

Evaluation of ecosystem responses and local knowledge to improve future CLLMM landscape revegetation – workshop report

June 2026



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The CLLMM Research Centre has the objective of developing and delivering locally driven, innovative, and impactful research that reflects community and First Nations priorities to provide an evidence base to address critical needs of the CLLMM region. The CLLMM Research Centre will also bring together our First Nations, local community and scientists to create and share knowledge, and support our well-informed and engaged community and empower our future generations to be part of the solution.

The Goyder Institute for Water Research Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) Research Centre, based in Goolwa SA, was established in 2023 through funding by the Australian Government.



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Title page photo credit: Revegetation at Springs Wetland, Mount Barker, SA in 2017 (Kerri Muller)

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Executive Summary

Revegetation, human assisted regeneration and care of remnant vegetation have been occurring for many decades, and are part of the social fabric of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) region. Recent ecological surveys of remnant ecosystems and areas that were revegetated fifteen years ago have demonstrated multiple benefits of revegetation at the landscape scale for plants, birds and overall ecological health. Surveys of landholders and practitioners involved in revegetation have yielded additional information on revegetation success factors and key considerations for adapting revegetation techniques to a changing climate.

The results of these surveys were presented at a workshop in March 2026 that brought together First Nations, scientists, local practitioners and community members. They distilled the key findings of the surveys, reviewed draft revegetation principles and considered what an adaptive management framework for future revegetation and human-assisted regeneration might need in terms of guiding principles, a community of practitioners, funding continuity and monitoring for evaluation.

Key reflections of the workshop included the importance of:

- Understanding your site in terms of regional context and changing climatic conditions,
- Working with neighbours and other communities to connect vegetation across the landscape,
- Incorporating cultural knowledge, including cultural burning, into best-practice to achieve the best biodiversity and ecological function outcomes,
- Adaptive planning that uses different species and/or techniques over time,
- Long-term funding to enable planting when and where conditions are suitable, and
- Monitoring and sharing results of success and failures to continuously improve our practices.

This report is a snapshot of practitioner and researcher responses to the results of the surveys and the resultant discussions around principles for future revegetation in the CLLMM region. The next steps needed to develop a regional revegetation framework are outlined and focus on the development of documented principles and practices, formalisation of demonstration sites and deeper examination of the plant species-specific climate projections to ensure the most appropriate species are being planted.

This workshop was a significant step in the pathway towards a co-designed future revegetation framework that is tailored for the CLLMM region and based on decades of experience and the latest research.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the cultural connections to the land and connected waters, as well as the cultural significance of waterbirds that exist between people of the Ngarrindjeri and Boandik Nations across the Coorong, Lower Lakes, and Murray Mouth region. We recognise that First Nations peoples' spiritual, social, cultural, and economic practices come from their lands and waters, and they continue to maintain their cultural heritage, economies, languages, and laws which are of ongoing importance. We are committed to fostering and nurturing ongoing relationships with First Nations communities in the CLLMM region as we collectively work toward healthy, resilient and thriving lands, waters, ecosystems and communities across the region.

The workshop was supported by the Goyder Institute for Water Research's CLLMM Research Centre, which is funded by the Australian Government. We thank Nick Whiterod, Jane French, Sue Ellison and Tiffany Nay (CLLMM Research Centre) for assisting with workshop organisation and delivery.

We would like to thank workshop participants who volunteered their time and expertise to contribute to discussion and outcomes, especially Richard Owen for his comments on the draft of this report. Thank you to other members of the Landscape Revegetation project: Martin Breed (Flinders University), Sacha Jellinek (University of Melbourne), Bri Le Busque (Adelaide University), Riley Hodgson and Heidi Rogers (Flinders University) who contributed to the workshop.

1 Introduction

1.1 *A brief history of CLLMM revegetation*

Revegetation is the practice of introducing native plant seeds or live plants to a landscape for specific and interconnected plant-based outcomes. Objectives often include erosion control, soil improvement, shelter for livestock, address habitat loss and enhance biodiversity, increasing landscape connectivity, improved pollination and pest control.

Revegetation has been practiced in the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) region for many decades by many people and is part of the social fabric of today's communities in the region. One of the earliest and most revered CLLMM revegetation practitioners, and founding member of Trees for Life (1981), Betty Rutherford Westwood OAM grew up in the Strathalbyn District. Betty harvested local seed, raised seedlings and planted out a range of species including native grasses, shrubs and trees. She also cared for local remnant trees, and was often out revegetating country roadsides. Betty opened the Strathalbyn Natural Resources Centre a few years before her passing in 2004, and is recognised for her tireless pioneering work in the region and through the Trees for Life Betty Westwood Nursery.

Revegetation work across the region was boosted significantly in the 1990s and 2000s through Federal Government investment in the Natural Heritage Trust and through the work of the Community Action for the Rural Environment (CARE) Team network that operated across the SA Murray Darling Basin and later evolved into the Local Action Planning (LAP) Boards. Community based organisations have between them sourced, grown and planted extensive areas of the CLLMM region, and 'learnt by doing' such that their techniques are highly-refined and well-suited to CLLMM.

Commencing in 1992, the Kumarangk Hindmarsh Island Landcare Group have planted more than 750,000 plants across 80 sites on the island. Other not-for-profit and community-based organisations that have played a major role in revegetation activities across the region include: Goolwa to Wellington LAP (becoming Second Nature Conservancy in 2023), the Coorong and Tatiara LAP boards, Nature Glenelg Trust, Nature Foundation, The Forktree Project, Milang Old School House Community Centre, Rivers Lakes and Coorong Action Group, Greening Goolwa, and Clayton Bay Community Nursery Group State (Trees for Life). Nationally focused organisations (Greening Australia, Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife) along with private contractors and landholders have also contributed to revegetation across the region. Different local (Alexandrina Council, Coorong District Council), regional (Hills & Fleurieu Landscape Board, Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board) and state (Department for Environment and Water) management agencies have resourced and contributed to revegetation programs. First Nations have also contributed significantly to regional revegetation, especially the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation, Ngarrindjeri Lands and Progress Aboriginal Corporation, Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority and Raukkan Community.

Between 2010 and 2016 there were several large-scale state and federally funded revegetation programs. This included the Vegetation Program of the CLLMM Recovery Project, where some 4.6 million terrestrial plants of more than 200 native species were planted at 72 planting sites over 975 ha of the region (Department for Environment and Water, 2021). The program, managed by Department for Environment and Water represented one of Australia's largest revegetation programs.

It is clear that future climates will significantly shape revegetation approaches across the region as warmer temperatures, reduced average rainfall, more frequent droughts, rising sea levels and increased salinity place greater stress on ecosystems. Revegetation practitioners must increasingly adapt their practices to build resilient vegetation communities capable of supporting biodiversity and ecosystem function under future climate conditions. This report seeks to capture some of the contemporary knowledge to assist with that on-going adaptation.

