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STAKEHOLDERS IN AGREEMENT ON THE NEED FOR BETTER FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT

The Inland Rivers Network is supporting calls by Macquarie River Food and Fibre for the NSW Government to improve the management of rural floodplains and environmental water in the Macquarie Valley and throughout NSW.

“All water management practices need to be scrutinised as floodplain development is sucking the life from the Marshes – the skeletons of the dead river red gums throughout the wetlands are stark reminders that change is needed,” said Amy Hankinson, Coordinator of the Inland Rivers Network.

“The Marshes have received less than 25 per cent of the water flowing into the system since 2001 – they need more water and it’s up to Government to make sure environmental water gets to the Marshes and floodplain,” she said.

IRN is particularly concerned about a plan being prepared by local irrigators and government that will legitimise current illegal banks upstream of the Marshes, even though they will harm the environment and other users in the system.

“The banks are cutting the river off from the surrounding environment, leaving the floodplain high and dry and stopping critical flows from getting into the river.

“These sorts of developments can be disastrous for the rivers and wetlands, starving key areas of water and stopping environmental water getting to where it needs to go. Floodplains are part of the river – cutting off the floodplain is like severing a river’s artery,” said Ms Hankinson.

“They not only stop water getting to trees and wetlands, they intensify flooding elsewhere, damaging the surrounding environment, other properties and towns downstream.”

Environmentalists are concerned about the lack of transparency around the floodplain management plan, saying key people have been locked out of the process. Ms Hankinson said a rigorous environmental assessment of the impact of floodplain development in the region was desperately needed.

“We would like to see a full investigation of all floodplain development in the Macquarie Valley and on all NSW rivers and floodplains to guide rural floodplain plans.

“Badly placed development must be removed and new banks that stop environmental water getting to where it needs to go must be banned.”

A one-page fact sheet on floodplain development is attached.

**For more information, contact Amy Hankinson, Inland Rivers Network Coordinator
Phone: 02 8270 9904 or 0407 279 088**