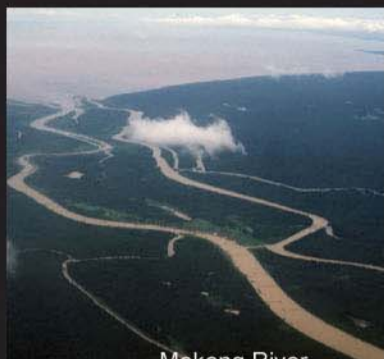


## Similarities to Vietnamese project



Mekong River

A delegation representing three government tiers and agricultural departments from Vietnam saw similarities with their project and the irrigation renewal in the Goulburn Murray region recently.

The group oversees a water resources project in southern Vietnam. Its main purpose is to develop new structures to divert water to Ho Chi Minh City, to alleviate salt water intrusion and to provide a sustainable water supply for industry, agriculture and domestic use in the future.

There were many parallels in the NVIRP works and the delegation was most interested in how the community was involved in the decision making processes. One of their major issues relates considerably to drainage after seasonal rains. A special highlight prior to their return to Sydney was the fish ladder at Yarrawonga.

## Wetlands and rivers protected

NVIRP will carry out specific environmental management to ensure that high conservation value wetlands and rivers continue to be watered once channels are automated and outfalls reduced.

NVIRP has met the planning conditions to uphold the Victorian Government's commitment that 'no net loss' of water will occur as a result of modernisation works.

Wetlands and rivers of high conservation value that derived an environmental benefit from the channel system will continue to receive water through environmental watering plans approved recently by the Minister for Water, Tim Holding.

The environment will also benefit by sharing in water savings achieved by modernising northern Victoria's aging irrigation system.

Stage 1 of the irrigation modernisation works will deliver a third of the savings for the environment with another 100 GL

a year expected from Stage 2 works.

The environment's 175 GL share of the savings, is in addition to water required to ensure no net loss of environmental water due to the modernisation works.

NVIRP CEO Murray Smith said protecting the environment was a vital part of the modernisation project.

"For example, Lake Elizabeth, west of Kerang, is home to a diverse range of native flora and fauna species," he said. "The lake supports a high number of waterbirds and NVIRP will protect this and other high value wetlands and natural waterways with well planned environmental management."

"Environmental watering plans will ensure that any at-risk sites continue to receive water once the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District has been modernised."

Early this year, the Minister for Planning Justin Madden determined



Lake Elizabeth west of Kerang home to a diverse range of native flora and fauna species.

that although an Environment Effects Statement was not required for Stages 1 and 2, six conditions would need to be progressively met in accordance with the *Environmental Effects Act (1978)*.

NVIRP is a state-owned entity designed to deliver the \$2 billion Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project that will modernise the irrigation system in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District.

## Zero work place injuries

Planning, prevention and training are the key to NVIRP's safe work environment with more than 200,000 man hours of labour carried out this winter and no time lost due to injuries.

The modernisation works, delivered by NVIRP's managing contractor Transfield Services, included installation of 1021 regulator gates and 15km of plastic lining.

Gary Seaborne Executive Manager Capital Works said "about 450 staff, often working in muddy conditions, used excavators, concrete pumps, tip trucks, cranes and a variety of hand tools to carry out the works."

"This sort of work is considered to be high risk for occupational health and safety hazards," Mr Seaborne said.

"But we have stringent processes in place to ensure our

guys are prepared and sites as well as workers are kept safe."

All site staff take part in an induction session, which mainly focuses on occupational health and safety. Contractors also have to prove their training meets a high standard.

On top of this, every day before works begin, the supervisor assesses the site and any dangers are identified such as power lines, underground services and wet and slippery conditions. The site supervisor and the workers then devise a plan together to manage these.

"There have been 30 'close calls' where an accident almost happened but was avoided," Mr Seaborne said.

"When this happens, a report is sent up through the chain of command and a preventative strategy is put in place to remove

the risk and inform the other crews working on the project so we learn from each other what risks are out there and how to remove them from the workplace.

"Having zero hours lost to work place injuries is a tremendous achievement; it means we are not only working very safely but also efficiently.

"However, this is also our goal and we will continue to strive to meet this target." Works still continuing include installation of handrails and walkways on gates. NVIRP is also working with Goulburn-Murray Water to refill the system and wet and dry commission the gates.

During the next eight months contractors working through the five irrigation districts will install another 2000 electronic meters on-farm before May 2010.



Michelle Poole NVIRP at a work site in Central Goulburn irrigation area

## STOP PRESS

### On-farm Modernisation continues

Torrumbarry, Pyramid-Boort and Murray Valley landowners should look out for an invitation and advertisements relating to public meetings being held in:

- Late September and
- Early October

to discuss the opportunities to connect to the backbone.

Landowners in these areas are encouraged to attend.

Farm irrigation assessments and meter replacements are continuing as a component of the 2009 works program.