1.2 CLLMM Research Centre Landscape Revegetation project

Our overarching CLLMM Research Centre project – *Evaluation of ecosystem responses and local knowledge to improve future CLLMM landscape revegetation* – assessed the ecological responses to revegetation that was undertaken under the CLLMM Recovery Vegetation Program, and complemented this with an evaluation of local revegetation practitioner and landholder knowledge. The project focussed on this revegetation program because valuable baseline ecological data was collected during spring 2015 at the revegetation sites as well as at nearby remnant reference sites. This allowed for a second sampling of a suite of indicators at the same sites to inform our evaluation of revegetation success.

The project team revisited these sites in spring 2025 to collect new data and evaluate the ecological responses after 10 years. Vegetation and bird surveys were also conducted, and soil samples were collected for soil health and environmental DNA analyses. The ecological survey findings for the revegetation and corresponding remnant sites are presented in the complementary project report (Hodgson et al. 2026).

The value of the scientific data sets was enhanced by also evaluating local knowledge and perspectives on what makes revegetation successful in the CLLMM region. This was done by conducting a landholder and practitioner survey in spring 2025 and further explore what has and has not worked in the region and what we could change to be more successful with revegetation in the CLLMM region into the future. The findings of the landholder and practitioner surveys are also presented in the complementary project report (Hodgson et al. 2026).

In March 2026, a summary of the results of these surveys and a suite of potential revegetation principles were workshopped by a representative group of First Nations organisations, local landholders, revegetation practitioners, researchers and other community members (see Table A1) at the CLLMM Research Centre, Goolwa, South Australia.

This report captures the participants reflections on the survey results and their evaluation of seventeen revegetation principles adapted from the literature, including their level of agreement with the principle and considerations for application to the CLLMM region under a changing climate.

2 Workshop methodology

The objective of the workshop was to distil the key findings of the ecological and landowner and practitioner surveys, review draft guiding principles and consider what an adaptive management framework for future revegetation in CLLMM region would look like.

The workshop was held on 3rd March 2026 at the CLLMM Research Centre in Goolwa, SA (Figure 1). The format was a mixture of presentations, questions and answer sessions and small group discussions as shown by the agenda in Table B1.

Prior to the workshop, a draft set of seventeen revegetation principles was developed based upon evaluation of the survey results and the following published revegetation guides:

- Restoring native vegetation, NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust (2019),
- A guide to restoring vegetation in the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Region. DEW (2019),
- Climate-ready revegetation: A guide for natural resource managers. Hancock, et al. (2018),
- Five steps to thriving revegetation. Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board (2023), and
- Establishing Victoria's ecological infrastructure: a guide to creating climate future plots. Jellinek, and Bailey (2020).

The seventeen principles were written in an open-ended style and in some cases had overlapping content or approached similar revegetation concepts from different angles. This was done to prompt conversation and encourage workshop participants to think in different ways. Summaries of the ecological and the landowner and practitioner surveys were presented at the workshop by members of the project team during which participants were asked to record their reflections as insights, questions, risks and opportunities on paper at tables of four to eight people.

In the second session, the participants were asked to work in small groups to evaluate the seventeen example revegetation principles by:

1. Describing their level of agreement on a graded line from Very High to Very Low,
2. Answering What needs to be considered to implement this principle?,
3. Answering Does it apply across the whole region, and does it become more relevant in the future?, and
4. Providing any other information relevant to the principle.

All groups evaluated principle #1 and then each small group looked at another 4-5 principles distributed across the tables such that multiple groups looked at each principle, but not all principles at each table. There was also a blank sheet upon which additional principles could be recorded. The blank sheet entitled "Principle 18" was offered to encourage participants to add extra principles, if they arose during discussions.



Figure 1. Revegetation practitioners workshop (Renata Kernahan, lorvismedia.com).

There was no attempt to combine, collate or aim for a pre-determined number of principles or style of language at the workshop. The exercise was designed to open up conversations rather than constrain them towards a given outcome by the close of the workshop. It was acknowledged that this workshop was a starting point and further discussions will be needed to truly co-design the principles.

Workshop participants were invited by the CLLMM Research Centre team with individuals from 25 organisations and community present representing:

- Landholders involved in the ecological and the landowner and practitioner surveys,
- Local practitioners, including community groups and not-for-profit organisations,
- Ecological scientists and natural resource managers, and
- Traditional Owners as represented by local Elders and Working-On-Country rangers.

A list of participant organisations are shown in Table A1.

3 Reflections on the survey findings

Whilst participants were provided with separate workshop sheets for each of the two surveys, most participants only filled in one sheet for both survey presentations. Consequently, the insights, questions, risks and opportunities shown in Table 1 are combined for both surveys. Several participants also commented on the Welcome to Country by Uncle Lawrie Agius and these comments were recorded in "Insights".

Participant inputs were captured on workshop sheets and have been recorded here with minimal editing, other than correcting spelling and adding linking words to make sense, especially where comments from one participant were linked by arrows or other graphics.

For increasing interpretation, the comments have been grouped into three themes:

- **People** – social and community aspects of revegetation and regeneration,
- **Plants** – plant selection, planting techniques and ecological beneficiaries (e.g. birds, soils), and
- **Plans** – operational and capital expenditure aspects of revegetation and regeneration.

Table 1. Workshop participants' reflections on the ecological and the landholder and practitioner surveys.

Survey reflections by workshop participants	
Insights	
People	• Listening to, and learning from, Uncle Lawrie's Welcome to Country • Welcome to Country was highly informative – thank you • Incentives for landholders to monitor and look after vegetation are needed to build our knowledge • Planting something is better than planting nothing • Learnt a lot by just chatting to others about revegetation – pick up new things every time • Practitioner roles [in the survey] didn't include on-going maintenance • Mental health benefits of doing something compared to doing nothing • Researchers seemed pleased with the revegetation outcomes • As long as people are doing their best with what they have learnt and researched [they make progress]
Plants	• It would be good to calculate the return on investment using established/accepted (ha/unit) values for nature • Acacia death in ecological surveys – probably at end of natural life and hopefully dropped seed to allow for regeneration • Important to collect species of local provenance from further afield • Seeing <i>Ozothamnus turbinatus</i> (coast everlasting) on Goolwa Dunes/Sir Richard Peninsula on foredune dying progressively over the past 10 years • Banksia had severe burning in 2024–25 on any exposed site, full sun near roads or small linear patches. Perhaps we need to plant in larger patches or in the shelter of other plants to prevent sun scorch. • Some people felt that in general revegetation and birds were doing well even in dry years • Other people are deeply concerned about on-going decline in birds populations, especially those dependent on high levels of connectivity between vegetation patches (e.g. small woodland birds).

