

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ACTION TO ADDRESS ACID SULFATE SOILS

What is the Australian Government doing about the issue of acid sulfate soils?

Developing national guidance for assessing and managing acid sulfate soils

The Australian Government worked together with states, territories and research institutions to produce the National Guidance for the Management of Acid Sulfate Soils in Inland Aquatic Ecosystems.

Assessing acid sulfate soils risks in the Murray-Darling Basin

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority initiated in 2008 a Basin-wide assessment of the spatial extent of, and risk posed by, acid sulfate soils at priority wetlands in the River Murray system, Ramsar wetlands and other key environmental sites in the Murray-Darling Basin and identified management options.

Supporting the management of water quality

The Australian Government works collaboratively with states and territories and the New Zealand Government to develop and implement the National Water Quality Management Strategy.

The main objective of the Strategy is to achieve sustainable use of the nation's water resources by protecting and enhancing water quality while maintaining economic and social development.

The Australian Government has invested in the development of two regional acid sulfate soils Water Quality Improvement Plans in Far North Queensland and the Mackay Whitsundays regions which are designed to establish planning and management strategies for avoiding acid sulfate soil disturbance and to reduce the impacts of disturbed acid sulfate soils.

Investing in national training

Supported in the initial phases of development by funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country Initiative , Southern Cross GeoScience now independently offers the Acid Sulfate Short Course, which focuses on how to prepare and assess an Acid Sulfate Soil Management Plan.

This course is specifically designed for professionals such as consultants, engineers, contractors, scientists, environmental officers and planners.

The program was developed in conjunction with the relevant government authorities and provides a unique opportunity for proponents and assessors to discuss different aspects of managing acid sulfate soils.

Courses are held in every state and the Northern Territory, on a demand basis. The first courses attracted unexpected demand and benefited from significant in-kind support from a wide range of stakeholders.

Investing in on-ground activities

Under the Caring for our Country Initiative , investments are being made in on-ground activities that address acid sulfate soils at priority coastal hotspots where such activities are specifically identified in agreed Water Quality Improvement Plans.

Water Quality Improvement Plans seek to deliver significant reductions in pollution being released into aquatic ecosystems with high ecological, social and/or recreational values across Australia.

Environmental watering

The Australian Government is committed to restoring the health of our rivers.

As part of Murray-Darling Basin reforms, the Australian Government is acquiring water entitlements with the objective of returning more water to the environment.

These entitlements become part of the Commonwealth environmental water holdings and are managed so that increased flows are provided to rivers and wetlands.

- About Commonwealth environmental water

The water is acquired through direct buybacks of water entitlements from irrigators as well as savings from infrastructure upgrades. This primarily occurs through the following programs:

- Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin Program (water entitlement purchasing)
- Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program

Source: <https://www.environment.gov.au/water/information/acid-sulfate-soils/australian-government-action>