo. The final Forum will be held at Berri on October 26th. My thanks to Keith for his many wise contributions to this process. The future of LAPs is more clear and upfront in future planning as a result of persistent LAP voices in this process. Other opportunities I have had to represent our voice have been at the Soil Boards CARE Committee meeting at Mannum on August 30th and a meeting of representatives for all LAPs and other interested parties at the CARE Office Murray Bridge on August 16th where some really important recommendations were formulated for the final Draft meeting at Berri.

Last, but not least, I also had the opportunity to be involved in discussions and recommendations about the future role and organization of LAPs at the Regional LAP meeting at Mannum on May 3rd. The report from this meeting is something that we do need to address in the coming year. Arising from the recommendations of the Mannum Combined Meeting I intend to attend two important workshops:

1. Volunteer Management October 19th at Strathalbyn.
2. Running at your Best-Good Governance for LAPS at Murray Bridge on Nov.5th.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the assistance of Ben, Aurelie, Malcolm and Judy in exploring the minefield of Phase Two Funding submissions.

Thank you to all the Committee Members for your many contributions to keeping the MMLAP flame alive and well.

One fact is certain, the challenges of the coming year will be even greater. Our job, I believe, first and foremost, will be to do all we can to ensure that local expertise, interest, and involvement are not lost in the administrative changes that will occur.

Rod Brown
Chairperson, Murray Mallee Local Action Planning Association Inc

Murray Mallee Local Action Planning

Landholders in the Murray Mallee already make a huge commitment to look after their land and water resources. This commitment is acknowledged by the local action planning process which:

- supports landholders to improve land management;
- provides a broader community focus on the region's natural resources;
- enables communities and governments to work together to tackle the major natural resource management issues.

Murray Mallee Local Action Plan

The Murray Mallee Local Action Planning Association Inc is a community organisation comprised of Murray Mallee community members who represent a range of groups and organisations. The Association was formed in 1998 and has a management committee which, currently consists of nine members. Membership of the Association is open to all members of the Murray Mallee community and the Association currently has 98 registered members. This membership has enabled strong links to be formed with many other groups, agencies and programs operating in the Murray Mallee.

The mission statement of the association is:

'To maintain and enhance the natural and agricultural systems of the Murray Mallee through the support of the community.'

To achieve this mission, the *Murray Mallee Local Action Plan: Draft for Public Consultation* was prepared and released in 1999.

The local action plan:

- identifies the region's major natural resource management issues and determines priority actions and the most cost effective way for the community, industry and government to invest their time and money in sustainable natural resource management;
- continues to evolve and the *Murray Mallee Local Action Plan: 2002-2005* reflects community feedback on the draft, with priorities identified through community consultation, and provides updated information on progress and future directions.

Issues

In developing the local action plan, the association identified five major natural resources management issues for the region in consultation with the Murray Mallee community:

Overarching issues:

Issue 1: Awareness

Issue 2: Farm profitability

Key resource issues:

Issue 3: Soil erosion

Issue 4: Water use

Issue 5: Biodiversity loss

The key resource issues can not be addressed without also addressing the overarching issues.

Objectives

Objectives and actions have been identified for each of the five issues:

Objective 1:

Raise awareness in the Murray Mallee community of the need for change

Objective 2:

Increase gross margins of Mallee farming systems within land capability

Objective 3:

Reduce the erosion of topsoil caused by wind

Objective 4:

Ensure sustainable use of the groundwater resources of the Murray Mallee

Objective 5:

Increase the water use efficiency on farms in the Murray Mallee

Objective 6

Minimise the impacts of irrigation drainage in the Murray Mallee

Objective 7:

Protect and enhance native vegetation communities in the Murray Mallee and the species they support

Partnerships

The focus of the local action plan is on achieving results through on-ground action, which can only be done by those people working on and making decisions about their use of the land and water resources. Therefore, the actions identified in this plan are mainly community actions. It is expected that these will be implemented in partnership with local and regional groups, and all levels of government.

The role of the Murray Mallee Local Action Planning Association is to create an overarching plan so that all land and water management activities in the Mallee have one central reference point. Responsibility for implementing many of the actions within this plan will be shared with other groups working in the Murray Mallee, such as the Murray Mallee District Soil Conservation Board, Mallee Water Resources Committee, and Mallee Sustainable Farming Inc. Some of the actions are covered in more detail in other plans developed by the association, such as the *Murray Mallee Revegetation Plan, Murray Mallee Land and Water Management Plan and Assisting the Murray Mallee Community to Understand and Adopt Integrated Natural Resource Management with a focus on Groundwater Recharge*.