Survey reflections by workshop participants

Plans

- More benefits if we can achieve natural regeneration than revegetation
- Plan as much as possible to cover best- and worst-case scenarios
- Continuous funding for monitoring is essential to inform management and future plantings
- The degree of prescriptiveness in revegetation is directly related to where you are on the spectrum – no 'one way' in my opinion
- Nothing is static – always changing that's including climate but also the point in time in succession – there is no 'one way'
- Burning can be positive for carbon – you might release carbon when burning but create more growth that stores even more carbon, so burnings are positive.
- Link broader land system/ecosystem services to revegetation – this will get buy-in from the private sector and provide evidence for business cases – link agriculture, river, basin, acid sulfate soils – if we can describe the future cost avoidance, then we may be able to get \$ secured
- Future principles = landscape function and repair e.g. reeds around the lakes having multiple benefits of carbon, erosion and acid sulfate soils control, lakeshore protection, habitat facilitation behind the reeds

Questions

Plants

- How do we know what species to plant or how to adapt to the climate if we have never been through it before?
- How do you choose species or techniques to adapt to climate change?
- Can we please get copies of the vegetation, DNA, soil and bird surveys? More information on the results of eDNA please?
- Grazing pressure – “what is prolonged grazing”?
- Many sites are going backwards due to lack of grazing, how do we get grazing right?
- What were the key weeds that declined in the revegetation areas?
- Were some weeds common across all sites?
- Were there comparisons of revegetation and remnant sites based on soil types?
- Was there different survival on different soils, sandy vs clay?
- Are there particular ecosystem forming plants and animals that we need to focus on at the patch scale and across the landscape?
- How can we use revegetation to help ecosystems move as climate changes?

Plans

- Do we need to reconsider our expectations for revegetation, is the goal of being similar to remnant an unreal expectation?
- What are we managing for? Targets are not clear – seems to be species level without understanding keystone species, function and form? Are we managing for birds? Landscape repair?
- Threatening processes – what are they? How can revegetation help?
- What is around the corner? How do we set up the system for more variable lake levels under climate change? Reeds are the key, limited land-use conflict means it's a winner.
- What if scientists suggest things, but 100 years into climate change and we find out nothing worked?
- What was found in the soil DNA? Want more information on how to improve microflora
- Why are some species dying off? Need to investigate cause
- Should we set targets for a certain percentage increase in diversity of certain species instead of aiming for being similar to remnant vegetation?
- What is meant by quantifying or defining resilience and diversity? Don't they change with priorities for each scenario?
- Why is funding for something that lives so long only 5 years? What were the failures that we need to explore further?

Risks

People

- Bias in this survey because participants were engaged landholders
- Vandals

Survey reflections by workshop participants

- Experience of revegetation people – commercial vs community – different risks with experiences of these

Plants

- Plant survival rates in relation to watering – it is very variable in the past five we have had a water cart and drought, but still poor success. Before that (2014 to 2020) we had excellent success and no watering in. so depends on season and timing and of course its not always possible when you have a contract to get in "x" amount [of plants] in a small timeframe
- Drought, salinity levels, water temperature rising, lack of river flows, soil degradation, climate change
- Need to plant 5m away from fences so that fences can be maintained and vegetation is not later removed
- Look at studies around weeds not being reduced by hot fires
- Ecological survey did not focus on the basics. Birds are OK, diversity is good – but we should look at the basic landscape function and what we need to achieve at a landscape scale – especially before drought e.g. lake edge erosion, habitat connection (edge to reeds), sulfate reduction to reduce ASS hot spots

Plans

- Business as usual due to funding (lack)
- Short term funding or lack of funding
- Poor continuity of funding and technical advice
- What are you keeping out of the site by making restrictions e.g. fencing, plant selection or infrastructure that could be risks to the plants?
- Cultural sites – burial sites, cultural history sites

Opportunities

People

- Better managing burial sites
- Future works for NLPAC
- Cool burns (cultural burns) – control weeds, stimulate regeneration
- Cool burns needed on revegetation and remnant sites
- We need professional 'shepherds' who can train small flocks for grassland and grassy woodland management – grazing regime
- Community involvement – high in this project – could survey community groups involved in surveys in other areas and find out their views, changing opinions and relationships with the environment
- **Working with neighbours to increase connectivity and connections – this has been a key success factor for KHILG**
- Hiring experienced local people as technical advisers
- Need control group of landholders who are not engaged to be surveyed
- Implement a hands-on approach from a young age
- Organisations to facilitate or enable (educate) landowners in positive and understandable way
- **Connectivity to neighbours is essential – connectivity is important to enhance regeneration from revegetation areas and also for specific species e.g. blue wrens – corridors have been demonstrated to work by the KHILG**

Plants

- Native grasslands on Hindmarsh Island for Cape Barren Geese
- Biochar supplements – can be pretreated with fungus and other microbes and also helps with plant survival
- Expand the reed plantings now to go around the lake edges and then plants grow between the reeds and the lakeshore – link to teal carbon and nature repair markets

Plans

- Long term catchment management for algal abatement
- Go for form and function over diversity matching remnant
- Seed banking at remnant and revegetated sites
- Knowing how to revegetate to a plan for a specific outcome

Survey reflections by workshop participants

- Adaptable revegetation always looks for opportunities to identify threats, adapt plans if and how and when threats are to be managed
- Proper funding (on-going) to further educate at a grass roots level to acquire more interest in the scientific field

[Ed] otherwise verbatim from workshop sheets. Comments appear in order of worksheet capture and have not been collated other than grouping under People, Plants and Plans to add interpretation. Spelling has been corrected.

4 Evaluation of the revegetation principles

4.1 *Level of agreement with principles*

All groups discussed and provided an estimate of their level of agreement with Principle #1 on a scale from Very High to Very Low (Table 2). Variable numbers of groups provided feedback on the remaining sixteen principles, and all principles were assessed across the workshop by at least one group of five to six participants. The number of groups commenting on their level of agreement for each principle is shown in Table 2 (n = number of groups), and it should be noted that this level of agreement and number of groups was reflected in the comments that the groups provided for the other questions reported on in following sections.

Table 2. Levels of agreement with the seventeen draft principles

PRINCIPLE	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT (n=number of groups)
#1 Understand climate projections in your area (e.g. rainfall, temperatures, sea level rise, river flows).	Very High to High One Very Low (rainfall) n=9
#2 Write down clear objectives and targets for the site (aim for ecological integrity under a changing climate).	Very High to High n=2
#3 Address and mitigate threats on the site before regenerating or revegetating.	Very High to High n=2
#4 Support natural regeneration in preference to revegetation (depending on levels of resilience and degradation).	Very High to Moderately High n=2
#5 Consider staged planting (the plants used in each stage are site specific).	Very High to Moderate n=2
#6 Avoid planting in very dry conditions and plan to water during establishment, if possible.	Very High to High n=3
#7 Exclude or strategically manage livestock and other herbivores, depending on revegetation objectives.	Very High n=2
#8 Use locally indigenous and/or climate adaptive plant species.	Very High n=3
#9 Understand the site's microclimates and plant according to different species' water and temperature needs.	Very High to High n=2
#10 Aim for complexity in vegetation structure using a diversity of species (unless the site objectives specify otherwise).	Very High to High n=2
#11 Seek advice from local experts and join a local community group to build capacity and share resources.	Very High n=1
#12 Identify and manage risks across the life cycle of the site (establishment to overstorey maturity).	Very High n=2
#13 Monitor plant establishment and growth against the objectives and targets.	High n=2
#14 Trial different planting techniques in different areas with different species.	High to Moderate n=3
#15 In difficult conditions or locations, choose the most resilient plants over higher diversity.	Very High to Moderate n=2
#16 Develop a seed production area or strategy for successive plantings and to promote regeneration.	Very High n=2
#17 Evaluate successes and failures to continuously improve management of the site.	Very High n=1

4.2 Spatial and temporal application of principles

All of the groups reported that all of the principles apply across the whole CLMM region with some qualifying statements and linkages to other comments captured by their group. There was also consensus that the principles become more relevant in the future, except for one group who suggested that future relevance depends on when

we start revegetating (an area/at scale), how continuous it is, and whether we lose impetus.

