

WINTER WORKS ON TRACK FOR SUCCESSFUL DELIVERY



Major channel upgrades across the Mildura and Red Cliffs irrigation districts are progressing on schedule, as part of the Sunraysia Water Efficiency Project (SWEP) Winter Works 2023 package.

As of the end of June, approximately 1.2km of channels have been lined, with a total of 4.2km to be completed this winter. This includes:

- 3.2 km of channel lined in the Red Cliffs district, along Cocklin Avenue and the Calder Highway.
- 1.0 km of channel lined in the Mildura district, along Dewry Avenue and Fourteenth Street.

While wet weather during June and early July resulted in minor extensions to shutdown periods to allow for works to take place, our team has been working closely with contractors and customers to ensure the project remains on schedule and the impacts of having the channels drained are minimised. These channel lining works will lead to a more efficient water delivery system and renewed assets, at no cost to growers.

Throughout the project, our team has had a big focus on incorporating local knowledge into the SWEP. Among the ways we've achieved this is working closely with the local chapter of Ozfish to successfully save hundreds of native fish from channels prior to construction (see below) and employing local contractors such as Mallee Engineering Services (see page 2). Thanks to these organisations – and the many others involved – for being part of the SWEP. There's no substitute for good, local knowledge and expertise!

As we work toward the end of the Winter Works 2023 package, our team will shift our focus to Small Meter Outlets (SMO's, also known as 'Dethridge wheels') across the Merbein and Red Cliffs districts, as well as Stock and Domestic (D&S) flowmeter replacements.

We'll continue to work closely with customers to arrange these works, but if you have any queries, phone 1800 808 830 and ask to speak to the SWEP team.

Daniel Freitag
PROJECT DIRECTOR



NATIVE FISH RESCUE

Three freshwater catfish were among the native fish rescued from irrigation channels in Red Cliffs and Mildura as part of the SWEP channel lining works.

The catfish were safely rescued by OzFish Sunraysia members and have been relocated to King's Billabong, along with almost 1,300 freshwater mussels, 411 small native fish, 890 yabbies and a broad shell turtle.

More than 16,000 carp were removed from the channel network and disposed of.

PROJECT UPDATE CONT.

JULY 2023



YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

How is a channel prepared for lining?

A lot of work goes in to preparing each channel for work to be undertaken. This includes:

- Preparing the site to be safe for construction (e.g. cordoning the site off, ensuring appropriate signage is in place, slowing local traffic, etc.);
- Rescuing and relocating native fish from the channel as it drains;
- Removing vegetation and widening the channel banks to provide for future access and maintenance of the channel;
- Cleaning of existing concrete channel;
- Removing sections of the existing concrete which are in very poor condition and pouring new concrete to renew the asset;
- Repairing damaged sections of the concrete liner.

Once the liner is installed, fences are being erected on either side of the channel to improve public safety.

LOCAL JOBS A BIG PART OF SWEP

Mallee Engineering Services (MES) has led the SWEP lining works in Red Cliffs this winter, with the crew of nine locals undertaking works alongside a team of sub-contractors.

Working with MES is:

- Mildura Concrete Cutting
- MCM Fencing
- Waters Excavation.

For Mallee Engineering Services Owner and Director Luke Droffelaar, the SWEP has been a good project to work on and an opportunity for his team to further develop channel lining skills first honed on the SMP2 project.

“We’ve certainly had our challenges with wet weather and tight timelines, but our team has worked hard and we’re proud of the results,” he said.

When the Winter Works 2023 package finishes in August, Mallee Engineering Services will have completed three of the four kilometres of lining works undertaken during winter.

“Mallee Engineering – along with its team of sub-contractors – have been excellent to work with. It’s great to see the project providing work for and being successfully delivered by locals,” Project Director Daniel Freitag said.



What is being used to line the irrigation channels?

The liner is black, but it’s not simply black plastic! Under the SWEP, channels are being lined with heavy duty reinforced polyethylene that incorporates a special weave pattern laminated with a nonwoven needle punched geotextile, to maximise material durability and strength. The liner will last approximately 15-20 years and is the same as the liner successfully used in the recent Sunraysia Modernisation Project (SMP2).

Prior to installing the liner, the existing concrete lining of the channel is cleaned and repaired to prevent the concrete tearing the liner. The liner is then placed over the concrete and secured to the channel by burying the ends in adjacent trenches.