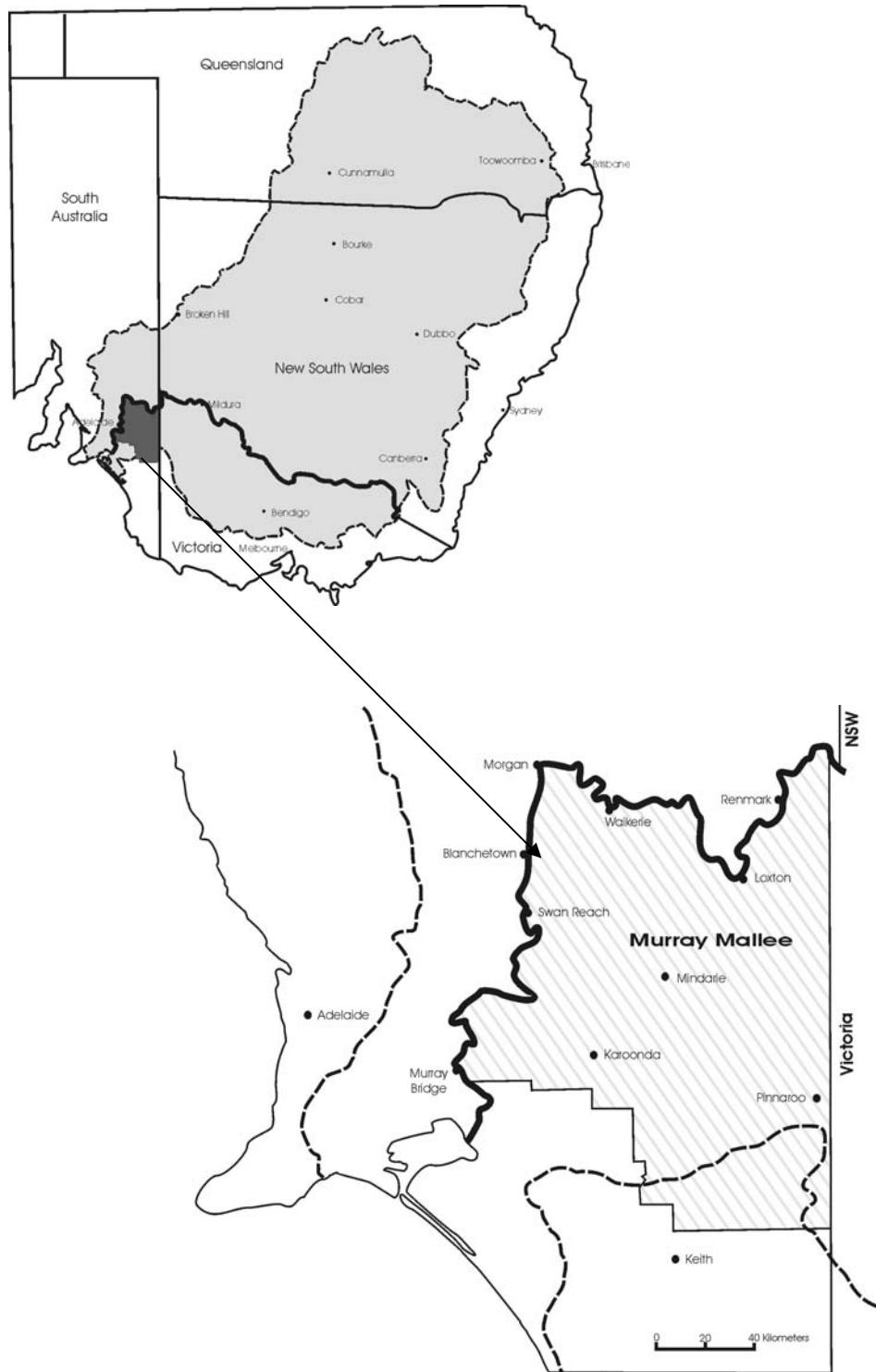
Action

The association has been involved in supporting, developing and implementing projects in the Murray Mallee that address the major issues in the local action plan. More than 20,000 hectares of on-ground works have been completed through the *Mallee Futures Program* since 1998.

How can you be involved?