Most of the qualifying statements related to the need to refine climate projections and other location-specific objectives based on habitats, ecosystems, sites, species interdependencies, connectivity and other ecological processes that operate at a landscape scale.

One group provided a sketch (Figure 2) that suggests climate projections need to be considered for different ecosystem types within the rivers, lakes and saline [salt] areas of the CLMM in order to describe tipping points for those ecosystems – asking the question: how to plan for the future depends on tipping points for different habitats – can they transition?

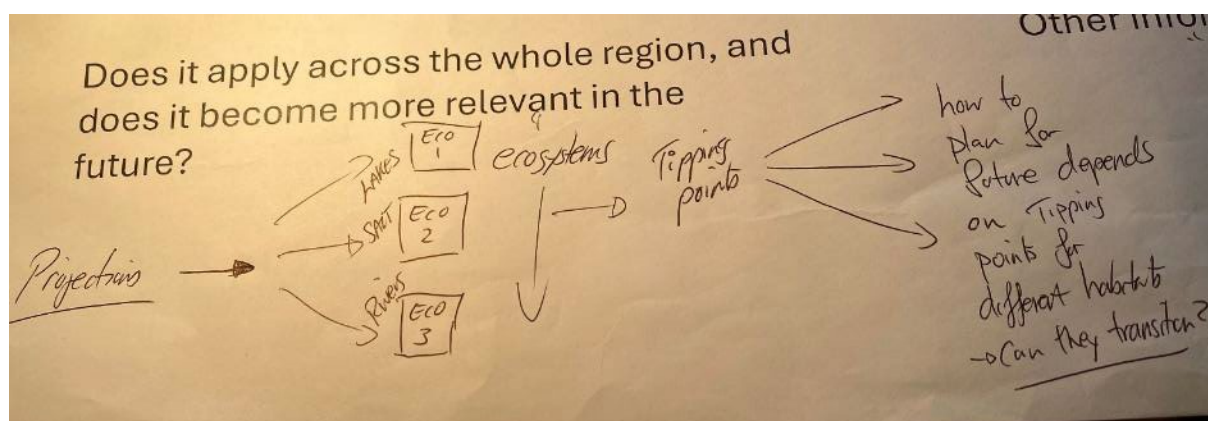


Figure 2. Photograph of sketch provided by workshop participants in terms of how applicable principle #1 – understand climate projections is across the CLMM region.

4.3 Discussion regarding each principle

All groups considered what would be needed to implement Principle #1 across the region and into the future (Table 3). Variable numbers of groups provided feedback on the remaining sixteen principles (n values in Table 2), and all principles were assessed across the workshop by at least one group of five to six participants.

Table 3. Workshop participant considerations on implementing the seventeen principles.

PRINCIPLE
#1 Understand climate projections in your area (e.g. rainfall, temperatures, sea level rise) • All of above - informed by successful plantings in similar environments • Need to be able to respond to conditions (funding, environment) • Vulnerable plants and new exotic plants • Identify at risk regions within CLMM • How does climate effect watering, grazing (deer, goats, roos) and fencing? • Effects and feedback on soil health and functioning • How do we predict effects on microbiome and how to ID a healthy microbiome? • Worry about water flow, too many weeds/reeds stopping the water, need to be pulled out – chopping under water, more water for yabbies, fish, insects, birds • Salinity, water levels, soil conditions – profile, climate, animal habitat, mother nature, access to country, connecting the dots • Groups with different levels of understanding (soil types, habitat types, water movements, climate change) need different info. Educators and facilitators need easily accessible info

PRINCIPLE

- Planning process that takes climate projections into considerations
- Right species, right time, projections
- Time frame – how do we know it works when outcomes/impacts are long term (e.g. 2100)?
- Access to info for small NFP's working on country
- Capacity building to access and utilise data
- Collection of relevant, reliable data
- Understanding practical application of data
- Increasing community awareness and giving community a voice
- Establish research monitoring sites to inform future data analysis
- Current elevation ranges of tidal veg > what is the new elevations with SLR > predicting where to plant based on this
- Super important to understand climate projections > but still not regional consensus/framework on whether would change species & provenance on basis of projections
- Sea level rise – know more about what to plant > plant with future habitats in mind
- Important to have hydrological projections > in sea level rise projections
- RAD method – resist, accept, decide
- Scientifically rigorous guidance – who will do this!
- On going funding and review
- Changes in threats due to climate change, weeds dynamics, pest animals
- Contraction of viable areas for planting
- Which data sources and for which time frames?
- Can we even predict this?
- Re-monitor climate adaptation planting sites
- Regular monitoring: determine what species are surviving – then adapting the species to suit
- **Consider spacing when planting – not too close – KHILG have found this very important, however, spacing needs to consider the species and the objectives**
- Plant well within species range
- Broad plant species genetics – combat higher temperatures > explore options to source seeds from other climates
- Plant appropriate species to match the soil type
- Biasing the species that do survive in the conditions
- Remnant veg may be degraded and some species lost

#2 Write down clear objectives and targets for the site (aim for ecological integrity under a changing climate)

- Is achieving remnant condition a reasonable goal? Ecological integrity may not equal pre-colonisation, rather a new managed environment supporting general biodiversity and including species from further afield basin on climate change modelling
- Ecosystem characteristics > what is important? > how does it change in space and time?
- How to account for heterogeneity?
- Have a good 2 years minimum in effective property and site planning
- Remove grazing or destructive land use then let the country naturally regenerate
- Encourage “disturbance” of sites before reveg occurs to see what comes up naturally
- What are the adaptive objectives and targets??? Relates to what you're trying to achieve
- Are your ecological integrity targets stationary in time?
- Clarify objectives and targets required in the example, but yes
- Are they stationary in time?
- What does ecological integrity mean? Ecological functionality might be a better word
- Look at teal carbon – plants and soils store lots of carbon
- Sites compared to remnant – is this useful? Instead set targets to increase birds by x%
- Need to be mindful that objectives might change over time
- Aim to maximise and stack multiple benefits on top of the revegetation objectives

#3 Address and mitigate threats on the site before regenerating or revegetating

- Threats: Kangaroos, rabbits, hares, deer (browsing) also stock – could be neighbours. Dry hot summers. Coastal planting – people, king tides, wind erosion
- Active adaptive management - requires flexibility from the funder
- Over mitigation could cause unintended consequences. E.g. Control weeds - as required (choose appropriate methods)

