Mt Burr Swamp is a modified wetland basin of 50-60 hectares in size, and is a central feature on a larger 300 hectare parcel of land that was developed as a private mixed farming enterprise over the past 60 years. The property is located in the lower South East of South Australia, east of Millicent and north-west of Mt Gambier, and lies adjacent to Marshes Native Forest Reserve (NFR).

The Marshes is a large freshwater wetland complex, listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia (DIWA) and is one of 13 priority groundwater dependent ecosystems identified in the South East Regional NRM Plan (SENRM Board 2010). Marshes NFR provides verified habitat for no less than six nationally threatened fauna species¹, and is one of the most floristically diverse nature reserves in South Australia.

Proposals that identified the restoration potential of Mt Burr Swamp, to enable expansion of the habitat in Marshes NFR, date back to the late 1970s; but were not acted upon successfully until Nature Glenelg Trust completed the purchase of the property on the 30th of September 2016. The land purchase was predominantly funded by partnerships that NGT entered into with the Native Vegetation Council (SA) and OneFortyOne Plantations, but was also supplemented by a successful public fundraising campaign that included significant donations from other NGOs, community groups, businesses and private individuals.

¹ EPBC Act 1999 listed fauna species include Growling Grass Frog, Little Galaxias, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Southern Bent-wing Bat, South-eastern Red-tailed Black-cockatoo, Australasian Bittern
Working towards property-scale restoration

Although the property has now been purchased with the long-term goal of conservation and restoration in mind, the precise pathway and mechanisms employed for how that goal is fully achieved, and the timeframe over which this will occur, are still being determined. To inform this process, a property restoration and management plan is currently under development, and the timing of its implementation will be subject to:

1. the availability of grant monies, philanthropic donations or other funding sources, including income derived from economically productive portions of the property before they transition to conservation, to support future works;
2. the harvest timing of blue gum and pine plantations on parts of the property under this commercial land use, a prerequisite before restoration can begin in those areas;
3. the ultimate method determined for transitioning pasture areas back to native vegetation; and,
4. assessment of the likely post-restoration inundation extent of other drained wetland features, especially those in proximity to the plantation areas (as per point 2.) or with consideration for access requirements for other actions required (as per point 3.).

Based on a (pre-development) aerial image from 1951 (see below), it appears that almost half of the property could ultimately be restored as wetland habitat. Over 40 (now mostly modified) wetland features have been mapped across the property, noting that these wetlands were originally interspersed among areas of dense heathland and woodland – just as Marshes NFR still appears today. Map layers so far created by NGT include: pre-development vegetation, historic wetland extent, management units, fences and property boundaries.

Because of the scale of the task involved, we are determined to work through the restoration process in a careful and considered fashion – which means not making major short-term changes to wider property management beyond undertaking some key early works. That means that large parts of the property will continue to operate and appear as a working farm for the foreseeable future, and wider restoration is anticipated to occur in a sequential, staged fashion in line with our restoration plans once completed.

**Summarising activities over the first 12 months after purchase**

Despite the restoration and management plan not yet being in place, a number of immediate priority actions have already been implemented on the property. The most prominent of these, was the restoration (from August 2016) of an interim (higher) static water level, achieved by installing a temporary regulating structure of the artificial outlet drain from Mt Burr Swamp – right.
Thanks to the wet spring that followed, the results have been dramatic and highly visual; with the swamp holding water through the subsequent summer and autumn for the first time in decades:

**The restoration of Mt Burr Swamp (from winter 2016)**

- Late autumn 2016
- Late winter 2016
- Mid spring 2016
- End of summer 2017

**Mt Burr Swamp (left) before drain regulation: December 2015 and (right) after drain regulation: November 2016 (courtesy of Charles Prime, LC Aerial)**

Other activities undertaken by NGT, often completed with the support of our fantastic volunteers, include:

- work on the shearing shed, to convert it into a multi-purpose space;
- fencing to exclude stock from two initial priority restoration areas (see map over page);
- weed control, especially the removal of feral pines;
- pre-restoration wetland condition mapping (see over page);
- wetland vegetation transect monitoring at selected sites; and,
- successful surveys for nationally threatened species including the Little Galaxias and Growling Grass Frog (right).
The future

We have a long and challenging, but also extremely exciting journey ahead, and look forward to involving the wider community in the story of Mt Burr Swamp as it unfolds. We’re also very interested to use the property as an opportunity to test new and innovative ways of achieving long-term environmental goals in a primary production context (our starting point), in the hope that we can initiate similar projects in the future.

Finally and most of all, we thank you – our dedicated supporters – for your tremendous support so far, and are proud to unveil the permanent sign that recognises your generosity. We wouldn’t be here today without you!

For more information on the future progress of the Mt Burr Swamp Restoration Project or our other work, please visit the NGT website: www.natureglenelg.org.au, or contact us by emailing info@natureglenelg.org.au.
### Appendix 1: explanatory codes for native vegetation in the 1951 aerial image shown on Page 2 (by Ben Taylor, NGT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>code</th>
<th>general description</th>
<th>dominant species</th>
<th>comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Swamp gum heathy woodland</td>
<td></td>
<td>as described by Haywood (2016) but may have a high proportion of E. viminalis and E. baxteri in more elevated areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Manna gum, Stringybark forest to closed forest over drier heath</td>
<td>Eucalyptus viminalis, E. baxteri ± E. ovata ± Acacia melanoxylon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Manna gum, Stringybark open to very open forest over drier heath</td>
<td>Eucalyptus viminalis, E. baxteri ± E. ovata ± Acacia melanoxylon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Manna gum, Stringybark woodland to open woodland over wet heath</td>
<td>Eucalyptus viminalis, E. baxteri ± E. ovata ± Acacia melanoxylon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Manna gum, Stringybark woodland to open woodland over wet heath</td>
<td>Eucalyptus viminalis, E. baxteri ± E. ovata ± Acacia melanoxylon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Tussock sedgeland with emergent Swamp Gum and Redgum</td>
<td>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</td>
<td>Low confidence in this vegetation description. There was only 1 Redgum on the property in the 1940s &amp; this tree still stands near the northern boundary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>Tussock sedgeland (treeless)</td>
<td>Carex spp. ± Juncus spp. ± Gramineae spp.</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>Swamp complex with riparian silky tea tree</td>
<td>Leptospermum lanigerum tall closed shrubland</td>
<td>Single mapped polygon representing Mount Burr Swamp. Separated from other swamp polygons due to greater knowledge of pre-development vegetation, esp. riparian shrubs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>Swamp complex</td>
<td>Leptospermum lanigerum tall closed shrubland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>Silky tea tree tall closed shrubland</td>
<td>Leptospermum lanigerum tall closed shrubland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>Swamp complex</td>
<td>Leptospermum lanigerum tall closed shrubland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>Wet heath (treeless)</td>
<td>Melaleuca squarrosa ± Melaleuca melaleuca ± Allocasuarina paludosa ± Acacia oxycedrus</td>
<td>“Heath” as described by ForestrySA (2007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>