- Invest in natural resources management in the Murray Mallee;
- Join the Murray Mallee Local Action Planning Association Inc;
- Participate in training activities eg field days and workshops;
- Undertake a revegetation project on your property – financial incentives and free technical support are currently available for some projects;
- Organise or become involved in group fox baiting or weed control programs;
- Become involved in malleefowl monitoring activities;
- Help your local school to be involved;
- Be involved in the decision making for the region by participating in consultation activities.

Location of the Murray Mallee Local Action Planning Association area



Management Committee members during 2003/04 were:

Chairperson

Rod Brown Murray Mallee Soil Conservation Board

Vice Chairperson

Malcolm Johns **Mantung Maggea Land Management Group**

Secretary

Keith Payne Murray Mallee Soil Conservation Board

Treasurer

Members

Aurelie Blanchett	District Council of Loxton Waikerie
Ross Day	Mallee Water Resources Committee
Jody Gates	Dept of Heritage and Environment
Barry Manuel	Wanbi Land Management Group
Neville Pfeiffer	Southern Mallee District Council, June 2004

The Management Committee was supported during 2003/04 by:

Shane Lavell	Murray Mallee NRM Coordinator, August 2003 to January 2004
Jem Tesoriero	Implementation Coordinator to August 2003
Claudette Helie	Implementation Officer to January 2004
Ben Simon	Project Officer, commenced March 2004

Key Achievements 2003 - 2004

To continue implementation of the *Murray Mallee Local Action Plan* during the last year funding support was provided through the Integrated Natural Resource Management Group for the SA Murray-Darling Basin. This support was linked to implementation of National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) and Natural Heritage Trust Extension (NHT) priority projects. The River Murray Catchment Water Management Board also provided significant funding to enable additional actions identified in the *Murray Mallee Local Action Plan* to be achieved.

The achievements of the last year have continued to build on the planning and implementation activities that have been undertaken during the last six years. These activities have been achieved through an investment of over three million dollars in the Murray Mallee Local Action Planning area. Past and current investment continues to address priority natural resource management issues identified in the *Murray Mallee Local Action Plan* with current investment also focussing on priority regional issues. This funding has been more than matched by financial and in-kind contributions from the community, especially landholders.

Funding also continues to be received by other groups contributing to on-ground action in the Murray Mallee, eg Murray Mallee Soil Conservation Board, Mallee Sustainable Farming Inc and Land Management groups.

Murray Mallee Natural Resources Management Program

Building Community Capacity and Support for NRM in the SA Murray Darling Basin

This project is being implemented by ten Local Action Planning groups, including the Murray Mallee and has attracted funding from the Natural Heritage Trust Extension program. The project aims to provide resources that will enable community groups and individuals to further develop their understanding and capacity to play a meaningful role in natural resource management in the SA Murray Darling Basin. Funding for this project has only recently been received and will be utilised during the next year to:

- Provide professional support to the Murray Mallee LAP and other natural resource management groups in the Mallee.
- Continue developing partnerships, networking and education and awareness activities.
- Facilitate change management and leadership activities.
- Address indigenous issues.
- Initiate participation in research programs and adaptive management activities.

Achievements 2003 – 2004

- Professional support provided to the Murray Mallee LAP and Land Management Groups as required.
- Partnerships maintained with Murray Mallee District Soil Conservation Board, Mallee Water Resources Committee, Mallee Sustainable Farming and Land Management Groups (Wanbi, Mantung Maggea, Lower Mallee).
- Linkages maintained with six local schools (Browns Well, East Murray, Geranium, Karoonda, Lameroo, Pinnaroo).
- Continued to seek support and partnerships with local government.
- Organised presentation to Murray Mallee LAP committee and attended meeting in relation to Southern Titanium Sand Mining proposal and impacts on land management and biodiversity.
- Attended Indigenous cultural awareness training.
- Maintained links with active adaptive management project and research activities being undertaken through the Mallee Sustainable Farming project.
- Prepared project schedule and commenced identifying partners for implementation of the National Landcare Program funded project “Overcoming barriers to use of productive perennial species to reduce Mallee recharge” in 2004 – 2005.
- Prepared grant application for a community volunteer grant.
- Provided input to NRM reform process and regional Investment Strategy development.
- Participated in regional Local Action Planning forums and attended CARE team meetings.

The project has been completed and final report information submitted.