PRINCIPLE

- New methods we (Second Nature Conservancy) are doing lately – more watering, kangaroo fencing in lieu of guards, wire enclosures to protect understorey from rabbits, wire mesh guards (re-usable netting + droppers)
- CLMM area: Veldt and pyp grass are an issue. Can't just plant into it. Needs careful and consistent pre-treatment and follow-up – KHILG have proven methods.
- Each site needs an action plan to consider how to do this across the project
- Soil condition
- Burial sites
- Vandalism
- Access to land from landowners
- More fencing for kangaroos etc 90cm high netting/biodiversity rings being used by Second Nature Conservancy
- Fencing can impact echidnas and turtles
- Soil conditions and burial sites need to be considered – get permission
- The word "before" is loaded
- Need to be site specific and adaptive
- Can't predict all threats

#4 Support natural regeneration in preference to revegetation (depending on levels of resilience and degradation)

- Use remnant sites to prioritise revegetation. Revegetate around remnant sites to promote spread and natural regeneration
- **Focus revegetation to form corridors between existing remnant and revegetation sites - KHILG have found this very important**
- One without the other isn't viable with short-term funding
- Both equally important
- Love the idea but not sure if viable, especially the way funding works (x2)
- Definite preference but long term
- Recognition of remnant vegetation
- Both revegetation and regeneration methods have merit, revegetation might be short term and leads to regeneration and that will have higher biodiversity
- Plants that we plant might not take/breed as well as plants that germinate at the site
- Club rush around the lakes – let's get stuck into that
- We need disturbance regimes, but people are too afraid to disturb revegetation

#5 Consider staged planting (trees and shrubs first, then understorey or most tolerant, then less tolerant)

- Consider staged planting...when you know what you want to achieve
- What are you managing for? – landscape repair (erosion, lake bed, carbon) or biodiversity target?
- Soil health and improvement – do with reveg? E.g. loaded char (biochar)
- If there are high nutrients in soil > deal with them first
- Depends on ecosystem and starting condition – fix/stabilise first?
- Planning first – then consider stage > aspect, water
- Long term property plan that matches planting objectives more important than this principle
- Depends on diversity of planting, type of planting/ecosystem and funding > some \$ is for trees (some plantings/ecosystems don't have all of these tree, shrubs, understorey)
- Less of a priority than meeting funding timelines
- Could become part of principle #2
- Stage planning changes depending on the area
- Infilling is very important to see what has done well in the first year, second chance to go back
- "stupid Government policy" everything has to grow over 2m
- Revegetation group that plants all understorey first but counter to that is the need for some small plants to have microclimate
- Relates to principle #15

#6 Avoid planting in very dry conditions and plan to water during establishment, if possible

- Careful consideration of planting when conditions are right
- Condition monitoring to inform strategy
- Use funding effectively to ensure start of reveg is long term effective

PRINCIPLE

- Watering can be strategically applied, but not always worthwhile if other care isn't taken
- Always plan to have watering as a possibility, especially during key life stages and in response to drying phases
- Watering not feasible for plantings of a certain scale
- In an ideal world, dry years would be spent prepping and wet years planting > requires flexibility and longevity in funding
- Most reveg works are tied to short funding cycles which restricts the ability to defer planting in dry years
- Adaptable planning
- Site specific, level of water availability
- You always plant and always water – soak the planting hole before planting
- Look to new technology e.g. SunCorp in Port Augusta
- Its not always feasible to water
- Risks can come with watering so there may be caveats
- If conditions are ok, keep water off – funding impact this
- “what would be great vs what can be done”
- Scale of plantings impact this

#7 Exclude or strategically manage livestock and other herbivores

- Farmers 100%
- Access from landowners (permission)
- Habitat, control with chem, correct fencing for stock, certain revegetation, bait programs
- Education: through school, group chats, biodiversity, corresponding with communities
- Fencing is expensive, contractors can be hard to find. But if guards are not needed, can be viable
- Shepherd flocks can be useful for grassland management
- In bad years landholders can be tempted to put stock in longer than they should
- Fencing around the lake edge was widely installed, but land holders can just open the gate to let stock in
- Rabbits, kangaroos and deer all increasing in numbers

#8 Use locally indigenous and/or climate adaptive plant species

- Clear definition of locally indigenous (provenance boundaries)
- Looking after *Nga:tji*
- Bush tucker, medicine, tools/resources
- Intergenerational knowledge/skills – passing on stories
- Importance of why we preserve culture and traditions, stories
- Planting all those for future use and learnings
- Already implemented
- Biodiversity achieved through similar populations on Fleurieu

#9 Understand the site's microclimates and plant according to different species' water and temperature needs

- Past land use known
- Why are you doing it?
- What is microclimate? > is it actual sub-regional micro-climate?
- Agree – plant to reference site, tends to be scale dependent, can't if direct seeding (don't get that scale)

#10 Aim for complexity in vegetation structure using a diversity of species (unless the site objectives specify otherwise)

- Ecosystem dependent and planning dependent
- What niches, functions and ecosystem services are important?
- Prioritise these according to restoration targets
- Plant lots of understorey, ground cover species and native grasses
- Wider spacing of trees
- Continual strategic weeding

#11 Seek advice from local experts and join a local community group to build capacity and share resources

PRINCIPLE

- **This is THE MOST IMPORTANT principle of all – strong support by many for this principle being critical**
- Conferences, locals, farmers, connections, group chats, RSLs, sports clubs, functions
- Unis, SAs
- Rangers – government, non- government
- CLMM
- Funding for community resource centres
- Institutional knowledge has greatly increased since CLMM (and networking)
- Remove competitive nature of funding
- Good landholders who have done work are highly regarded by skeptical farmers

#12 Identify and manage risks across the life cycle of the site (establishment to overstorey maturity)

- Site preparation, planting methods
- Ongoing weed and pest management
- Access to sites
- Long term funding

#13 Monitor plant establishment and growth against the objectives and targets

- Objectives and targets can differ even within "groups" – soil stabilisation; biodiversity; connectivity; green space and beautification; green belts (wind breaks); urban greening > carbon
- > some objectives and targets are easier to monitor in ecosystem functioning (sic)

#14 Trial different planting techniques in different areas with different species

- Agree in principle but hard to achieve in reality
- Connection between research and practitioners
- Technical readiness level??
- Needs effort to characterise the ecosystem – soils, veg > what's important
- Scalping, ripping
- Deep-stem planting
- Match plant species to soil types
- Climate planting – integrate testing of methods into reveg programs
- Can disturbance regimes in planting be included for recruitment?

