

Wetlands for Wildlife – Wetland Habitat Improvement Grants program

Guidelines

5 August 2022



An incentive program to assist landholders, land managers and community groups to improve wetland habitat for threatened and/or locally significant species

This program is supported by Murray Local Land Services through funding from the NSW Government

1. Program Description

The objective of this program is to assist land managers and community groups to improve wetland habitat for threatened and/or locally significant species.

This program will deliver targeted threat and pressure minimisation projects that arrest decline in natural resources by working in partnership with stakeholders to improve the condition of high value wetlands.

This will be done by providing incentives to landholders to undertake on ground works for wetland habitat improvement for threatened species, as well as species and sites considered a significant by the community. Many threatened and endangered species in the Murray region rely on the availability of healthy wetlands for food, habitat and breeding, including small bodied native fish, wetland plants and a range of water birds, e.g. the Southern Bell frog, the Australasian Bittern, and the Southern Pigmy Perch. Improving wetland habitat assists these species to survive and over time will improve their population trajectory.

Maximum incentive funding available is \$15,000 (ex GST) per project. Applicants are entitled to apply for one (1) project per business entity.

Incentives will be allocated through a competitive application process assessed against criteria outlined in this document. The application process and anticipated timeframes are detailed in the table below:

Project stage	Anticipated timing
Grant round opens	Monday 8 th August 2022
Deadline for requesting assistance with application	Friday 2 nd September 2022
Closing date for applications	Monday 12 th September 2022
Successful applicants will be notified by	Friday 7 th October 2022
Deadline for signing agreement	Monday 12 th December 2022
Project completion, including submission of final report	Friday 19 th May 2023

2. What can I apply for?

Eligible activities and expenses

The table below details the eligible activities and the level of funding that applies to them under this program. Total funding available is up to \$15,000 (ex GST) per project.

Eligible activities	Funding available
Fencing	Labour and materials for the construction of fences at a rate of \$10,000 per km.
Alternate watering point	Water troughs, water tanks, pipes, pumps, (including solar pumps and associated required infrastructure) and associated hardware such as valves, joiners etc up to a maximum of \$5,000 per project.
Revegetation	Plants (including trees, shrubs and grasses) and consumables associated with planting (including stakes and guards), and direct seeding (including seed and seeding costs) of species that are indigenous to the locality of the project site. 100% of the cost of materials and seeding costs, including planting costs where done by a contractor.
Re-snagging	Re-snagging works up to a maximum of \$5,000 per project.
Minor structures to improve water delivery to the site	Earthworks, materials and contractor costs associated with the construction of minor structures to improve water delivery for the purposes of improving wetland habitat. Up to a maximum of \$10,000/project.
Carp exclusion	Earthworks, materials and contractor costs associated with the installation of carp screens. Up to a maximum of \$5,000/project.
Pest control	Pest animal control as part of an ongoing program (the grantee will be required to undertake ongoing monitoring and pest animal control for a minimum of 2 years after the completion of the project and as required thereafter to maintain the site. Murray LLS may provide and cover the cost of fox baits.
Weed control	Chemicals and contractor costs associated with the control of weeds. 100% of the cost of chemicals, including spraying or mechanical removal costs where done by a contractor.
Other activities that improve habitat	Other activities or items that Murray Local Land Services deem integral to successful implementation of an individual project. Such examples may include sedimentation traps, erosion control structures etc. Up to a maximum of \$5,000/project

All funded projects must comply with Australian Standards (including installation) where required by regulation. Installations must comply with the manufacturer's instructions and use licensed tradespeople when required by legislation, council regulation or the manufacturer's instructions. This is the responsibility of the farm business. Murray Local Land Services is not liable in any way in relation to or in connection with the Eligible Project, other than as expressed in the Guidelines.

Ineligible activities and expenses

- Activities that may have a significant adverse impact on indigenous cultural heritage and which have not received approval through relevant state or territory legislative requirements
- Activities that involve planting of species (including native species) that are known to be, or could become, environmental or agricultural weeds in or near the project location
- Enlarging, deepening or construction of new water bodies.
- Projects, activities, or purchases already undertaken prior to written approval-in-principle of the grant application.

This list is not exhaustive and grant recipients will be notified prior to entering into an agreement which items are eligible to receive funding.

Budget

The budget (amount of funding being requested from Murray Local Land Services) will be used by the assessors to get an understanding of the proposed activities and to determine how cost effective the project is. While there is no requirement for applicants to include any in-kind contribution (such as your labour, time, materials, maintenance etc), such contributions will be highly rated as part of the assessment process.

Please seek assistance from Murray LLS if you require assistance with your budget.

