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Aquatic ecosystem health checks

The latest round of Aquatic Ecosystem Condition Reports (AECRs) for South Australia has rated the 32 surveyed sites in three regions as being in either very good, good or fair condition.

The monitoring data was collected in 2020 as part of the EPA's ongoing AECRs program. It came from 18 sites in the Mt Lofty Ranges, 11 on Kangaroo Island and three in the Tod River area of Eyre Peninsula.

The EPA worked with Kangaroo Island Landscape Board staff to see if the direct effect of the 2019-20 bushfires, and the subsequent effects of any run-off, had caused degradation of any streams.

But EPA Director Science and Information Keith Baldry said there were no indications that ash, sediment and nutrients mobilised by winter run-off from burnt catchments had worsened the condition of the streams.

"Despite the extensive bushfires on Kangaroo Island, most sites have shown only minor to moderate changes to animal and plant life and less than half show changes to ecosystem function," he said.

"In the Mt Lofty Ranges there are opportunities to improve stream conditions by making changes to riparian habitats lining most waterways, with a focus on eradicating weeds and reducing the amount of nutrients and fine sediments that enter rivers and creeks."

The EPA monitored the Tod River sites on the Eyre Peninsula to record any recovery from an extensive fire in 2005. The sites showed no evidence of any legacy effects from the bushfire and were listed as being in fair condition, reflecting the scale of historical vegetation clearance, salinisation and nutrient levels, although some sites in the past had been listed as poor or very poor.

Data from the AECRs is used by the EPA, Department for Environment and Water, landscape boards, councils and other groups to help identify and manage the causes of nutrient rises in waterways.

The surveys in the Mt Lofty Ranges were jointly funded by Green Adelaide. The reports are available on the EPA [website](#).