

Municipal Catchup!

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Spotlight on River Health

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority is close to completing its River Health Strategy. The strategy, when complete, will form part of the Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy's sub-strategy documents.

Building on existing river-related action plans, implementation plans and strategic documents, the strategy is supported by a series of sub strategies and discussion papers. It relies on the following four key elements: Protecting the rivers that are of highest community value; Maintaining the condition of ecologically healthy

rivers; Achieving an overall improvement in the environmental condition of the remainder of the rivers; Preventing damage from future management activities.

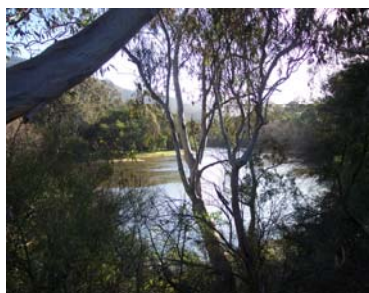
High Priority Waterways within the Goulburn Broken Catchment are identified in the strategy. These include rivers that are "of greatest value to the community" and are rivers that are currently "ecologically healthy".

The strategy identifies waterways within the catchment that can potentially be improved to ecologically healthy condition. It also identifies opportunities for river

restoration works, and through a risk analysis process, identifies a range of management actions to be implemented in various parts of the catchment.

The Goulburn Broken River Health Strategy provides a framework for integrated actions that will enable rivers of high quality to be protected and others to be improved in quality for current and future generations.

For further information contact the GBCMA Office on (03) 5822 2288



Catchment Management Authorities are required to establish and articulate a clear vision and direction for natural asset protection and management. They have a major responsibility to engage the community to achieve this vision as set out in the Regional Catchment Strategy.

Catchment Management Authority- Role and Responsibilities.

Catchment Management Authorities (CMA) are statutory authorities set up under the Catchment and Land Protection Act (CaLP)1994.

Some duties beyond the CMA's primary duties as listed in the CaLP Act 1994, have been added under the Water Act 1989 as delegations.

CMA's are required to operate according to specified protocols.

They have a Catchment Management Authority Board and Implementation Committees and were established in partnership with government and the community, to ensure: *"the sustainable development of natural resource-based industries, the protection of land and water resources and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage in their region"*

Did you know?

The Goulburn River is 570km long, flowing from upstream of Woods Point to Echuca.

Ecologically Healthy Rivers

An Ecologically Healthy River is described by the Victorian River Health Strategy (VRHS) as "a river which retains the major ecological features and functioning of that river prior to European settlement and which would be able to sustain these characteristics into the future"

National Water Week

Planning for National Water Week October 2004 has already begun in the Goulburn Broken Catchment. The theme will again be " A Water Festival" and will be aimed at the general community and schools. It will include river boat cruises, movie nights, wetland walks and school performances. This year's committee is going to make sure that it will be bigger and better than the last..... For further information please contact Jacinta Burke at Goulburn Valley Water on (03) 5832 0461.

IF YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS OR QUERIES YOU CAN CONTACT MELVA RYAN ON:

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GREATER SHEPPARTON



Water is Life

Human settlement in Australia has always followed water because water is life. Tens of thousands of years ago, Aboriginals settled near rivers, streams and lakes because they provided a source of drinking, washing, and cooking water and a variety of plants and animals to eat.

When Europeans arrived in Australia, they followed the same pattern for the same reasons. However, since arrival much damage has been done to our streams as we have changed the land and waterways to meet human needs.

The damage is a result of the following:-

- * Increased stream flows from cleared catchments and towns resulting in erosion, damage to stream-side land and poor water quality;

- * Road run off, especially gravel roads, carrying sediment into streams;

- * Farm run-off, carrying sediment and farm chemicals into water ways;

- * Industry discharges into waterways leaving pollutants stored in stream bed sediments;

- * Increased stormwater run-off from hard surfaces of towns carrying litter and other pollution into waterways;

- * The construction of levee banks and drains to protect land, crops, livestock, roads, bridges and homes from flood damage;

- * Alterations to river courses allowing floodwaters to flow away quickly and not flood surrounding land;

- * Logs and snags removed from rivers;

- * Stock access and careless recreational use; and

- * The introduction of willows and other weeds on waterways.

All these impacts reduce water quality in rivers as well as being harmful to animals and vegetation living nearby. However, many of these changes were not seen as problems at the time. Attitudes have since changed and people want to restore our rivers and streams to a more natural condition.

This will take many years!

International Decade for Action "Water for Life"

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed the period from 2005 to 2015 as the International Decade for Action "Water for Life". The decade will start on World Water Day, March 22nd, 2005.

This declaration came from the close of the International Year of Freshwater 2003, and calls for a greater focus on water-related issues and for actions to ensure the participation of women in water related development efforts.

