

Free!

Sustainable Recreation Guide

How to have fun
with minimal impact
on the River Murray



Sustainable Recreation

How to have fun with minimal impact
on the River Murray

River Murray and Lower Lakes, South Australia

Second edition

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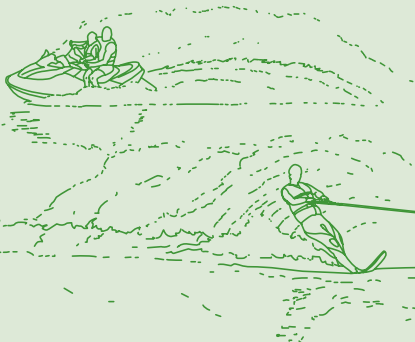
Alexandrina Council; Berri–Barmera Council; Coorong District Council, Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation; District Council of Loxton–Waikerie; Environment Protection Authority; Local Action Planning committees; Mid-Murray Council; Murray and Mallee Local Government Association; Murray Darling Association Inc.; National Parks and Wildlife Service SA; Natural Heritage Trust; Office for Recreation & Sport; Planning SA; Renmark–Paringa Council; Rural City of Murray Bridge; SA Tourism Commission; SA Water.

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It's our River—please look after it!



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The River Murray and Lower Lakes of South Australia—with their spectacular natural beauty and high ecological values—are popular holiday destinations for thousands of people each year. Visitors to the region enjoy a great range of recreational activities.

The impacts from these activities include soil erosion, damage to vegetation, water pollution and disturbance of fauna habitats. These impacts are becoming increasingly obvious and threaten the very asset that attracts visitors to the area.

Caring for the River Murray and the Lower Lakes, while enjoying the many recreational opportunities available, will ensure that present and future generations can enjoy these wonderful places for many years.

Basic sustainable recreation principles:

- › always seek permission before entering private property
- › be bushfire aware and observe restrictions
- › if you bring it in, take it out—never bury or burn your rubbish
- › keep noise to a minimum so as not to disturb other river users or wildlife
- › keep pollutants out of the River
- › be responsible with alcohol, especially if you are driving, riding or piloting a vehicle or vessel.

The drought

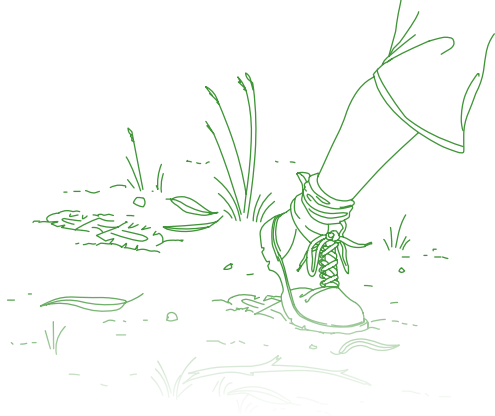
This decade's drought has seen a reduction in the amount of water in the River. In this situation, some of our impacts from recreation—especially litter and pollution—will be more concentrated and pronounced. So, when on the River, always operate your vessel at a safe speed and keep a lookout for potential hazards.

Other risks include:

- potential safety issues associated with lowered river levels including accelerated riverbank erosion, unstable banks, the potential for tree collapse on riverbanks, and exposure of snags and other hazards in the river
- increased impacts on wetlands that have dried out, with increased degradation, soil compaction and erosion due to trailbikes, four-wheel drives and other vehicles
- the potential for acid-sulfate soils in susceptible areas, leading to fish kills, other environmental pollution and human health problems
- the potential for bad odours due to the increased incidence of blue-green algae, sulfur, rotting vegetation and fish etc.
- increased opportunities for foxes and other predators.

Through **Murray Watch**, river users can report environmental damage, pollution, or dangerous or antisocial behaviour. Reports are recorded and then passed on to the relevant government authority for action. Any information remains confidential and will not be used without permission.

Tel: (08) 8531 0710 (24 hours)



To minimise your impact on the environment as a bushwalker, please follow the tips provided in the *Bushwalkers' Code: Minimal Impact Bushwalking* (see Resources for details). In this way you can not only enjoy the natural surroundings without causing environmental degradation, but also help to ensure that the environment remains in good condition for you and others to enjoy in the future.