Education and awareness activities, ongoing (*Achieving objective 1*)

Raising awareness in the Murray Mallee community of the need for change has been a key part of all project work undertaken in the Murray Mallee. An integrated extension program involving all active groups and programs in the area continues to be implemented.

Achievements 2003 – 2004

- Media
 - Newspaper advertisements and editorials printed in local papers, and CWA magazine.
 - Radio interviews with 5MU and ABC Radio, Riverland.
- Web page
 - Information provided for link to regional web page currently being developed.
- *Mallee Update*, two newsletters were prepared and distributed to 750 people.
- Attended and/or organised displays for Riverland field days, Mallee Sustainable Farming field day, Pinnaroo Show, Mannum NRM Field Day and Karoonda Farm Fair.

- Four “Mallee Extravaganza” tours were held to celebrate the success of the *Mallee Futures Program* and launch the land capability case studies:
 - Paringa/Taplan – visited three properties and gained a better understanding of the establishment and management of saltbush, local native species and lucerne on different soil types. Presentations were also organised on biodiversity and Noora drainage basin and cropping using reduced and no-till establishment methods.
 - Mantung/Mindarie – visited four sites including roadside local native species establishment, rehabilitated sand hills and gained an insight into the use of saltbush to improve management of different soil types with an update on new varieties of saltbush being established.
 - Karoonda/Burdett – visited two properties and heard presentations on the topics of managing stony soils using no-till continuous cropping, use of saltbush to increase production and establishment and value of windbreaks and perennial pastures for a grazing enterprise.
 - Sherlock/Parrakie – visited two properties and shared experiences about the establishment of local native species, wood lots, fodder and perennial pastures, especially lucerne to address soil erosion and groundwater recharge issues.
- Prepared field day planning guidelines “Principles for organising a field day or event in the Murray Mallee – learnings from the Mallee Extravaganza tours”
- Organised “Fire Forum” workshop held at Murray Bridge with a focus on the use of fire to manage biodiversity, fire breaks etc.
- Began planning “Mallee Enterprise Tour” to be held in the Southern Mallee in October 2004.

School activities

- Attended tree planting day with Lameroo school students at a saline discharge site and provided information about the issue of groundwater recharge and using trees to help address the problem.
- Seed collection workshop at Karoonda, including presentation and collection of seed for use in 2004 revegetation project. Followed up with a direct seeding workshop.
- Participated in regional environmental education forum.

Development of an integrated extension program, ongoing (*Achieving objective 1*)

Linkages have been maintained and continue to be developed with groups and agencies working in the Murray Mallee:

- Murray Mallee Soil Conservation Board, Mallee Sustainable Farming, Mallee Water Resources Committee, Murray Mallee Strategic Task Force, Murray Mallee Community Education Network, River Murray Catchment Water Management Board, INRM group

for the SA Murray-Darling Basin, Animal and Plant Control Boards, Local Government and Land Management Groups.

- Technical support is provided by DWLBC through Rural Solutions SA for the planning and assessment of on-ground works projects and technical support has been provided by DEH for biodiversity focussed projects.
- Linkages strengthened with other Local Action Planning groups with the implementation of several projects in partnership with other groups ie *Building Community Capacity and Support for NRM in the SA Murray Darling Basin* and *Maintaining the Momentum*.

Support for groups and activities in the Murray Mallee (*Achieving objective 1*)

- Mallee Sustainable Farming Project (*achieving objective 3*)
 - Project updates included in the newsletter, *Mallee Update*.
 - Attended meetings of SA Management Committee.
 - Supported and attended Waikerie Field Day.
- Wanbi Land Management Group (*achieving objective 3*).
 - Combined field day organised.
- Mantung Maggea Land Management Group (*achieving objective 3*).
 - Combined field day organised and meetings attended.
- Lower Mallee Land Management Group (*achieving objective 3*).
 - Assisted to organise fox baiting activities.
 - Administered Envirofund application to protect remnant vegetation in partnership with DEH.
- Mallee Water Resources Committee (*achieving objectives 4, 5, 6*).
 - Information about activities included in newsletter, *Mallee Update*.
- Murray Mallee District Soil Conservation Board
 - Information about activities included in newsletter, *Mallee Update*.
- Input into threatened species recovery plan being prepared by DEH.
- Input into Karoonda East Murray District Council roadside vegetation survey project managed by DEH.
- Attended spore water workshop for control of bridal creeper at Karoonda.

