This information sheet has been drafted to advise shack owners and others with property adjacent the main channel of the River Murray of the regulations and requirements governing works to stop erosion of the riverbank, protect trees from collapsing and obtaining access to the waterfront.

This is a guide only. It should not be assumed that the works discussed will be permitted to be constructed in all circumstances and to any dimensions/specifications.

Various factors may influence the design and subsequent assessment of any works, including zoning, site characteristics, topography of the land, the extent of riverbank erosion, the number of existing structures on the land or nearby land, ownership and other government agency policies.

In what circumstances will works be required?

There are approximately 2,500 shack sites and 220 kilometres of the River Murray within the Mid Murray Council district.

Recreation and tourism is extremely popular within the region and water based recreation forms a major part of that industry. As such suitable access to the waterfront, specifically in shack areas, is important.

An unfortunate side-effect of the recreational use of the river is the increasing incidents of erosion of the riverbank and the collapse of trees in close proximity to the waters edge due to the wave motion from vessels on the river and various other factors.

Accordingly many shack owners are now looking for ways to stop or minimise the erosion of the riverbank, to protect trees from collapsing into the river and to enable suitable access to the waterfront.

What methods can be used to minimise erosion of the riverbank and protect trees from collapsing into the river?

The needs of shack owners must be balanced against the needs of the environment and the general goal to maintain the natural character of the river valley as much as possible.

Accordingly there are a number of different options available including:

- Placing sand bags along the water edge which minimises erosion and provide a stable non-slip surface for access to the waterfront;
- Placing geo-textile matting along the riverbank combined with lawn or other vegetation to fix the matting in place;
- Artificial logs/soft rock (a large synthetic tube filled with sand) which can be placed along the waterfront (with the land behind backfilled with clean soil if necessary) creating a barrier to erosion and enabling access;
- Re-vegetation of the waterfront with native vegetation which will prevent erosion by stabilising the soil;
- Retaining walls.

Sand bags, geo-textile matting, artificial logs and re-vegetation are the preferred methods to prevent riverbank erosion due to their natural appearance in the river valley, however it is acknowledged that in some circumstances retaining walls will be the only option available to prevent erosion and enable access to the waterfront.
In what circumstances should a retaining wall be constructed?

Retaining walls may be appropriate where the topography of the land is too steep to enable the other methods to be used effectively.

Retaining walls should only be constructed in the following circumstances (and as a last resort when other options are impractical or impossible to implement):

- Where access to the waterfront for the purposes of recreation or access to vessels is impossible due to the topography of the land;
- Where erosion of the riverbank is substantial and it is demonstrated that a retaining wall is the best option to minimise that erosion;
- Where a retaining wall is required to stop a tree or other significant vegetation from collapsing into the river.

In those circumstances where a retaining wall is an appropriate solution to prevent riverbank erosion/enable access, they should be constructed in accordance with the following:

- Not constructed any higher than is necessary to prevent riverbank erosion (i.e. avoid “levelling” of the riverbank);
- Not involve the “terracing” of the riverbank (i.e. only the waterfront should be retained to prevent erosion);
- Be constructed of red wood or other timber material (as opposed to concrete sleepers) such that the wall blends with the natural features of the environment;
- Be limited in length to those areas of the allotment frontage which are subject to substantial erosion or where it is necessary to retain a tree or enable access to the waterfront;

A single set of stairs to access the waterfront will also be considered if the topography of the land does not allow general access.

Approval

All of the possibilities referred to within this information sheet require development approval from Council before they can be constructed/implemented.

Retaining walls, regardless of their height also require development approval, but only retaining walls retaining a difference in ground levels exceeding one metre are required to be accompanied by engineering details.

The following information is required to be submitted with an application for any of the above activities:

- Development Application Form;
- Electricity Declaration Form;
- Site Plan showing:
  - All boundaries of the site;
  - All existing structures on site;
  - The extent of any existing retaining walls;
  - The river pool level (typical and current);
  - Any existing vegetation in close proximity to the waters edge;
  - A north point and scale;
- Elevation plans showing the height of the wall, materials to be used, colours and extent of the riverbank;
- Photographs of the area to be retained, including previous photographs (if possible) which help to demonstrate the extent of riverbank erosion;
- Any other information deemed relevant.

Fees

The application will need to be accompanied by the appropriate fees. The fees can vary as they are based upon the cost of the development. An example of the fees which may be required is as follows:

- Lodgement Fee - $64.00;
- Development Plan Assessment Fee - $39.75
- DEW Referral Fee - $379.00
- Building Rules Consent Fee - $69.50.

Please note these fees are indicative only and may vary. Additional fees may also be required depending on the development proposed.
Referral to DEW

It is likely that each application will need to be referred to the Department of Environment and Water (DEW) who will assess the application against the provisions of the River Murray Act 2003, and conduct all of the various Government referrals (Native Title, Native Vegetation, Crown Lands etc).

An 8 week timeframe is allowed for this process to be completed.

Crown Lands

If the retaining wall will be placed on the riverbed (i.e. a section of land under the water level) approval from Crown Lands as the land owner will be required and a license will be issued together with an annual fee.

Referral of your application to Crown Lands will occur during the development application process. You do not need to contact them separately.

Timeframes

Applicants should expect a timeframe of approximately 12 weeks for the completion of the assessment of the application and for a decision to be made.

Lack of information submitted with an application has the potential to lengthen this timeframe. Accordingly please ensure all of the relevant information is submitted.

Assistance

Council’s Planning Staff are available by phone, in person at the Cambrai Office, or can come to you to assist with any query you may have. The Planning Department can be contacted by phoning 8564 6020 or by email at postbox@mid-murray.sa.gov.au.