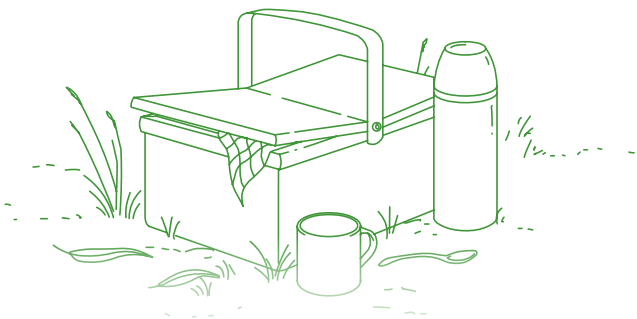
You can help by doing the following:

- keeping on tracks and not cutting corners or creating new tracks
- avoiding sensitive vegetation
- using toilets where provided.

In areas without toilets, bury all faecal waste in a hole that is at least 15 centimetres (six inches) deep. This hole needs to be at least 100 metres away from campsites and watercourses. Mix faecal waste with the soil to help decomposition and discourage animals.

Other than that, if you've carried something into the bush, carry it out. Don't burn or bury rubbish, and if you find other people's rubbish, please take this with you as well.

Take only photographs and leave only footprints.



To protect the delicate River Murray environment, we need to 'tread lightly' and minimise our impacts on the natural environment.

When picnicking:

- Take your rubbish with you. Food scraps can be harmful to native animals and some wastes do not decompose quickly.
- Don't burn or bury rubbish. Burying food waste disturbs the soil and native or feral animals may dig it up later.
- If you have the misfortune to come across other people's rubbish, do the environment a favour, and take the rubbish with you.
- Leave picnic areas tidy. Try to go at off-peak times. This minimises your impacts and your picnic will be more enjoyable.

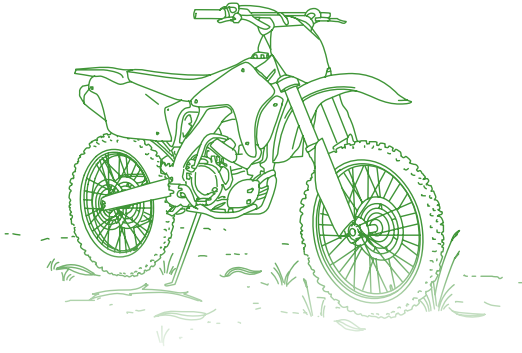


Camp in designated areas or existing campsites where possible, in natural clearings, or on sandy or hard surfaces at least 20 metres from the edge of watercourses. Do not camp directly under trees, as falling branches may cause injury or death.

Be aware of other users of the River and avoid disturbing them. Avoid disturbing native vegetation through trampling, and aim to leave the area as if no one had been there. Take all litter away from the campsite and dispose of it correctly. Refer to the tips under 'Picnicking'.

In relation to campfires:

- only have a campfire if it is necessary
- do not cut trees for firewood or gather fallen timber, as this is part of valuable habitat for insects, animals and plants, and an important part of ecosystem processes
- use existing fireplaces or fire rings
- use the firewood provided, bring your own, or purchase it from sustainable sources
- whatever firewood you don't use, leave for someone else
- keep campfires small and in a pit to reduce the risk of flying sparks and to make it easier to bury when you leave
- extinguish all fires thoroughly after use
- observe fires bans—check with the CFS Bushfire Hotline on 1300 362 361 or the Bureau of Meteorology on 1900 955 365.



Normal road rules apply on bush tracks. Riders must be licensed and bikes must be registered and roadworthy.

When riding, keep to roads and tracks. This will avoid widening them and prevent soil erosion and damage to vegetation, which can destroy habitats for both animal and bird life.

Keep noise to a minimum to avoid disturbing wildlife, and especially near dwellings and recreational areas.

Avoid vehicle travel when tracks are wet. Trailbikes must never be used on walking tracks or on dry wetlands and other sensitive areas.

Keep in mind that property owners need to be consulted prior to using their property. Please leave gates as you find them and avoid disturbing stock. Take your rubbish out with you.



The Australian Trail Horse Riders Association have developed *13 Golden Rules* to encourage riders to minimise the impact of horses on the environment (see Resources).

