

OH 456/17 - Interview with Don Blackmore

TAPE 1, SIDE A - Salt interception scheme

Well, what happened was that we had the two opposing forces where one we wanted to protect our high value irrigation and other land and the only way we could do that was by allowing some drainage and that drainage then took with it some salt, so if we allowed unrestricted drainage to the river, we'd fundamentally destroy our other asset which was the river. So what we needed to do was to see whether there were things we could afford that would protect our river and at the same time allow some drainage or other actions which increase salinity. So the balance that was struck after a very detailed study of the river, the irrigation areas, salt interception opportunities, was to invest \$47 million in salt interception schemes and we now divert up to 1100 tonnes of salt a day away from the river, every day, and spend about \$2 million a year on energy pumping salt. Now that might sound a bit awful, but that reduced salinity by about 80 EC, or about 20 per cent, on average in South Australia. The quid pro quo for doing that was the upper states got a pollution entitlement of 15 EC each, so that's 30. So we reduced salinity by 80 and we gave the states 30 back to distribute between their communities and the net result was a reduction in river salinity but still accommodating this need to drain.