

Moolap Wetlands Environmental Management Masterplan

Public consultation on site values and options for the future
Engagement Findings April 2025



Credit: Rory Gardiner

A key action from the Moolap Coastal Strategic Framework Plan (2019) is the creation of a detailed Moolap Wetlands Environmental Management (EMM) Masterplan for the Wetlands and Former Saltworks Precinct.

Introduction

Between 21 January and 4 March 2025, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) ran a series of community engagement activities to gather input from all interested community members including residents, businesses and interest groups to support the development of the Moolap Wetlands EMM.

In particular, we gathered perspectives on:

- What people value about the site
- Ideas and preferences for future use
- Level of support for future uses of the site
- Three example scenarios for the future of the site.

This update provides a snapshot of what we heard. We thank everyone who participated.

Collaborations with Traditional Owners are also continuing to inform all stages of EMM development.

The Moolap EMM aims to balance the site's heritage and environmental values while considering opportunities for future use and addressing the changing coastal conditions anticipated to impact the area from present day to 2100+.

How did we engage?

Engagement included a range of activities:

- Two community open house events
- Business doorknocks
- Letter box drop to nearby residents
- An online survey via Engage Vic website
- Email submissions.

Who did we hear from?

We talked to a range of community members and stakeholders across this period of engagement. This included:

- Discussing in person and hearing from over 70 people at the open house events.
- Chatting with 19 local businesses during the business doorknocks and leaving an information postcard at 27 businesses.
- 241 survey submissions and 5 email submissions.

Data showed the following about the participants:

- 85% are local residents.
- 57% are bird enthusiasts and 57% are wetland enthusiasts.
- 10% are local business owners or workers.
- 54% are likely or highly likely to want to provide a stewardship role related to the wetlands.

What are the key site values?

Key values of the site include:

- Critical bird habitat
- Water management
- Vegetation and ecosystems
- Wadawurrung cultural significance
- Industrial heritage legacy.

Values relating to critical bird habitat, vegetation and ecosystems were ranked and expressed through community feedback as being of very high significance for the site (Figure 1).

Recognition of Traditional Owner values and Wadawurrung cultural significance was also expressed through the feedback – these values are foundational to the EMM development (feedback separate to ranking).



Image 1: The open house event on 22 February 2025

Credit: DEECA

Community survey ranking of key site values:

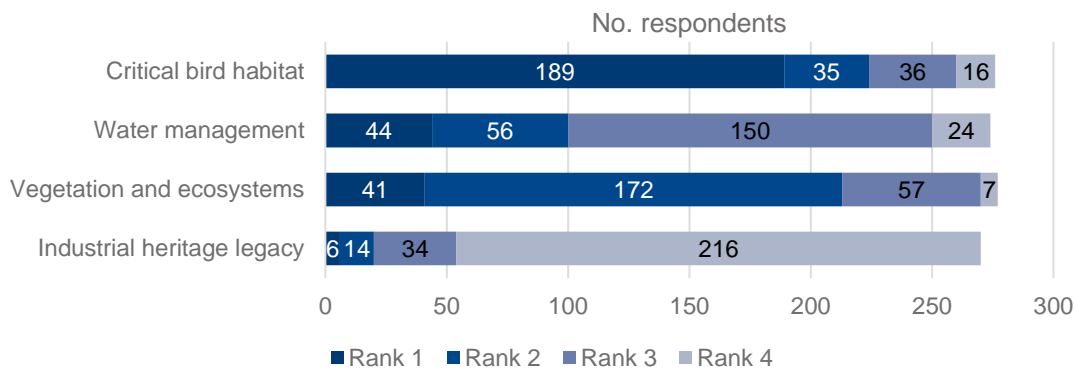


Figure 1: Current site values ranked 1 (most important) to 4 (least important) (n=280)

Why are these values important?

Feedback included a range of detail on the importance of site values and implications for the future. Here is some of what we heard.