Suggestions include:

- taking care of waterways by using firm, stony crossings and bridges
- camping horses at least 30 metres clear of watercourses
- removing manure from campsites
- allowing your horse to eat only weed-free feed for the 24 hours prior to entering a bush area.

Check with the relevant authority or landholder as to whether horse riding is permitted in the area before setting out. Plan your trip, take a map with you, and notify a responsible person of your trip intentions.



You will reduce environmental damage and have a more enjoyable trip if you go mountain biking in a small group. To prevent the spread of weeds and root-rot fungus, keep your bike clean. To reduce erosion and damage, ride on established tracks and try to keep to the middle of the track.

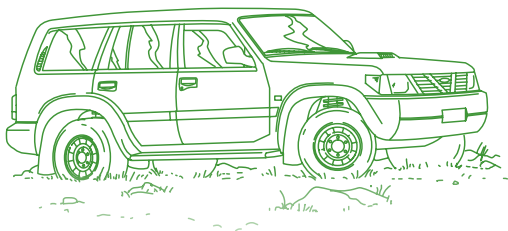
When crossing creeks, do so slowly, and at a 90-degree angle to the water flow.

A commitment to minimal impact mountain biking will mean that you:

- > protect the environment
- > improve the experience of others
- > take care of yourself while riding.

Plan your ride, take a map with you, and notify a responsible person of your trip intentions.

Keep in mind that property owners need to be consulted prior to using their property. Please leave gates as you find them and avoid disturbing stock. Take your rubbish out with you.



The South Australian Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs has devised a Code of Ethics for its members.

Some of the main points are:

- Observe the laws and regulations regarding recreation vehicles.
- Avoid noisy driving or riding near settlements and general recreation areas.
- Keep to approved vehicle corridors and tracks. On beaches and non-vegetated sand areas, drive only where permitted. Avoid wetlands and vegetated dunes.
- Respect our wildlife. Stop and look, but never disturb or chase animals.
- Keep the environment clean. Carry your own rubbish home, and that of other people if necessary.
- Observe all fire restrictions and extinguish your fire before leaving. Maintain your vehicle to ensure your exhaust does not emit sparks.
- Take adequate water, food, fuel and spares on trips. In remote areas, travel with another vehicle.

If camping, please minimise your impact and refer to the tips under 'Camping' and 'Picnicking' in this guidebook.

Some areas within National Parks are closed seasonally, such as the Coorong during Hooded Plover breeding season. Check with National Parks and Wildlife SA or consult *The Tattler* (see Resources).



The River Murray and all its lagoons, creeks and anabranches are defined as 'waters of the State' and recreational fishing within these waters is controlled by the *Fisheries Act 1982* and its Regulations. Compliance will ensure plenty of fish for current and future generations. Please also refer to PIRSA's *Recreational Fishing Guide*.

Fishing licences are not required for fishing in the River Murray in South Australia. However, the following freshwater species are protected in South Australia and, if caught, must be returned to the water immediately: River Murray Catfish, Murray Cod (closed season from 1 September to 31 December inclusive), River Murray Freshwater Crayfish, River Blackfish, Silver Perch, Trout Cod, yabbies with eggs attached, fish of the genus *Amblyseius*, *Mogurnda* and *Nannoperca*.

To minimise your impact on the environment:

- observe size, bag and boat limits
- use biodegradable fish hooks
- take all rubbish, including discarded bait bags, fishing line, hooks and nets to avoid entanglement by wildlife or other river users
- practise 'catch and release' fishing for native species, but never return introduced fish such as European Carp to watercourses (it's illegal).

If fishing from a boat, take care where you anchor to reduce damage to logs, tree roots and other fish habitats.



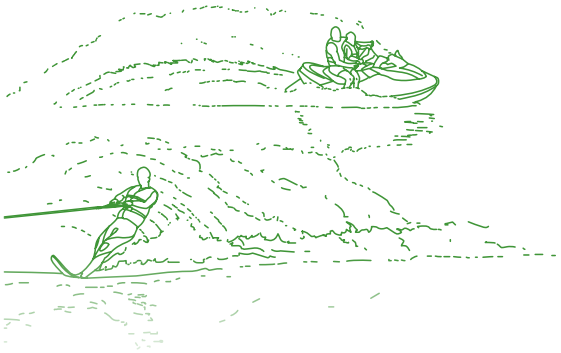
Canoe South Australia has developed an Environmental Code which lists some ways of minimising your impact on the environment.