3. Project and applicant eligibility

Applicants must:

- have no outstanding debts to Local Land Services, or have already entered into, and are complying with, a payment plan
- be willing to enter into a written agreement with Local Land Services and undertake certain works in accordance with set specifications and agreed timeframes
- be an Australian citizen,
- applicant (or auspicing organisation) must be registered for tax purposes in Australia and have an Australian bank account,
- be willing to declare any conflicts of interest when submitting an application. Persons who have associations that are considered by Local Land Services to represent a conflict of interest which cannot be managed will not be eligible
- have public liability insurance for a minimum of \$10 million to be considered for funding
- abide by and implement as required all Local, State, and Federal Government laws, regulations, and Acts as they are relevant to an individual project
- be able to complete all on-ground activities by the contract end date.

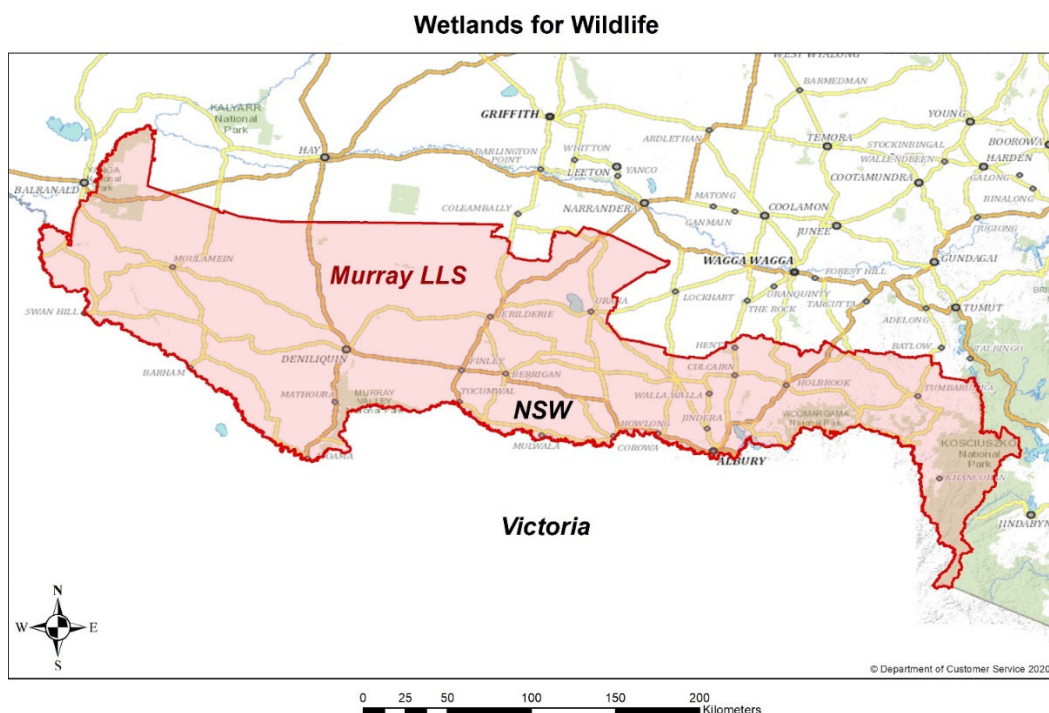
4. Conflict of interest

Local Land Services staff and board members are required to identify and declare conflicts of interest so that they can be managed in an open and transparent way. This policy extends to external parties or individuals who may be associated with Local Land Services staff or Local Land Services board members through immediate family relationships, close friendships or business relationships. Should a conflict be identified, a conflict of interest declaration form will be provided to the applicant to complete.

5. Conditions of funding

If your application is successful, the following conditions of funding will apply:

- you must formally commit to undertaking your project by entering into a Funding Agreement with Murray Local Land Services
- you must not commence your project until you have signed a contract with Local Land Services
- a maximum of \$15,000 (ex GST) per property will apply
- payment of up to 75% of the requested grant amount upon the execution of a compliant contract with Murray Local Land Services. The remainder of the grant funds will be provided upon successful completion of works and a final inspection conducted by a Local Land Services staff member of the contracted works
- if the works are deemed unsatisfactory, the final payment may be withheld, funds recovery action may be taken and restrictions on future funding may occur. Appropriate measures to remedy the issue will be discussed
- **all contracted works must be completed by 19th May 2023** within the Murray Local Land Services region (see map below). Note that an inspection will be carried out by Murray Local Land Services staff to verify the successful completion of the project



- you must agree to allow Murray Local Land Services to publish information about you and your project on our website, Facebook page and other communication channels and products as required by Murray Local Land Services
- if your project is funded you will be required to undertake basic monitoring of your project's environmental outcomes for 10 years, such as photo point monitoring. This monitoring information will assist Local Land Services to assess project and applicant successes and is necessary to justify future funding rounds
- if your project is funded you will be required to undertake ongoing maintenance of the site (monitoring and removing weeds and maintaining stock proof fences) for a minimum of 10 years

6. Project standards

To be eligible to participate in this program, certain minimum standards are to be applied to aspects of projects.