#15 In difficult conditions or locations, choose the most resilient plants over higher diversity

- Boobialla, knobrush (tells us where fresh water is), bluebush, pigface, muntries, native cherry, nitre bush
- Define conditions, generally sound principle, need to define more eg. "plants" >> reference sites for plants selected
- Need to create suitable conditions for some sites/plants eg. heat tolerance, exposure, wetting/drying
- Very site specific depending on aims eg. for some birds only key species needed
- Planting some species prior to improving conditions/suitability can risk greater mortality
- Sometimes planting resilient key structure/floristics species from reference assemblage can help a patch of reveg mature to the point that other species can be added, increasing diversity
- Risk of species being overrepresented in a patch

#16 Develop a seed production area or strategy for successive plantings and to promote regeneration

- Long term planning for successive plantings
- Space
- Administration
- Sharing of local knowledge between specialised groups with landholders
- Funding to facilitate revegetation on private and public properties

#17 Evaluate successes and failures to continuously improve management of the site

- For carbon projects, don't require on-going rigour – still needs maintenance
- Microclimate – what is there now and how can we change it with what we plant?
- Long-term investment is critical for success also in terms of community engagement
- Science of restoration is involving a lot of science and art
- A lot of things in agriculture could be used in reveg – employ these technologies
- This all requires consistent and regular funding – consider diversification of funding

PRINCIPLE

- Got to see any economic outcome as well as biodiversity and ecological outcomes to be able to evaluate and continuously improve
 - Need help to prepare business cases that include all stages of revegetation from planning to evaluation
-

4.4 Additional information

Workshop participants were also encouraged to write down any other information that their group discussed for the different principle, which is shown in Table 4. If a principle is not included, then no additional information was provided.

Table 4. Other information provided by workshop participants on the seventeen principles.

PRINCIPLE – OTHER INFORMATION
#1 Understand climate projections in your area (e.g. rainfall, temperatures, sea level rise) • Require topographic information to guide plantings • Look at plantings structure to broaden habitat variety/diversity • Look at individual ecological needs of species • Define your priorities at start of project • We don't know how species will respond to individual locations • Hedging bets projections are still projections • Banksia thriving in Meningie • Can't control mother nature • Access to info! Where?? • Sea level rise and river flows > same species may be in different spots (where to plant?) • Rainfall and temp for terrestrial species – should we be considering different species? • Understand the species that will do better under projections – there are winners and losers • River flows: SDL varies each state • Flows risk flooding • Infrastructure/assets • RAD, My climate view website • Align revegetation planning with local council, NRM and catchment management strategies • Stop govt. making money from it • Water transparency – who, where
#3 Address and mitigate threats on the site before regenerating or revegetating • Natural regeneration • Not enough spaces to effect landscape scale change • Wire mesh guards can be provided to landholders who can move as needed • Maybe not enough done to control browsing pressure – landholders often reluctant to consider kangaroo management • Plastic tree guards maybe not appropriate going forward (microplastics and lack of ongoing funding for removal, burden on landholders)
#4 Support natural regeneration in preference to revegetation (depending on levels of resilience and degradation) • Monitoring is essential to confirm recovery trajectories and trigger intervention if needed
#13 Monitor plant establishment and growth against the objectives and targets • Not everyone wants objectives and targets • Some obj. and targets change throughout life of project > adaptive • What objectives + targets do you want? • Can we achieve these? • Do we need to monitor against remnant veg? Why? • Should reveg be monitored against ecosystem function? Restoration targets? Function/form/repair?
#16 Develop a seed production area or strategy for successive plantings and to promote regeneration • Reduces long term reveg costs • Climate change increases importance of local provenance in the future

4.5 *New principles arising at the workshop*

A total of nine new principles were documented at the workshop. These were referred to as “Principle 18” on a blank worksheet, and have been renumbered from Principle 18 to Principle 26 as follows:

Principle 18 – Consider how plantings can maximise biodiversity and ecosystem engineers

Considerations:

- Use of insects, structures, logs and habitat stacks to enhance ecosystem engineering and biodiversity.

Principle 19 – Be clear on primary outcome and maximise multi-benefits, where possible

Considerations:

- Primary objective may be carbon or salinity, and
- Multi-benefits include nature positive, biodiversity outcomes, social and cultural benefits.

Principle 20 – Keep going, do your best with no regrets because anything is better than nothing

Considerations:

- Don't let perfect get in the way of good,
- If your objective is biodiversity, then focus on structure and function, and
- It's not all about perfect plant diversity.

Principle 21 – Implement a disturbance regime suitable for the site

Considerations:

- Fire is important tool. Focus on revegetation sites with high bird diversity and abundance as this indicates that the seedbank may be well suited and requires disturbance to sprout. Needs to be Ngarrindjeri-led,
- Use cultural methods and understory knowledge to create suitable cool burns, and
- Who should do the burning? Just Ngarrindjeri?

Principle 22 – Revegetation needs people

Considerations:

- Only principle #11 mentions the people involved,
- Landholders, advisors, community groups, neighbours, environmental groups, volunteers, contractors, and
- Ensure all people know objectives and landholders/project leaders have access to experts/locals/technical advisors/community groups to learn from and apply knowledge to best of abilities and funding.

Principle 23 – Plant within species' traditional range

Considerations:

- Don't plant species at the edge of their traditional range, and
- Links to Principle #1.

Principle 24 – Long-term investment is critical for success

Considerations:

- Long-term investment in revegetation programs is critical but equally is the long-term investment in building and maintaining community-based skills and capacity is critical for the success of those revegetation programs, especially for post planting management medium and long term, and
- This may fit alongside Principle #11 but isn't adequately captured at present.

Principle 25 – Working with neighbours

Considerations:

- **Essential for connectivity that neighbours work together, both public and private**
- Funding for private landholders, and
- Consensus between partners.

Principle 26 – Fire adaptive management

Considerations – cultural rangers' team (Figure 3)

- Reintroduce fire as a management tool – soils, air temperatures, reading Country, age range of plants,
- Cultural burns are a must,
- Look at our own seasonal calendar – some seasons are better for burning,
- Many plants are adapted to burning – so if not getting fire then not getting full range of plants and benefits,
- Fire management has been squashed, relearning fire, and
- Burning as a climate change tool – fire is carbon – timing is critical thing.