Practical measures you can take include:

- taking your rubbish with you
- securing your belongings so they do not fall into the water
- wearing a personal flotation device (such as a lifejacket).

Carry appropriate repair equipment, a torch, maps, compass and survival kit on wilderness trips. If camping, please refer to the tips under 'Camping' and 'Picnicking' in this guidebook.

Plan your trip well and ensure you notify a responsible person of your trip intentions.



Jet skis are regulated as vessels under the *Harbors and Navigation Act 1993*. Waterskiing is also regulated under this Act. All drivers must be licensed.

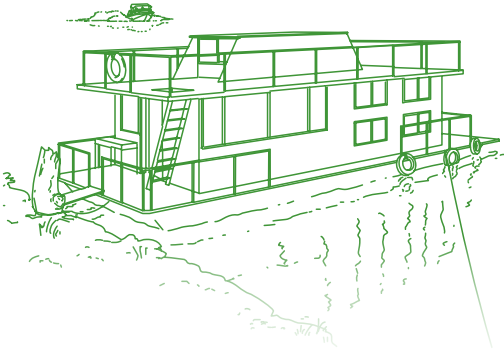
All skiers and ski-boat operators need to take safety precautions. To avoid injury, don't ski where riverbanks are steep or where there are snags. Care should also be taken when skiing near sandbars and other floating or semi-submerged obstacles. Look out for swimmers.

To minimise your impact:

- keep boat-wash to a minimum to avoid capsizing smaller vessels and reduce damage to riverbanks
- be mindful of the impact of excessive noise on wildlife and other users of the waterways
- wear a personal flotation device.

Keep a safe distance from other river users (at least 30 metres) and please be aware of the ecological character of the areas you use. In particular, the Coorong and Lower Lakes are Ramsar-listed wetlands of high ecological value, and provide valuable habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. Avoid reed areas, where these birds nest and feed.

Jet skis have been banned from some parts of the Coorong National Park. Check with the National Parks and Wildlife Service for details (see Resources).



On the water, care should be taken to avoid snags, which provide valuable habitat and breeding areas for fish and other aquatic organisms. Keep boat-wash to a minimum to avoid damage to riverbanks and reeds, and to lessen the impact on nesting birds.

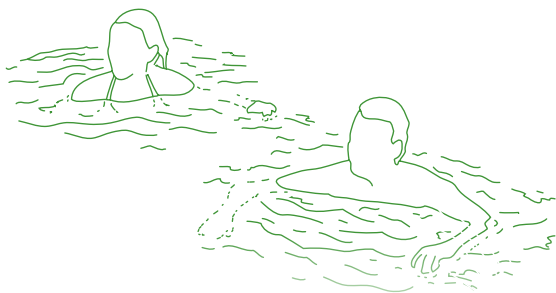
When mooring boats, please:

- observe notifications and restrictions on mooring
- use existing mooring posts (not trees) to ensure riverbanks and vegetation are not damaged by ropes (or the vessel)
- moor at a safe depth to allow for changes in water level due to wind or other factors.
- don't moor too close to intakes for other people's water supply (as greywater can pollute this resource)

Other things you can do to protect the environment include:

- using environmentally friendly products (e.g. phosphate-free detergents and soaps)
- taking care when re-fuelling to avoid spills and report any spills immediately to MurrayWatch (see Resources)
- keeping noise to a minimum to avoid disturbing other people and wildlife.

Also, refer to the tips under 'Camping', 'Picnicking', and 'Swimming' in this guidebook.



Before swimming, check for snags and the depth of the water. The River's depth can be affected by the slope of the riverbank, holes in the river bed and occasional flood events.

Sandbars in the River can move with changes in water levels. Swim upstream, away from the sweeping bends of sandbars, where currents are created. Be aware also of boats, snakes and snags.

Help protect the environment by choosing your entry and exit points to the water so that riverbanks are not damaged.

