

SIRLWMP Surface Water Management Program: Farm Drainage Sub-program

March 2019

The Farm Drainage Sub-program is part of the renewed 2017 Surface Water Management Program (SWMP) for the Shepparton Irrigation Region (SIR).

The 2015 SIR Drainage Strategy Review highlighted the need to investigate and improve farm drainage management options for irrigators in areas which do not have access to primary, hybrid or community surface water management schemes (SWMS).

Irrigated properties which do not have drainage may be at a higher risk of flooding, salinity and waterlogging. This may then result in land management costs to mitigate drainage risk and potential productivity and environmental impacts.



Irrigated paddocks with inadequate drainage after a rainfall event

The updated SIR Drainage Strategy (the strategy) defines priority catchments for provision of drainage through Hybrid SWMS. However, there are significant areas of the SIR which are outside of these priority catchments and may be vulnerable to drainage risk at times.

The strategy identifies the need for the SWMP to support farm drainage mitigation actions that are implemented in a coordinated way. This will potentially lead to improved drainage outcomes on farms, along with minimised risks to third parties, public assets and the environment.

There are a number of different ways irrigators can mitigate on-farm drainage issues including: improvements to farm layout; maximising farm storage of water through drainage reuse; earthworks; and sacrificial areas in flood-prone paddocks.

Sometimes farm drainage mitigation actions can be un-coordinated and this can compromise the environment, cause social conflict and create public costs through damage to roads and infrastructure.

The Farm Drainage Sub-program has identified two main areas of work to support irrigators in managing drainage on their farms. They are:

1. additional information and advice (including through the Whole Farm Plan process) and
2. investigating improvements in the policy and regulatory environment (including options for changes to regulations and rules for re-use dams [whilst remaining compliant under the MDB Plan and Cap] as well as clear frameworks where irrigators without drainage can pump water off-farm).

The Sub-program is being developed and delivered by Agriculture Victoria, Goulburn Broken CMA and Goulburn Murray Water.

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