It points to the world's ever growing water crisis and re-commits countries to achieving the water related goals of the

2000 Millennium Declaration, the 2002 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and Agenda 21. "Water for Life" action will fit in with the International Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, which is also set for 2005-2015.

This period offers a wonderful opportunity for any water education campaign and program.

For further information contact Kym Nixon, Senior Project Officer, Victorian Water Industry Association (VicWater) on (03) 9639 8868.

Did you know?

Goulburn Broken Waterwatch celebrated it's 10th birthday in 2003! Last year Waterwatch coordinators visited more than 7,400 school students in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

Links with Local Government

This project began in the Goulburn Broken Catchment in October 2002. The aim of the project was to develop a process to link the objectives of the Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy with local government corporate planning activities.

The project work produced a framework for establishing the desired link. The framework is in the form of a matrix and has been called the Matrix for Action Document (MAD).

A separate document will be implemented for each of the eight local government regions in the Goulburn Broken Catchment. This document has been designed to show direct links between the objectives of the GB Regional Catchment Strategy and local government corporate plan Key Result Areas programs areas. It provides a process for information exchange and a list of implementation activities.

MAD implementation is currently being facilitated with the three municipalities within the Shepparton Irrigation Region.

For further information contact Melva Ryan, GBCMA Municipal Catchment Coordination on (03) 5822 2288.

Drainwatch

The Drainwatch program (formerly called Nutrients in Irrigation Drains) was formed in 1996 in conjunction with Waterwatch and the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network.

Currently there are 21 volunteers monitoring 40 sites within the Goulburn Broken Catchment's Shepparton Irrigation Region. Monthly water quality readings are taken for electrical conductivity, turbidity, phosphorus and flow.

A wide variety of people volunteer to be Drainwatch participants, including members of Landcare groups, landholders adjacent to drains, drain diverters and others who care for our environment.

If you are interested in becoming a Drainwatch monitor contact Melanie Browne on (03) 5832 1133.



Did you know

165 community volunteers are monitoring water quality parameters at over 750 sites in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

Partnerships in Natural Resource Management.

The following partnership activities have particular relevance to the GB Regional Catchment Strategy objectives relating to Waterway Health. **Waterway Health** is of common concern to both Local Government and the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority.

During 2004 **Stormwater Project** activity will focus on the building and construction industry. The City of Greater Shepparton, Benalla Rural City and Moira Shire have joined forces to run an industry education campaign on stormwater and litter issues.

This project and the Regional Waste Management Group are in the process of designing two 3x6 metre banners to display in new sub-division areas. The campaign activity will include a centre page lift out in each of the local papers describing the philosophy of **Water Sensitive Urban Design**.



The Stormwater Project is administered through Goulburn Valley Water.

As part of the **Waterwatch project** Students from the Cobram Primary School recently investigated tiny beasts that live in our waterways. Students chased and caught a range of bugs and turned them into movie stars by placing them under the video flex microscope and on to a TV screen.

The Waterwatch Project is administered through Goulburn Valley Water.



In the Goulburn Broken Catchment's Shepparton Irrigation Region, **Saltwatch Week** activities are coordinated by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). Participants collect water samples from local water sources and test it for salinity levels. Students use salt watch activities to learn practical environmental monitoring, mapping, data entry, graphing, and analysis making comparisons with other parts of the catchment and the state.

Saltwatch Week is the second week in May. Check out the Saltwatch website on www.saltwatch.org.au



Did you Know?

More than half of the world's wetlands have been destroyed in the last 100 years.

What is a Wetland?

Wetlands are areas covered at least some of the time, by fresh or saline water. They maybe permanently covered as in lakes, or only wet sometimes, like a billabong which dries up in summer.

The many types of wetlands are called different names depending on whether they are permanent or temporary, large or small, beside inland rivers or by the sea.

Wetlands are often highly productive, made rich by the regular inflow of water and the minerals and nutrients it carries.

Numerous plants and animals rely on wetland for all or part of their life.

Many of Victoria's wetlands have been drained for agriculture or for urban development and industry development. They were drained because it was relatively easy and the many economic and land use benefits of leaving an area as a natural wetland are not always appreciated.

Healthy wetlands serve as living filters helping to purify water. They support wildlife and the control of insect pests. They act as flood protection areas; natural fire breaks; erosion controllers and are breeding and feeding areas for many native animals. They provide vital living areas for many threatened plants and animals, are food source areas directly and indirectly for people and are places of recreation; landscapes of natural diversity, beauty and inspiration.

The Commonwealth Government and some states have wetland policies in accordance with the Ramsar Convention.