To keep safe when swimming in the River:

- never steep-dive into the River or lakes—you never know what may be only a metre or so underwater
- always swim with someone else
- wear a personal flotation device (such as a life jacket) if you are not a strong swimmer.

If you're taking food with you, please refer to the tips under 'Picnicking' in this guidebook.

Many places along the River Murray and within the Lower Lakes area are culturally significant, both for Aboriginal people and the wider community. These places include burial sites and canoe trees, early settlements, homestead ruins, and Aboriginal art and Dreaming sites. These places may also have special spiritual significance.

South Australia has some of the best remaining canoe trees in Australia. Each requires protection to preserve Indigenous cultural heritage and for the enjoyment and understanding of future generations. Please never cut them for firewood.

Treat all cultural heritage places with consideration and respect and obtain permission from the traditional landowners or the relevant land manager to visit sensitive areas. Please do not touch Aboriginal paintings or rock engravings.

If you discover any damage to a cultural heritage site, please report it to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation (see Resources).

Resources

Australian Canoeing

Tel: (02) 8116 9727 <www.canoe.org.au>

Australian Canoeing Safety Guidelines

Australian Trail Horse Riders Association

<www.athra.com.au>

Bureau of Meteorology

Tel: 1900 955 365 <www.bom.gov.au>

Canoe South Australia Inc.

Tel: (08) 8240 3294 <www.canoesa.asn.au>

CFS Bushfire Hotline

Tel: 1300 362 361 <www.cfs.org.au>

Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW

<www.bushwalking.org.au>

Bushwalkers' Code: Minimal Impact Bushwalking

Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation

Tel: (08) 8226 8900

Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation

Tel: (08) 8463 6800 <www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au>

Houseboat Hirer's Association Inc.

<www.hha.asn.au>

Code of Conduct for Houseboat Users

Local Action Planning Committees

Tel: (08) 8582 4477

<www.rivermurray.sa.gov.au/work/lapgrouops.html>

Local Government Association

<www.lga.sa.gov.au>

MurrayCare

(River Murray Urban Users Committee Inc.)

Tel: (08) 8204 9100 <www.murrayusers.sa.gov.au>

Important numbers

Emergency—Police, Fire, Ambulance

Tel: 000

Fishwatch

For fish identification and reporting
illegal fishing

Tel: 1800 065 522 (24 hours)

Marine Safety Officers

Berri, Tel: (08) 8582 1946

Murray Bridge, Tel: (08) 8532 8161

Goolwa, Tel: (08) 8555 0144

Murray Watch

To report environmental damage, pollution,
or dangerous or antisocial behaviour

Tel: (08) 8531 0710 (24 hours)

Environment Protection Authority (SA)

Tel: (08) 8204 2000 or 1800 623 445

(for country callers) <www.epa.sa.gov.au>

Murray Darling Association Inc.

Tel: (08) 8226 4402 <www.mda.asn.au>

National Parks and Wildlife SA (DEH)

Tel: (08) 8595 2111 (Murraylands region)

<www.parks.sa.gov.au/parks/index.htm>

Natural Heritage Trust

Tel: 1800 065 823 <www.nht.gov.au>

Office for Recreation and Sport

Tel: (08) 8416 6677

<www.recsport.sa.gov.au/index.php>

Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania

Minimal impact mountain biking means respect
<www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreation/bikes/mt_bike.pdf>

Planning SA

Tel: (08) 8303 0600 <www.planning.sa.gov.au>

Primary Industries and Resources, South Australia

Tel: (08) 8347 6100

<www.pir.sa.gov.au/fishing>

Recreational Fishing Guide

River Murray Act 2004, Fisheries Act 1982

River Murray Boat Owners Association of South Australia Inc.

<www.rmboa.org.au>

Save the Murray

<www.savethemurray.com>

South Australian Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs Inc.

Tel: (08) 8359 0627 <www.saafwdc.asn.au>

South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board

Tel: (08) 8532 1432 <www.samdbnrm.sa.gov.au>

South Australian Tourism Commission

Tel: 1300 655 276 <www.southaustralia.com>

***The Tattler* magazine**

Available by download from

<www.parks.sa.gov.au>

Transport SA

Tel: 1300 360 067 <www.transport.sa.gov.au>

Harbours and Navigation Act 1993 and Regulations
Recreational Boating Safety Handbook



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