Murray Darling Basin Plan

For RRTI Working Group
Susan Smolnik
January 11, 2013
Australia and MD Basin

http://www.mda.asn.au/
MD Basin Quick Facts

• **Quick Facts**
• Catchment area for the Murray and Darling rivers and their tributaries
• Total of 23 river valleys
• Basin area over 1 million square kilometres
• 14% of total area of Australia
• Annual average rainfall 530,618 gigalitres
• 94% of rainfall evaporates; 2% drains into the ground; 4% ends up as runoff
• Basin generates 39% of the national income derived from agricultural production
• Produces 53% of Australian cereals grown for grain, 95% of oranges, and 54% of apples
• Supports 28% of the nation’s cattle herd, 45% of sheep, and 62% of pigs.

Mouth of the Murray
Birdlife at the Coorong

http://topbirdsandeveryfing.typepad.com
Birdlife at Lake Alexandrina

http://topbirdsandeveryfing.typepad.com
Drought

Decade of Drought

Drought

CSIRO: South East Australia becoming drier, global warming implicated
Lake Alexandrina Water Levels

Salinity

Drought Effects

10% Reduction in Number of Farmers

http://www.knowledge.allianz.com/
Drought Effects

500 miles of Toxic Blue Green Algae Bloom

Drought Effects
Adelaide Extreme Water Shortage

Drought Effects
Acid Sulfate Soils

Copyright Murray Wetlands Working Group.
Exposed Acid Sulfate Soils
Dead Red Gum Floodplain

Copyright Murray Wetlands Working Group.
Dead Fish and Mussels
Dead Long-necked Tortoise
Cleaning Tortoises

http://www.ramsar.org
Sulfate Soils Vegetation
Water Act 2007

• National approach to water management
• Established the Murray Darling Basin Authority
• Authorized creation of Murray Darling Basin Plan
Murray-Darling Basin Plan

The plan:
- Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDL)
- Environmental objectives
  - water quality
  - salinity objectives
- Improved water security
Guide to the MD Basin Plan

• Released in October 2010
• Called for reductions in water allotments
• Buy back allotments from willing sellers
• Goal to acquire 3,000-4,000 GL for the environment

MDBA visited rural towns to present the proposed plan at consultation meetings...
Opposition Rural Australia

The sign reads:

WAR ON THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN AUTHORITY AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS FOR WANTING TO CRIPPLE THE FOOD BOWL OF AUSTRALIA.
Opposition Griffith
Opposition Griffith
Opposition Deniliquin
Opposition Echuca
The National Farmers Federation says its careful analysis has found that the Guide to the Murray Darling Basin plan is fatally flawed and should be thrown out.

NFF president Jock Laurie says the Guide in its current form cannot be revived, and there's no prospect of it being a workable basis for the eventual Basin plan.
Opposition
Support

There was also been support for the draft plan by various groups, including the Australian Conservation Foundation and Environment Victoria.
Improving MD Basin Plan

- More modeling
- Incorporated rural concerns (social considerations)
- Incorporated upper basin states’ concerns
- Issued revised plan in Nov 2011
- Environmental water down to 2750 GL
Soliciting Opinions

Does the Murray Darling Basin Plan strike the right balance?

Have your say now in the form below.
Soliciting Opinions
Counter-Opposition Ecologists

Healthy River = HEALTHY COMMUNITY
MORE WATER FOR THE RIVER

adelaidenow.com.au
Counter-Opposition Ecologists

Counter-Opposition South Australia

NO FUTURE ON
A DEAD RIVER
SA NEEDS A HEALTHY MURRAY
Counter-Opposition South Australia

SIGN NOW

SAVE THE RIVER

I ❤️ MURRAY
Counter-Opposition South Australia

• To:
  Prime Minister Julia Gillard
  Christopher Pyne MP, Sturt MP
  Federal Government, Environment Minister Tony Burke
  Senator Penny Wong, Senator for South Australia

• I just signed the following submission addressed to: Australian Federal Government and South Australian MPs

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Change the draft Murray-Darling Basin plan so there is more water to keep the river alive

The Murray is the lifeblood of south-eastern Australia. It is vital for our economic prosperity and our environment. Water extraction from the Murray has increased by 500 per cent...

• Read More
Counter-Opposition South Australia

• South Australia models too
• Uses science to make case that more environmental water is needed
• Eventually agreement is reached
• 450 GL additional environmental water
• 2750 GL of environmental water by 2019
• 3200 GL of environmental water by 2024
Finally a Plan To Become Law

WE MUST BE ON THE RIGHT TRACK... EVERYONE IS EQUALLY UNHAPPY
How did it finally come together?

• Listened to rural communities
• Emphasis on efficiencies instead of buy backs
• Science! Science! Science!
• South Australia studies built support for extra environmental water
How did it finally come together

Money!

$$$
How did it finally come together?

• More than $10 billion in Fed spending
  – $3.1 billion in buy-backs
  – $6.6 billion infrastructure and on-farm improvements

Rather than take money out of rural communities money is going into them
How did it finally come together

“I think the oppositional approach — farmers versus environmentalists, state versus state, urban versus rural — masks the reality that we are all in this together and without a healthy river, we will not have healthy communities and economies. “

*Green Left Weekly’s Gemma Weedall*
How did it finally come together?

“People mistrust what they don’t understand.
People resist what is forced upon them.
People support what they co-create”

Larry Hicks

From Dec 14, 2012 RRTI Working Group Meeting
THANK-YOU