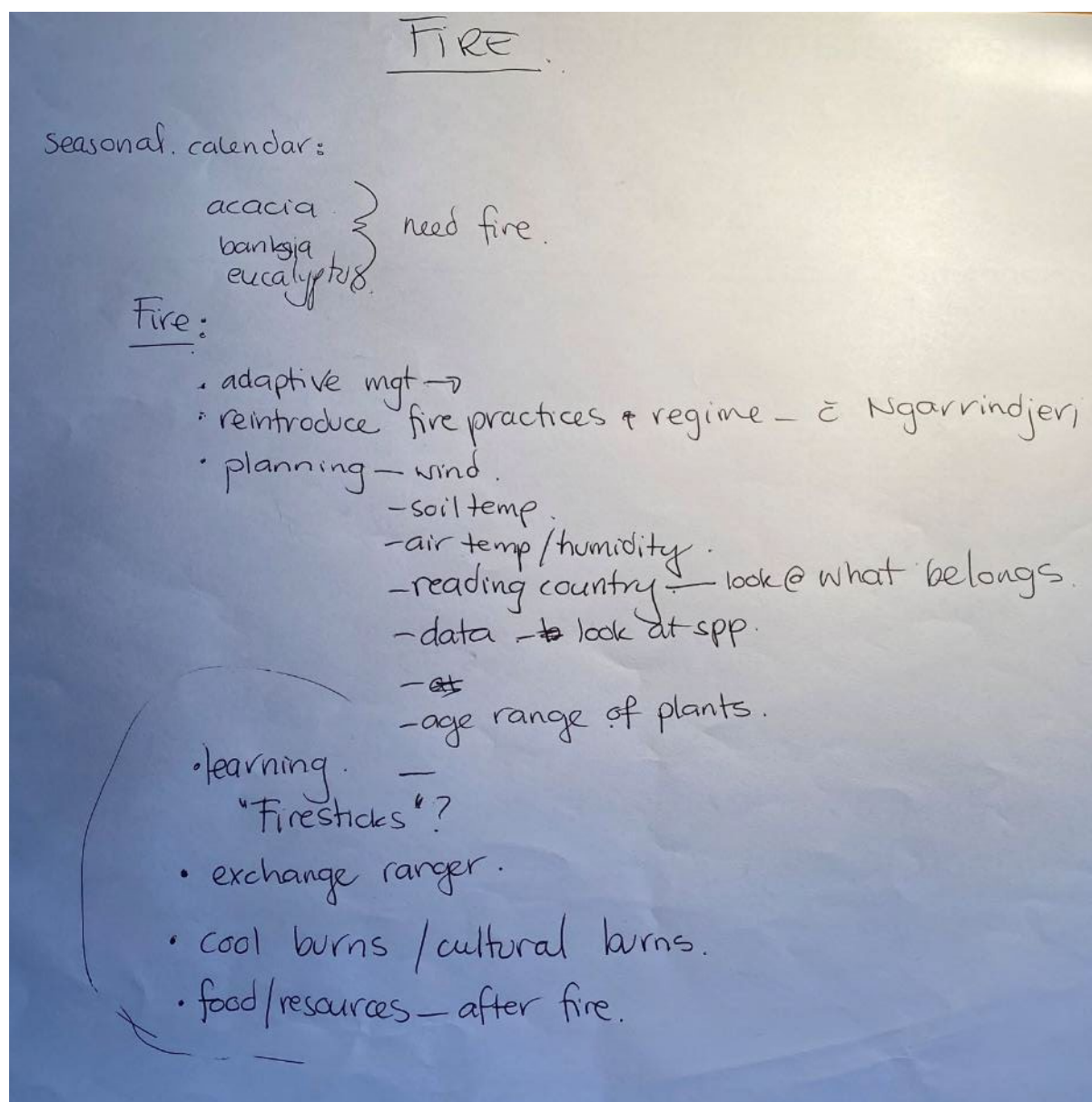


Figure 3. Diagram of cultural burning considerations captured at the workshop.

4.6 Comments received post-workshop

We didn't discuss direct seeding opportunities and/or seed collection at the workshop. As you are probably aware, direct seeding is generally much more cost-effective compared with tubestock revegetation.

Several factors are critical to the success of direct seeding. Suitable site preparation is essential, particularly effective weed control and the management of grazing herbivores such as rabbits, kangaroos and, in some cases, deer. Careful matching of plant species to soil types is also important.

Post-seeding management is equally important and may include weed control through over-spraying during the first year of germination, along with ongoing pest animal control (including red spider mite). Seeding also doesn't need to be

undertaken in straight lines; it is often more effective if it follows the natural contours of the landscape.

Timing is another key factor. Ideally, seeding should occur when there is sufficient soil moisture, with follow-up rainfall to support germination and early establishment. Outcomes from direct seeding are best assessed over a 3 to 5-year period, as different species will germinate and establish at varying times.

Seed collection should follow best practice guidelines and focus on collecting from strong, healthy specimens within local remnants or other plants in the landscape that are growing under similar soil and rainfall conditions. To improve long-term resilience, particularly under a future climate that is likely to be hotter and drier, it may also be beneficial to incorporate species or provenances from slightly drier climates.

5 Workshop Outcome Summary

Clear and consistent themes emerged at the workshop, however, there is great richness in the nuances and details of the discussion captured above that will inform future revegetation planning and practices. These discussion details will need to be explored further (see Next Steps) and the following workshop summary is provided as a reflection point rather than a definitive summary of the revegetation principles required to support the success in the CLLMM region.

Workshop themes for guiding future revegetation in the CLLMM region:

- Understand your site in terms of its regional context (river, lake, terrestrial, estuarine, marine), cultural context (listening to Country, cultural practices) and likely exposure to climate changes over coming decades (temperature, rainfall, hydrology),
- Importance of working with neighbours and others across the region to connect patches of remnants and revegetation, thereby “learning by doing together”, developing new techniques and reaping mental health benefits,
- Incorporation of cultural practices into revegetation planning and management, including cultural burning of remnant and revegetated sites to promote natural regeneration of a greater diversity of plants,
- Plan for adaptive planting over time, accepting that species survival and selection may change over time and with capacity to provide pre- and post-planting care, noting that planting something now is better than planting nothing,
- Implement revegetation and regeneration at the CLLMM landscape scale with a focus on enhancing ecological function and connectivity between neighbouring properties and remnant areas across diverse habitats and corridors,
- Engage experts for projects and provide ongoing support for community groups and the CLLMM regional community of practitioners to “learn by doing together” fostering best-practice and social-ecological cohesion,
- The critical need for continuous, long-term and diverse funding sources to support revegetation and regeneration over decades, and the revegetation practitioner network. Importance of emerging nature repair markets and other sources of income to enable revegetation and regeneration at the CLLMM regional scale,
- Need to better understand threatening processes and beneficial disturbance regimes, including grazing, fire, flood and temperature, in shaping vegetation communities, and set clear targets for revegetation at a site-scale, and
- Monitoring of success, and failures, will help guide future revegetation works, and identify if there are tipping points for species or habitats (e.g. salinity, temperature, moisture) that will prevent plants thriving regardless of human efforts.

6 Next Steps

The general consensus with the seventeen draft principles, the identification of nine new principles and the evaluation that they broadly apply across the whole region and will become more relevant over time, suggest that the workshop participants saw value in co-defining and applying principles. This workshop was the first step along that pathway, and the next steps have been identified to include:

1. Working toward long-term funding certainty for regionally significant restoration programs and sites where ecological benefits accrue over decades rather than typical project funding cycles,
2. Coordination of regular meetings of the revegetation community of practice to advance knowledge and continue development of the principles and practices into a useful strategy for the region,
3. Co-develop a glossary of terms, a library of practices and a suite of principles that are specific to the CLLMM regional habitats and landscape processes,
4. Consider development of a best practice guideline and/or create a supplement to an existing guideline that captures the best practices that sit beneath the agreed set of principles based on local experience and scientific evaluation of revegetation actions,
5. Document case studies that are exemplars of the different principles and/or establish demonstration sites for best-practice and emerging techniques,
6. Evaluate the established survey sites and identify new sites, as required, to form a chain of “living laboratories” where different species, techniques and approaches can be trialled, monitored and evaluated over time particularly identifying those that can cope with climate change,
7. Undertake species-specific climate projections for a selection of plant species that are extensively used for revegetation, indicators of change in regeneration and those known to be susceptible to climate stressors. The methods outlined in Figure 4 (Hancock et al, 2018) could be used to prepare a climate-ready strategy for CLLMM revegetation, and
8. Establish a monitoring network and knowledge management framework to ensure continuous improvement of CLLMM revegetation and regeneration practices into the future.

