

Environmental Flow benefits moving along the River at Jeparit



Jeparit Waterwatch volunteers at their monthly Wimmera River monitoring on their 23rd birthday, from left: Jeanie Clark, Martin Stone, David Livingston and Frank Pitt. Campbell Livingston, absent from this photo. Photo H.

Monitoring the Wimmera River water at their 23rd birthday meeting, Jeparit Waterwatch Group (JWW) was delighted to see evidence that the Autumn environmental flow was moving through Jeparit and bringing its benefits to River water quality.

Salinity, or the salt level in the water, is a key concern of JWW. The long-term graph below shows the ups and downs of the River's salinity since the flood of 2011 from Antwerp to Lake Hindmarsh. At Jeparit, each late summer- autumn, it has reached over 5000EC's, a high level of salinity.

In May, the effects of the environmental flow had reached as far as the town boat ramp. There, it had dropped the salinity over 1000 EC's from levels in April. However it had not reached as far as the Old Bridge, nor the Weir, where salinities continued to rise to about 5000EC's. A second effect was seen in the pH levels, which also dropped to neutral from previous alkaline levels, but were still alkaline where the flow had not yet reached.

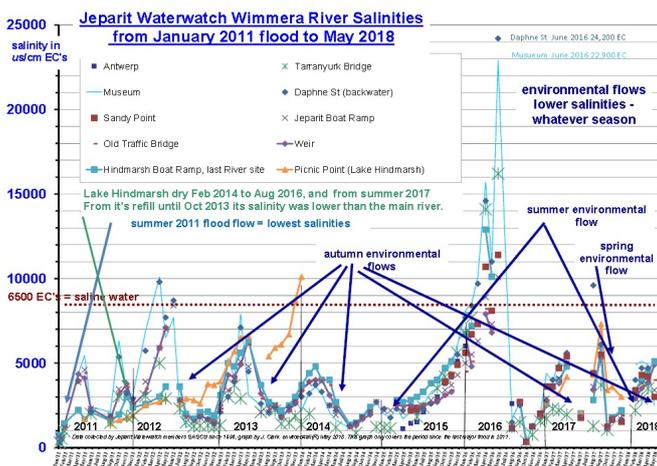
The Lake has been dry since summer. "As it was about half full last Spring, it dried surprisingly quickly. There is now lots of native Club Rush reed growing on the bed of the Lake," commented Frank Pitt

JWW's monthly tests also cover turbidity (the murkiness of water), water temperature, and comments about birds, fish and plants. "Right now, it is a great concern to see the amount of Prickly Pear between Tarranyurk and our Museum site," said Martin Stone. "During the last year, we've reported this to Parks Victoria and Ash Tree infestations at our Daphne St site, near the stormwater drain entrance. We were very pleased to see the Ash Trees dealt with quickly by them."

In May, JWW completed 23 years of continuous monthly monitoring of nine regular sites along the River from Tarranyurk to Lake Hindmarsh. Aged from their 30's to 80's, the JWW volunteers meet monthly on the second Wednesday morning at the Jeparit Museum, on the verandah or inside.

"Visitors are welcome to join us anytime," said David Livingston, "but Jeparit Waterwatch Group is especially seeking new members, of any age, to join us and share in this way of caring for our River."

ENDS



Annotated graph showing salinity changes for the JWW monitoring sites along the Wimmera River from Antwerp, Tarranyurk, Jeparit (7) and the Lake, since the flood of Jan 2011. Graph J. Clark.



JWW members Frank Pitt and Martin Stone discussing the latest River water quality readings. Photo J. Clark