Critical bird habitat

Habitat preservation for migratory birds
Ecological benefits
Impact of development and human activity
Economic and tourism benefits

Water management

Climate change and drought resilience
Water filtration and ecosystem
Stormwater management
Bird habitat preservation

Vegetation and ecosystems

Biodiversity and ecological balance
Climate resilience
Water filtration
Survival of wildlife and ecosystems

Wadawurrung cultural significance - connection to Country

Industrial heritage legacy

Engaging and educating visitors
Learning from the past
Prioritising the environment over industrial heritage

Other values of importance

Balancing access with environmental protection
Ecotourism and education
Biodiversity beyond migratory birds
Planning and site management

Environment & industrial heritage

"Industrial heritage legacy is important, as a society we need history to inform us of the successes and failures of previous industrial processes"

"This is an internationally significant site for migratory and endemic bird species"

"Protecting these habitats ensures biodiversity, supports ecosystem balance, and upholds our responsibility to preserve the natural world for future generations"

"It must not be polluted and must be shared"

"Filtration of nutrients and pollutants prior to stormwater runoff entering Corio Bay enables marine ecosystems to flourish and maintain critical balances of species"

"Healthy ecosystems foster resilience against environmental changes, benefiting both wildlife and people"

Cultural heritage and First Nations Connections

"First Nations input is important as our local stories are often hard to find and may be lost for future generations"

"Aboriginal cultural heritage for Wadawurrung and others visiting to walk gently on Country—a sense of place and belonging"

Ecotourism and education

"It is a fabulous place to relax and observe nature for the people of Geelong"

"Community education and involvement are key values for the Moolap Wetlands"

"Public awareness and education are critical to ensuring the ongoing success of a well-maintained and established migratory and endemic bird site. There are world-class examples of how ongoing management plans can be implemented to achieve a successful bird habitat whilst providing an educational facility for the public"

Ideas for the site

"Birds and other wildlife are desperate for sanctuary - they need the Moolap Wetlands"

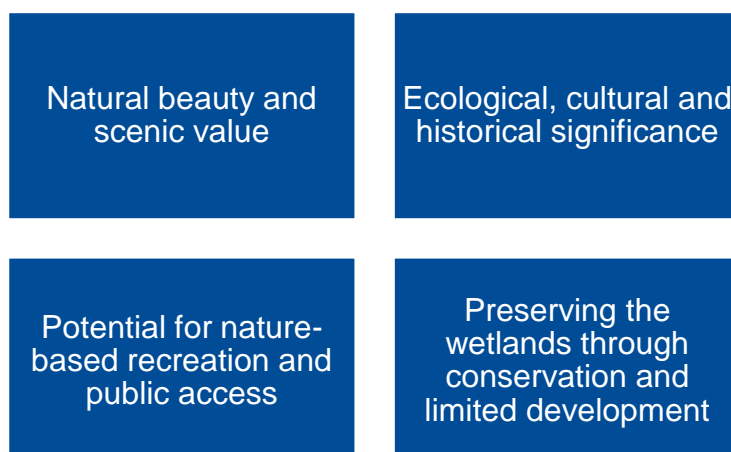
"The lovely coastline – protected; wildness + potential for a nature park, for all recreation walkers + conservation to appreciate visiting birds"

"The spiritual component of the First Nations People and their connection to country"

"Must be limited, if any, development of this site in order to preserve it"

What are the favourite features of the Moolap Wetlands area?

Four key themes emerged from feedback on favourite things about the Moolap Wetlands:



What possible future uses of the site are supported?

Strong support was noted for a diversity of site uses, with the top uses including:

- Bird hides and lookouts (55%)
- Education and research facility (52%)
- Trail access (44%).

Community survey raking of support for possible future uses:

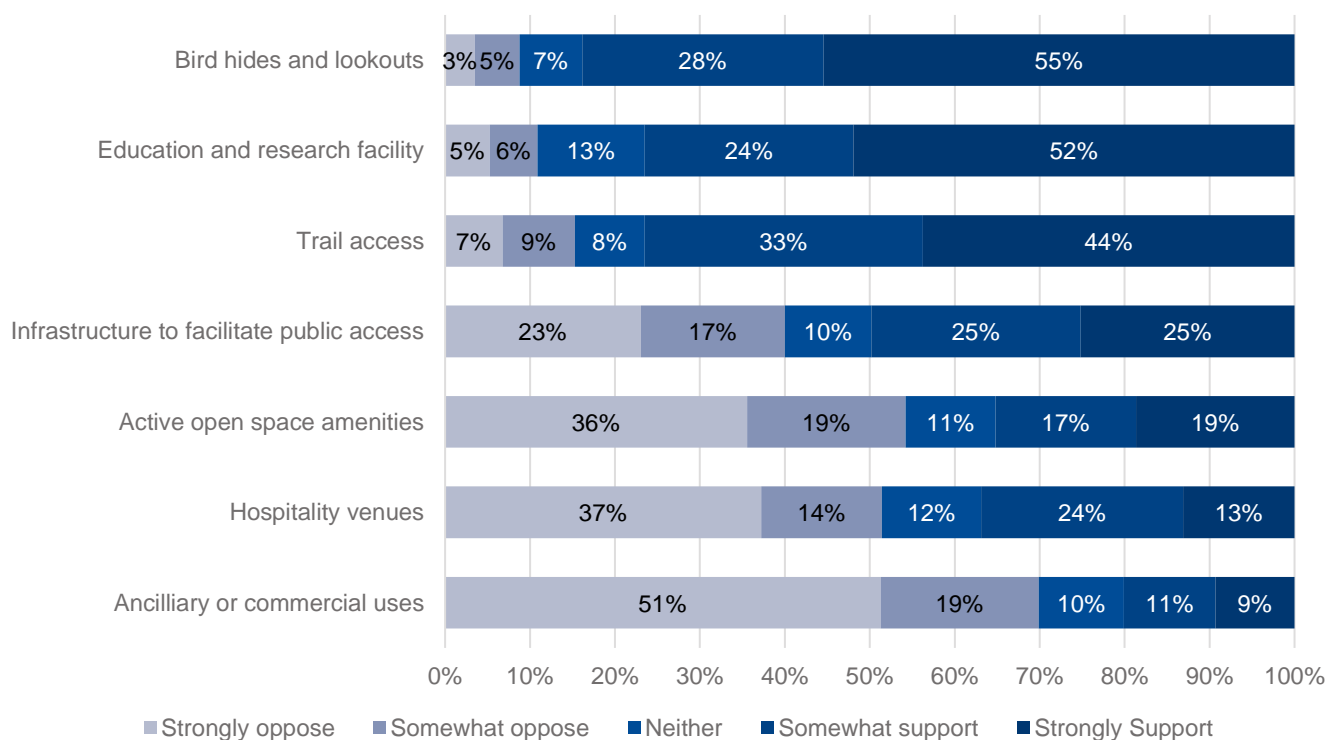


Figure 2: Levels of support for possible future uses (n=287)

What is the level of support for example future access and site management scenarios?

Three example scenarios on possible future access and site management scenarios include:

Example scenario 1: Active management: Focuses on improving existing values through targeted interventions, habitat protection, and maintaining existing levels of controlled access. Future management facilitates habitat migration as environmental conditions evolve.

Example scenario 2: Active management and activated edge: Concentrates development and access / activities along the site's boundaries to preserve core ecological areas. Stormwater and habitat buffers act as natural barriers against risks. Active management strategies adapt to long-term changes.

Example scenario 3: Active management and integrated activation: Combines habitat protection with infrastructure integration, and more extensive site access. Fosters a resilient, multi-functional landscape. Active management strategies adapt to long-term changes.

The strongest support was noted for Scenario 2, closely followed by Scenario 1 (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Rank of scenario examples (n=272)

Additional comments

Community feedback included a diversity of comments and suggestions that will provide valuable input into the EMM development process. Some additional feedback points included:

- Strong support to prioritise environmental value over commercial gain in the development of the Moolap Wetlands. The development should enhance, rather than harm, the natural environment.
- The wetlands could become a significant tourism destination, educational resource and global example of how to manage natural areas for both conservation and public engagement, provided it is managed responsibly.
- Broad recognition that with careful planning, the wetlands could become a world-class ecological site that supports both wildlife and the local community.
- It is important for the Wadawurrung people to be directly involved in planning to ensure that cultural and environmental values are integrated into the management and development of the wetlands.
- Concerns regarding overdevelopment and its potential negative impact on the wetlands.
- It is important to manage stormwater in a way that prevents flooding and environmental damage.

Next steps

Hearing ideas and perspectives from the Traditional Owners, Moolap residents, businesses, interest groups and stakeholders remains an important part of this project. Your feedback helps to inform how we plan to manage and adapt the Moolap wetlands and former saltworks in the future.

We're incorporating all this feedback into developing the draft Moolap Wetlands Environmental Management Plan. There will be opportunities to provide feedback on the draft plan as the project progresses.

Further updates will be provided on the project website: [Moolap Wetlands and Former Saltworks EMM](#)



Image 2: Moolap Wetlands aerial view

Credit: Rory Gardiner

We acknowledge Victorian Traditional Owners and their Elders past and present as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters and commit to genuinely partnering with them and Victoria's Aboriginal community to progress their aspirations.



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