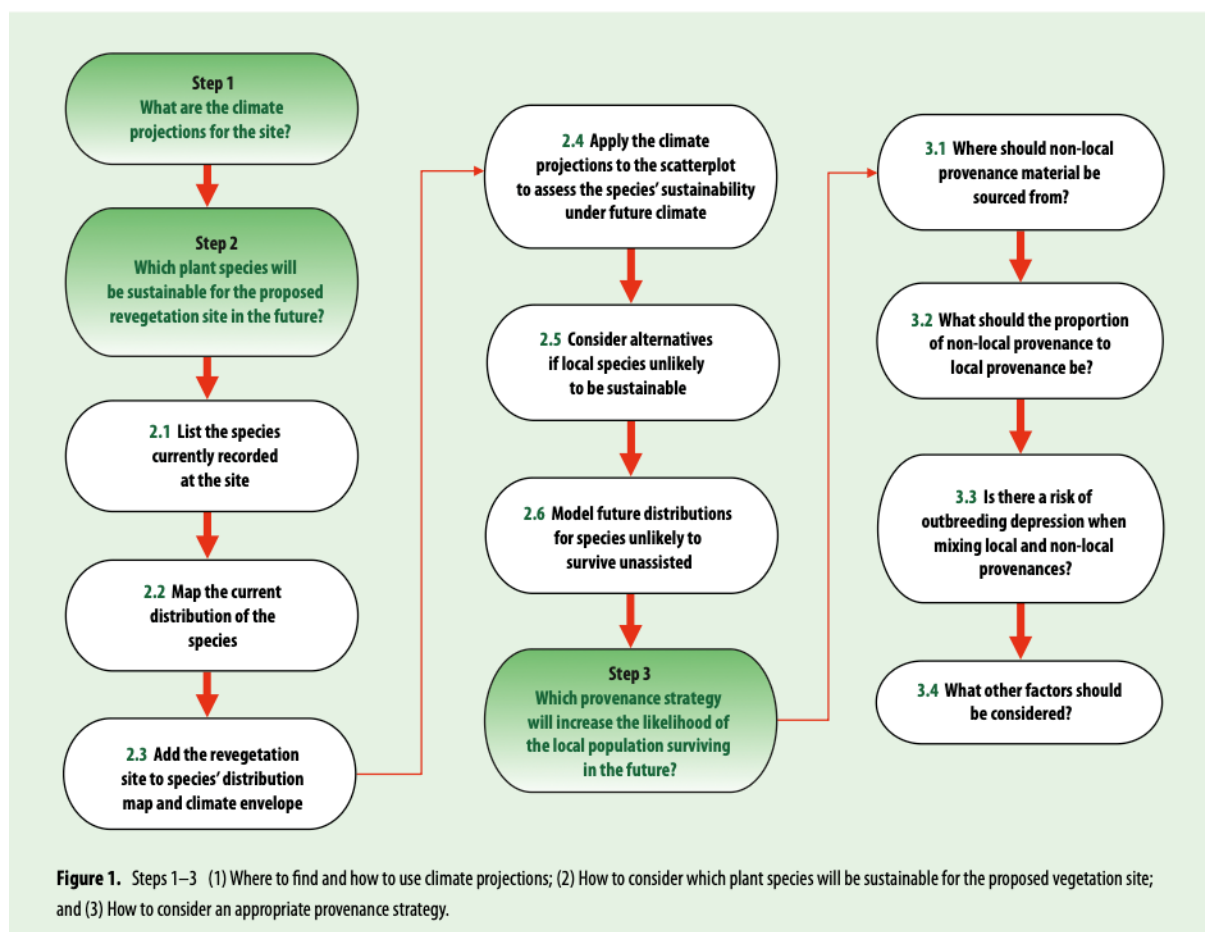


Figure 4. Three steps for applying climate projections to plant species selection. taken from Hancock et al (2018).

7 References

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Appendix A

Table A1. Summary of participant organisations who attended the CLLMM Revegetation Practitioners workshop on the 3 March 2026.

ORGANISATION
Adelaide University
Alexandrina Council
AU2100
Biodiversity Victor Harbor
CLLMM community
CLLMM Research Centre
Coorong District Council
Flinders University
Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife
Hills & Fleurieu Landscape Board
Kumarangk Hindmarsh Island Landcare Group
Investigator College
Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board
Nature Foundation
Nature Glenelg Trust
Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation
Ngarrindjeri Land and Progress Association
National Parks and Wildlife Service South Australia
River, Lakes and Coorong Action Group
RSW Environmental
SA Department for Environment and Water
SA Drought Hub
Second Nature Conservancy
The Forktree Project
University of East London
University of Melbourne

Appendix B

Table B1. Agenda for the CLLMM Revegetation Practitioners workshop on the 3rd March 2026.



CLLMM REVEGETATION WORKSHOP

Reflecting on the past to shape the future

- Date:** Tuesday, 3 March 2026
- Time:** (sandwiches provided 12:30–1:00 pm arrival for) 1:00pm–4:00 pm workshop with optional informal food and drinks afterwards)
- Venue:** CLLMM Research Centre, 92 Barrage Road, Goolwa, SA, 5214
- Purpose**
1. Discuss key findings of the ecological and practitioner & landowner surveys
 2. Evaluate guiding principles for future revegetation in CLLMM region
 3. Identify gaps in knowledge and future priorities

Time	Item	Who
12:30–1:00pm	Workshop participants arrive & settle in & housekeeping. Sandwiches provided	All
1:00–1:10pm	Introduction Official commencement of workshop, housekeeping, Welcome to Country and setting the scene for the workshop	Nick Whiterod (CLLMM Research Centre) and Lawrie Agius
1:10–1:40pm	Ecological survey summary Presentation and discussion on key findings from 2025 ecological surveys comparing with 2015 outcomes and broader ecological indicators	Martin Breed (Flinders University), Sacha Jellinek (University of Melbourne), Riley Hodgson (Flinders University)
1:40–2:00pm	Practitioner perspectives & landowner insights Presentation and discussion on surveys of practitioners, landholders, First Nations representatives, and community groups, highlighting perceptions of revegetation benefits, challenges and future priorities.	Bri Le Busque (Adelaide University)
2:00–3:45pm	Workshopping Participatory session focusing on developing guiding principles for future revegetation in the region, integrating ecological evidence and lived experience.	Keri Muller (AU2100) & all
3:45–4:00pm	Workshop wrap-up Opportunity to share key insights from workshop and discuss next steps	Keri Muller (AU2100) & all
4:00–5:30pm	Optional drinks, nibbles & chance to continue conversations informally.	All

The workshop forms a component of the 'Evaluation of ecosystem responses and local knowledge to improve future CLLMM landscape revegetation' project being delivered through the CLLMM Research Centre.