Fencing Standards

All fencing supported by this project will be constructed using new materials. The preferred materials and construction methodology is as follows:

- No barbed wire is to be used
- Minimum of 7 lines of high tensile plain wires or a combination of plain wires and 7/90/30 hinged joint
- Maximum line post spacing of 5 metres apart (8 metres in flat plains country)
- Site must contain at least one permanent gate for site access, minimum 12 feet wide
- End assemblies are to be appropriate to soil type
- Electrified wires may be used, but fence must be stock proof without the power on, in case of electrical failure.
- Variations to this standard may be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, in all circumstances, the fencing must be permanent, wildlife friendly and stock proof.
- Any clearing of native vegetation deemed necessary for the construction of the fence line must be to the minimum extent necessary and be undertaken in accordance with allowable activities under the Local Land Services Act 2013.
- Fencing under this project adjoining waterways, wetlands and drainage lines must be located a minimum of 20m out from the top of bank (or high-water mark for wetlands).

Stock Water Supply

Contributions to the establishment of reticulation water systems will be considered where fencing excludes livestock from a wetland which serves as a current permanent water source. Landholders can apply for support in providing alternative water access points to the immediate paddocks that are affected by the wetland exclusion.

Vegetation

The landholder will be responsible for preparation of the site for revegetation.

The landholder will source and plant seedlings and/or direct seed using native species suited to the location and landscape at each site.

Plants selected should be local native species, with different species selected for the various zones that are located within the planting site (e.g. wet and bogging areas, fringing zones and dry areas).

If using tree guards, biodegradable tree guards are preferable.

Landholders will be responsible for ensuring invasive pests and weeds are controlled within the project site.

Grazing Management

The landowner will exclude livestock grazing from each site for a minimum period of four (4) years after planting or seeding to allow for enhancement works and natural regeneration of native species to establish.

Should the landholder identify a significant risk to the site (such as increased fire risk, incursion of weedy species), grazing may be permitted after consulting a representative of Murray LLS.

7. Assessment and notification process

In general terms, applications will be assessed against the criteria detailed below.

An Evaluation Panel will be convened and will assess projects deemed to meet the eligibility criteria.

The Evaluation Panel will assess projects according to the Evaluation Criteria and rank them in order of highest to lowest.

Evaluation Criteria	Definition	Value
Extent to which project activities contribute to project objectives	Project activities must improve wetland habitat for threatened and/or locally significant species.	30%
Presence of threatened species	NSW-listed threatened species recorded at project site	20%
Long term outcomes	The likelihood the project will have outcomes that extend beyond the life of the project	20%
Value for money	High outputs for the level of investment through 1. Size of project site. Fencing larger sites are likely to be more cost effective than smaller sites. 2. Amount of in-kind contribution.	20%
Level of risk	The level of risk involved with delivering the project, for example in terms of likelihood of completing the project or external risks that may impact successful outcomes	10%

Successful applications will receive a site visit to confirm site and project details and produce an accurate map of the project site to be used in the Management Agreement.

Any applications that meet the assessment criteria but do not receive funding due to higher ranked applications exhausting the available funding, will be placed on a second round offer list. If further funding becomes available offers may then be made using the same principles/process as outlined in this plan.

Once a fully executed contract is received by Murray Local Land Services, up to 75% of the maximum grant application will be provided to the applicant to be spent on works and activities related to the project. A minimum of 25% of the total funding will be retained until the project is fully implemented to the satisfaction of Murray Local Land Services.

8. How your information is used

The information you provide to Murray Local Land Services in your application will be stored and used in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988.

By signing the funding agreement, you provide consent for Murray Local Land Services to use this information to communicate to the public about the program. This may include publishing communication articles on our website, Facebook page and other communication channels and products, as required.

9. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage assessment

It is the responsibility of the landholder to ensure due diligence takes place with respect to Aboriginal cultural heritage values. If the application is successful, a site assessment may be required, with the clear intent to protect cultural heritage. If deemed necessary, Local Land Services may request that a site inspection is a condition of the agreement.

10. Compliance with existing State and Commonwealth Legislation

Local Land Services only approves the amount of funding for your project. This does not authorise you to implement the project. You must ensure that your project has all necessary approvals, licenses, permits, consents, etc. and that your project complies with all relevant legislation.

11. How to submit your application

If you believe that your project fits the criteria, you can lodge an application form, found on our website. Alternatively, contact Murray Local Land Services to receive an email or hard copy application which will be mailed to interested landholders upon request.

Application forms will be assessed if they are received or post-marked by 5 pm on Monday 12th September 2022. You will receive an acknowledgement to confirm receipt of your application form. Email your application form to: wetlandsforwildlife@lls.nsw.gov.au

Alternatively, you can hand deliver your application to the Albury or Deniliquin offices.

Late applications may be received, however, will not be assessed against applications that have been received by the closure time. Should the project be under-subscribed after all on time applications have been assessed and eligible applications awarded, late applications may then be considered.

12. More information

Any queries or questions can be emailed to: wetlandsforwildlife@lls.nsw.gov.au

Alternatively, contact:

Josh Campbell, Land Services Officer Murray LLS Deniliquin. Mobile 0427 1048 974.