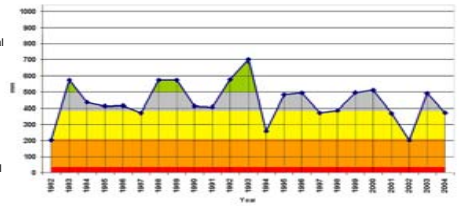
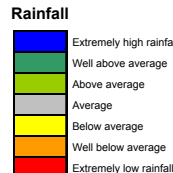
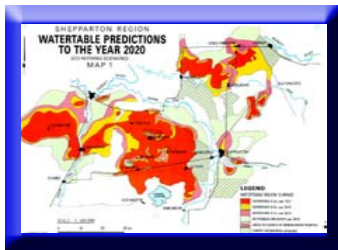
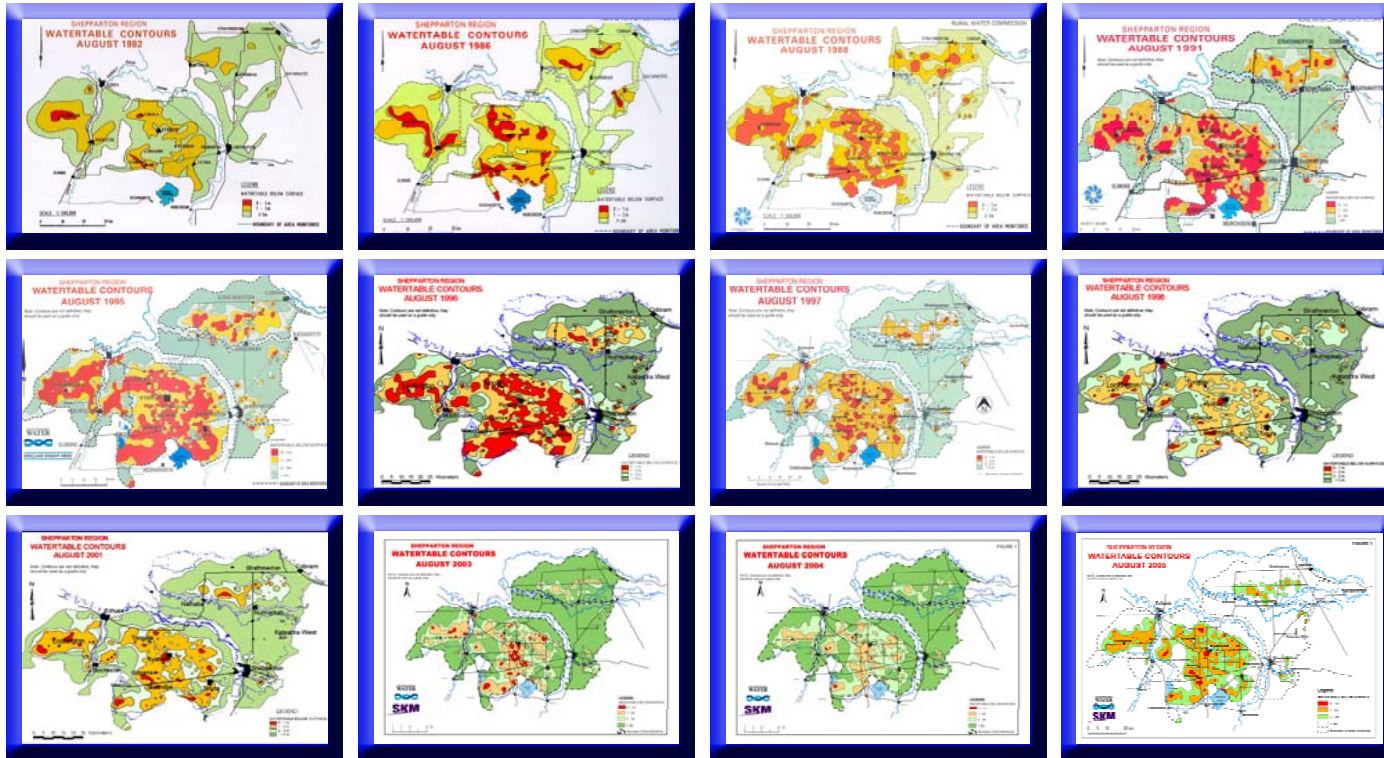


WATERTABLE MAPS of the SHEPPARTON IRRIGATION REGION: 1982 - 2020



1982 saw the first release of a series of maps of regional watertable depth for the Shepparton Irrigation Region. These maps (see left) show depth to the watertable from ground surface. Where the watertable is less than 2 metres depth (red and oranges areas) the land is at a much higher risk of salinisation. In the event of doing nothing to combat rising watertables, 65% of the region would be expected to have a watertable at less than 2 metres depth by 2020 (see Shepparton Region Watertable Predictions to the Year 2020 map).

The rise and extent of watertables across the region was rapid between 1990 and 1995. From 1996, dry seasonal conditions and the associated limited surface water allocations played a role in lowering watertable depth. It is also apparent that catchment works are having a significant impact on keeping watertables down.

The Shepparton Irrigation Region Catchment Strategy targets salinity and water logging reduction through activities including groundwater pumping, surface water management and improved water use efficiency. In 2006, more than 120,000 hectares of the irrigated part of the region is protected through direct lowering of watertables by groundwater pumping and 520 kilometres of community surface water management and 190 kilometres of primary surface water management schemes.

A total area of 200,00 hectares or 70% of the region is whole farm planned. Whole farm planning, land forming, farm reuse systems, improved irrigation efficiency and surface water management schemes reduce additions to the watertable.

The activities of the Shepparton Irrigation Region Catchment Strategy collectively provide improved security to the various agricultural industries and valuable environmental assets of the region.

The risk now facing the community and government is complacency about the need for ongoing funding of salinity works.

Analysis of groundwater levels and rainfall data show that watertables have responded to above average winter rainfall in 2005, increasing areas subjected to high groundwater levels. The threat of the region being underlain by a watertable less than 2 metres depth is still quite real!