As at 2002, 57 wetland sites in Australia are listed under the Ramsar Convention. 11 are in Victoria and one, the Barmah Forest, is in the Goulburn Broken Catchment.

Did you Know?

Saltwatch began in 1987 and is Australia's longest running community monitoring program. Approximately 100,000 students, teachers, community and Landcare groups have since participated.

The *Ramsar* Convention-Helping to Conserve Wetlands

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is commonly called the Ramsar Convention after the Iranian town where it was first signed in 1971. This international treaty aims to halt the world wide loss of wetlands and to conserve remaining wetlands through ecologically sustainable use and management. Over 130 countries, including Australia, have already signed this wetland conservation treaty. Countries signing the treaty are expected to nominate wetlands of international importance and manage them to protect their ecological characteristics, develop a national wetlands policy and promote the protection of their wetlands through a system of reserves.

Works and Activities on **Designated Waterways**

To minimise degradation of creeks and waterways and to help ensure the long term stability and health of waterways, all works and activities on a designated waterway require a permit.

Poorly designed, constructed or maintained works lead to bed and bank erosion, the obstruction and alteration of flows and impact on stream health and water quality.

Inappropriately constructed and/or designated works require more frequent ongoing repairs and maintenance and can have a severe impact on flooding and the adjacent lands.

Works requiring permits include bridges, culverts, fords, service crossings, bed and bank stabilisation works, drainage outlets, extraction activities, vegetation management and stream deviations.

Catchment Management Authorities have a statutory role to determine and issue permits for works and activities on designated waterways throughout Victoria.

Did you Know?

Since European Settlement, Victoria has lost 50% of wetlands on private land. This includes 93% of its Shallow Freshwater Meadows and 78% of its Freshwater Marshes.

Wetland Protection

Wetlands are one of the most threatened environments on earth. It is important that the remaining wetlands and their values be protected.

Wetlands are important to the overall health of the Shepparton Irrigation Region. They conserve native plants and wildlife, enhance agricultural productivity, improve water quality and sustain genetic diversity.

Most wetlands on private land have been lost or altered as a result of agricultural development.

In recent times Whole Farm Plan Certification and Earthwork controls have been implemented and subsequently provide an opportunity for further wetland protection and enhancement activity.

This role is outlined under the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) By Law No1 pursuant to Sections 160, 161 and 219 of the Water Act 1989.

Any such works carried out without a permit constitutes an offence under the Water Act 1989 and the By Law.

A permit must be issued by the Catchment Management Authority before the start of any works on designated ways.

If an offence has been identified a Notice of Contravention will be issued. The offender will be required to rehabilitate the site and/or be subject to substantial financial penalties and prosecution.

Further information is available from the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Ph (03) 5822 2288.

Stormwater Management *Plan Education*

In an industry campaign as part of the Stormwater Education Program in the Shire of Campaspe, 53 business were assessed for stormwater management practices. Most were found to have insufficient spill and containment measures. Subsequent follow up visits found many businesses had purchased spill kits and had trained staff on how to use the new equipment.

The school education program included a story of a raindrop called Drip the Drop. Falling from the sky, Drip collects litter, sediment, leaves, dog poo and nutrients. and enters our waterways via stormwater drainage systems.

The story provided a greater insight into river health and water quality issues.

Did you Know

More than two billion items of litter end up in Port Phillip Bay each year through the stormwater system. This equates to:

- a two-storey high pile of rubbish over the entire MCG playing surface, or
- 221,000 Ute loads of rubbish, or
- 28,750 rubbish skips (8 cub. metres).

Acknowledgment:

Contributions in this issue from-
Jacinta Bourke—Goulburn Valley Water
Brad Montgomery—Goulburn Valley Water
Emily Boucher—Shire of Campaspe



Waterway Grants for Landholders

Riparian lands contain a high level of biodiversity and play a crucial role as a corridor for the movement of plants and animals. Acting as a filter strip, grasses in the riparian zone trap around 90% of the sediment moving from adjacent land. The vegetation provides shade to streams and regulates stream temperature.

Although riparian lands occupy a small percentage of the catchment landscape, they are vital to its long-term health and sustainable development.

Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority's waterway grants program provides incentives for landholders to undertake works to prevent or repair degradation to the riparian zones.

Grants are available for fencing, revegetation and off stream watering points for stock. Bed and bank stabilisation, exotic vegetation control and in-stream habitat enhancement may also be under taken by the Authority in conjunction with the waterway grant works.

When works undertaken by a landholder provide multiple benefits for the environment, a higher grant payment is calculated. Multiple benefits would include improvements to water quality, protection of native vegetation and biodiversity protection and enhancement.

For further information about wetland protection, native vegetation management and salinity control grants, contact the GBCMA on (03) 5822 2288.