

Frenchmans Creek fish passage

The construction of a fish passage between Frenchmans Creek and Lake Victoria is one of three main components of the sustainable diversion limits offsets project in the Lower Murray NSW. The package of works aims to restore and enhance river habitat in the Lower Murray region of New South Wales (NSW).

Lake Victoria is an important nursery habitat for native fish to feed and grow before they return to the Murray River channel via Frenchmans Creek. Currently, the Frenchmans Creek inlet regulator impedes fish passage back into the Murray River where these fish are then vulnerable to predation.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment proposes constructing a fishway at Frenchmans Creek to facilitate the passage of fish at the inlet regulator between Lake Victoria and the Murray River. This initiative will restore connectivity between breeding sites, feeding grounds and migratory routes for native fish including Murray Cod and Golden Perch. It will also generate benefits at a regional scale.

In developing concept designs for the construction of the Frenchmans Creek fish passage, we will consult with Traditional Owners of the Barkindji Nation. We will also support the engagement of local Indigenous groups in land and water management to meet cultural heritage objectives. This engagement is important to protect cultural values and ensure the planned works align with the Native Title claimant's management plan for the project area.

We will need to complete more work to validate the detail of the approach during the planning and design phase, given the characteristics of the site, which has a highly variable head to tail water difference.

Lake Victoria and its associated assets, including Frenchmans Creek, are the responsibility of the Murray–Darling Basin Authority. They are operated by SA Water. These partners have a proven track-record of effective project development and implementation. The operation of new assets within Frenchman's Creek is the responsibility of SA Water.

Project location

The project exists within the semi-arid zone of NSW. The climate is hot and dry, with high evaporation rates throughout the year. The Murray River therefore represents an important source of water for the floodplain ecosystem.

Frenchmans Creek is the main flow path from the Murray River to Lake Victoria. The lake is one of the major storages on the Murray River and is used to ensure minimum passing flows to South Australia during the height of summer when there are constraints on supply from the Murray River itself.

This project involves drafting a feasibility concept design and costing for the provision of an appropriate, fit-for-purpose fish passage that will restore fish passage between Lake Victoria and the Murray River. The project also seeks to confirm the benefits of this connectivity for regional fish populations.

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