Mallee Futures Program (Achieving objectives 1, 3, 5, 7)

The *Mallee Futures Program* is the key implementation program for the *Murray Mallee Local Action Plan* and *Murray Mallee Revegetation Plan*. The *Mallee Futures Program* currently has three sub projects:

1. *Maintaining the Momentum*

This project has maintained the momentum for change amongst landholders throughout the SA Murray Darling Basin, which has been achieved through involvement in Local Action Planning on-ground, works programs. It supports continued on ground action to address a range of integrated natural resource management issues in priority locations through the SA MDB to achieve priority outcomes of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and with a major focus on biodiversity as part of the solution. The project is being implemented by four local action planning groups and commenced in 2003, with the Murray Mallee component being administered through the well recognised banner of the *Mallee Futures Program*. It has built on work already undertaken in the region and capitalised on the investigations undertaken by the Mallee Sustainable Farming Project. It will develop the skills of landholders to evaluate and implement options to address a range of integrated natural resource management issues such as groundwater recharge, soil erosion, and biodiversity decline.

The project is in the final stages of completion with most on-ground works now assessed.

2. *Soil Boards Drought Grant*

The State Government provided the Soil Conservation Boards with funding to address soil degradation issues accelerated by the drought conditions in 2002. Project work commenced in 2003 and has continued in 2004.

3. *RMCWMB Corridor Project*

The River Murray Catchment Water Management Board has provided funding to a local action planning partnership to implement on-ground works in the priority area within 15 kilometres of the River Murray. The Murray Mallee LAP is managing several projects in the dryland component of the “corridor”.

Achievements 2003 - 2004

- Information about the *Mallee Futures Program* was distributed to about 1000 land owners in the Murray Mallee, advertisements and updates placed in local newspapers and the *Mallee Update*.
- Landholders successfully targeted for participation in the Soil Boards Drought project.
- Ongoing follow up of landholders to help plan projects and access technical support has continued, as well as numerous final inspections for completed projects.
- Technical support provided by State Government agencies, has been extremely useful in assisting landholders plan revegetation and rehabilitation projects, especially in the selection of suitable species, establishment techniques and assessment of remnant vegetation and eroded sand hill sites.
- The community have continued their commitment to on-ground works and table 1 summarises the project work completed to September 2004.
- Provided area of revegetation funded and revegetation activity information for Ministerial report.
- Participation in training for “NRM Tracker” database.
- Monitoring requirements continued to be reviewed in partnership with other Local Action Planning groups to develop a system suitable for future regional reporting processes.
- Monitoring of all completed projects has been undertaken, including photographs and GPS readings to enable a GIS coverage of project activity to be maintained.
- Lower Mallee Land Management Group members have continued fox baiting activities to reduce predation on Malleefowl using funding provided by a Threatened Species Network grant and the support of the Murray Bridge Animal and Plant Control Board.
- Planning commenced for a native grasses establishment trial on sandy soils, using active adaptive management guidelines.

Option	Pilot Project Biodiversity in the Mallee Implementation of the LAP 1999 to 2000		Mallee Futures Program *	Salinity Reduction Program *	Maintaining the Momentum Soil Board Drought RMCWMB Corridor Works funded to 30/9/04	TOTAL works funded to 30/9/04	3 year targets 2000 - 03
Protect and enhance remnants	402	1798	2,556	392	1315	6,463	12000 ha
Local native species blocks	113	97	62	363.5	79.5	715	1000
Windbreaks	40	36	67.5	24.5	14.5	182.5	600
Fodder shrubs	340	489	1,167	836	324	3,156	4400
Product block / woodlot		13	8	8	10.5	39.5	300
Perennial pasture - lucerne	425	1527	2,774	812	2675	10,441	4600
Perennial pasture – veldt/primrose		730	1,458	40			4900
Fodder shrub / pasture mix	107		n/a			107	6600
TOTAL	1427 ha	4,690 ha	8,092.5 ha	2,476 ha	4,418.5 ha	21,104 ha	30000 ha
Earthworks	57 ha	250 ha	215 ha	72 ha	187 ha	781 ha	
Fencing	99 km	117 km	266 km	111 km	108 km	701 km	

* Note due to a very dry season in 2002 these works took three years to complete instead of the planned two years with the majority of the on-ground works undertaken in 2003.

