

Rivers, the veins of our Country

Nine case studies of First Nations involvement in managing water for the environment in the Murray-Darling Basin 2022-23

Learning by doing: On-Country environmental monitoring with First People of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation

Monitoring techniques in action

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The First People of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (FPMMAC) have taken an active role in monitoring vegetation, fish and waterbirds on-Country, thanks to a strong partnership with the Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and The Living Murray (TLM) program.

It's all part of ensuring First Nations people have opportunities to actively participate in environmental water management and spending time on-Country.

Training sessions first began in 2021, with follow up training completed in early 2023. This saw FPMMAC rangers pair up with ecologists from Ecology Australia to learn practical, hands-on skills and improve their knowledge of the monitoring techniques used for annual condition monitoring of The Living Murray Icon Sites. Vegetation, fish and waterbird monitoring in the Mallee reflects on the training that was undertaken.

Musk Duck Wetland on Ned's Corner

FPMMAC rangers were able to put into practice the new monitoring techniques they had learned when setting up permanent survey sites surrounding Musk Duck Wetland in 2023.



FPMMAC ranger undertaking tree monitoring at Musk Duck Wetland. Photo Credit: Mallee CMA



FPMMAC rangers learning Lignum condition monitoring techniques. Photo Credit: Mallee CMA

The sites were established for monitoring the condition of Black Box (*Eucalyptus largiflorens*), River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and Lignum (*Muehlenbeckia florulenta*).

Musk Duck Wetland was identified as a trial monitoring site through the Victorian Government's Water Is Life (WIL) environmental water initiative. The WIL program supports increased decision-making and resources for Traditional Owners in the management of water landscapes, as well as increasing Traditional Owner access to water.

Lake Wallawalla

During a field trip to Lake Wallawalla, rangers learnt the ecological methods for assessing fish condition. This involved the setting and pulling of fyke nets to capture fish and learning to process the catch (measuring length, weight, identifying species and tagging). The training also included a demonstration of backpack electrofishing.

Apex River Bend

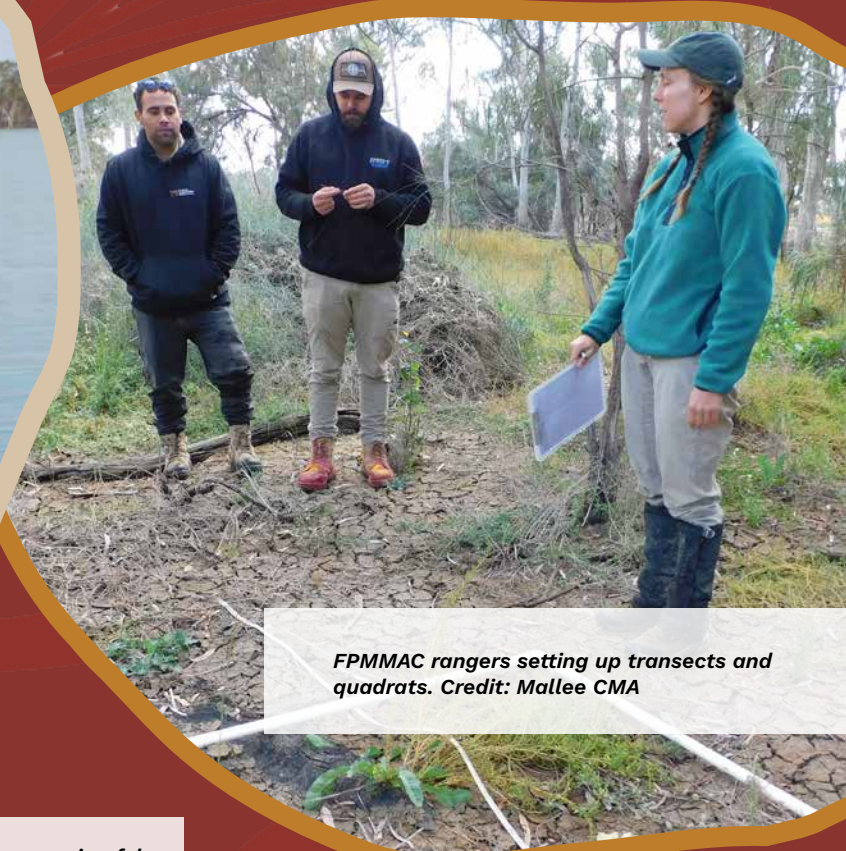
Investigating understorey wetlands and floodplain vegetation was the focus of training for rangers at Apex River Bend. Participants learned how to set up transects and quadrats to undertake comparative sampling.

A large focus was also on the identification of key species. Currently, the floodplain is covered in vegetation, with a number of these species listed as significant in Victoria. It is hoped that the skills learnt by FPMAC rangers can be used to monitor sites important to them and enable them to collect data which will support future aspirations at their sites.

The FPMAC rangers were overwhelmingly positive in their feedback about the training sessions and had a high level of interest in environmental monitoring being undertaken in the area. Many of the FPMAC staff also enjoyed seeing practical linkages between on-ground monitoring and their studies in conservation and land management.



*FPMAC ranger using fyke nets to capture fish.
Photo Credit: Mallee CMA*



FPMAC rangers setting up transects and quadrats. Credit: Mallee CMA