Development of market based investment for NRM along the River

Murray/Mallee dryland corridor (Achieving objective 5)

This project continues the investigation activities commenced through the Natural Heritage Trust funded *Salinity Reduction Program* and is being implemented in partnership with DWLBC. The project is funded by the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and aims to develop an investment strategy for the River Murray/Mallee dryland corridor which has community support, builds on existing biophysical information and will lead to sustainable River Murray salinity and dryland land management and biodiversity outcomes. The project provides project officer support for the coordination of on-ground works projects in the “corridor” funded through other projects. This project officer will also assist to engage the local community in developing a vision for the Mallee dryland corridor that balances social, economic and environmental needs. Other roles include providing input into the biophysical and investment modelling processes, and extending the information gained from these processes to other local action planning groups for use in future project development in the region.

Achievements 2003 - 2004

- An Implementation Coordinator was employed by the Murray Mallee LAP in March 2003 to support on-ground works projects and engage the local community. With the resignation of the Implementation Coordinator in August 2003 and the knowledge that high priority activities would be within five kilometres of the River Murray and generally outside of the Murray Mallee LAP implementation area it was decided not to continue direct involvement with the project.
- Background information was provided to the INRM Group for the SA Murray-Darling Basin which took on the role of coordinating community involvement in the project in partnership with local action planning groups.
- Criteria prepared by DWLBC were used for the assessment of on-ground works projects funded within 15 kilometres of the River Murray.

Murray Mallee Biodiversity Plan (Achieving objective 7, Action 7.2)

The objective of this project is to identify and document areas with threatened flora and fauna in the Murray Mallee. The identified priority areas will be targeted for protection to prevent further decline in biodiversity. An important component of this plan will be to address conservation concerns for a suite of threatened mallee birds. The conservation of these species requires the identification of populations within the Murray Mallee, and the subsequent identification of specific on-ground and research action required to conserve each population. The plan will ensure that future revegetation recovery projects are well targeted towards biodiversity outcomes, in addition to addressing other natural resource management issues. This information will be a key resource for future project development and implementation to address biodiversity conservation issues in the region.

Achievements 2003 – 2004

- Draft consultancy brief prepared for review.
- Ongoing discussions held with DEH in relation to support available to progress the mapping component of the project.

Murray Mallee Revegetation Guidelines (Achieving objectives 1, 3, 5 7)

This project is to provide Murray Mallee land managers the understanding and skills to contribute to biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management. This will be achieved thorough the development of guidelines, which describe revegetation options and implementation techniques to achieve sustainable and profitable farming systems based on land capabilities.

Achievements 2003 – 2004

- Consultant, Peter Bulman, Farm Tree Systems, appointed to prepare the guidelines.
- Guidelines finalised and include a detailed financial analysis of perennial vegetation options in the Murray Mallee.
- Guidelines currently being prepared for printing and targeted distribution.
- A brochure highlighting the key points of the guidelines is being prepared and will be distributed throughout the Murray Mallee and wider community

Future activities

Ensuring continued implementation of the *Murray Mallee Local Action Plan* continues to be a challenging process as the delivery of funding programs takes a more regional focus. Current projects will be completed during 2004 – 2005 and new projects are expected to commence with funding available through the *Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan for the SA Murray-Darling Basin* and associated Investment Strategy and the River Murray Catchment Water Management Board.

The delivery of funding and implementation of future projects will be influenced by the outcome of the current Natural Resource Management (NRM) reform process. With the appointment of a Regional NRM Board in 2005 and subsequent appointment of sub-regional groups the ongoing role of the Murray Mallee Local Action Planning Association will need to be determined. During 2004 – 2005 a key role of the Murray Mallee LAP will be to continue building the capacity of the local community to enable input into regional planning and implementation processes. Activities to enhance the skills and confidence of community members to ensure local priorities are considered during regional decision making processes will become increasingly important.

As stated previously, partnerships have been a key component of the implementation of the *Murray Mallee Local Action Plan* in the past. It is becoming increasingly apparent that enhancing these partnerships through the sharing of skills and resources will ensure priority outcomes for the region are achieved. Maintaining these partnerships and developing new partnerships within a new regional natural resource management structure will be crucial for the ongoing implementation of the Plan. These partnerships will ensure that the integrated approach to addressing natural resource management issues used by the Murray Mallee Local Action Planning Association will continue into the future.

Auditor's Report

The following pages outline the financial report prepared by the Association's auditor.

This report reflects the financial position of the Association and does not show the financial status of individual projects. Further information about the financial status of individual projects can be obtained by contacting the Association's Project Officer or Treasurer.