

# Making a difference

## Farm Water Program

The Farm Water Program is a consortium of Northern Victorian agencies, led by the Goulburn Broken CMA, which helps irrigators to achieve water savings by improving on-farm irrigation systems. Half the water saved as a result of these projects is transferred to the Australian government for environmental purposes.

The consortium partners are North Central CMA, North East CMA, GMW, DEPI, Dairy Australia, Murray Dairy and Northern Victorian Irrigators.

The consortium has secured more than \$100 million for the Farm Water Program from Australian Government's On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program (\$46 million – Rounds 1 and 2); the Victorian Government's NVIRP (\$16 million – Round 1); and the Victorian On Farm State Priority Projects initiative (\$43 million – Round 2).

Participating irrigators report that water and labour efficiencies have surpassed their expectations and that the program allows them to carry out works that would otherwise have never been completed or would have taken years.

As well as making more water available for the environment and contributing to Victoria's share of the Murray Darling Basin Plan's water recovery targets, the on-farm irrigation improvements help control water issues that affect farm productivity by reducing water logging and nutrient run-off, helping address the re-emerging salinity and watertable issues the region's facing as a result of recent flooding.

Regional communities have also benefited from the investment: hundreds of jobs have been created; and the on-farm works, along with the upgrade to the irrigation delivery network, have improved the value of properties.

This has boosted industry confidence after years of drought and then flood, attracting investment, which all helps build the region's resilience in the face of changes in climate, water policy reform and global market factors.

## A partnership that's kids' play!

Since early 2013 male Goulburn Broken CMA staff members have volunteered to take turns to attend Wilmot Road Primary School's after school Learning Club each week for an hour.

The partnership, initiated by GV Community Fund CEO Lisa McKenzie, is a great way for the Goulburn Broken CMA to "give back" to the community and engage with young people.

Wilmot Road Primary School has a diverse, multicultural school population, with about 60 per cent of the students having non- English speaking backgrounds.

Goulburn Broken CMA staff volunteer their time to read and speak with the students, providing valuable one-on-one learning time, and demonstrating the different ways adults can be involved in their learning.



The weekly sessions also give Goulburn Broken CMA staff the opportunity to tap into the students' enthusiasm for the environment and talk about the organisation's work to improve the Catchment's water, land and biodiversity and how that, in turn, helps improve farmers' productivity and keeps communities vibrant.

The relationship with the school has extended beyond the Learning Club: the CEO was enlisted to judge the school's scarecrow competition; and a senior manager attended a special assembly with parents and students to present the Civic and Citizenship Awards at the WOW (Wonders of Wilmot) Awards, which recognise "outstanding" student effort in various fields in each year level.

The 148 projects funded in Round 1 were completed and achieved the following:

Round 1	
Total value funded – \$ million	35
Total water savings – gigalitres	18.7
Laser grading – hectares	3584
Drainage reuse – hectares	2121
Farm channel upgrades –kilometres	6.1
Pipe and riser systems – hectares	4859
Irrigation scheduling – hectares	225
Gravity channel surface irrigation – hectares	3470
Project by industry type:	
- dairy	92
- grains	23
- beef	13
- sheep & beef	9
- other	11

## Traditional Owners working 'on country' in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

The Commonwealth Government's Caring for our Country-funded Dookie Biolinks Program has contracted local Traditional Owners to work 'on country' in the Dookie area for the past three years. A typical example of what has been achieved is the Yabba North project where, in partnership with three neighbouring landowners, the Traditional Owners Works Crew has fenced and revegetated approximately 10 hectares.

This connects remnant vegetation across the three properties and two kilometres of an old creek line, linking past revegetation projects and establishing new wildlife corridors. This increases diversity of native plant species across the properties, builds habitat around the creek system, while at the same time providing sustainable farming benefits through an improved ecosystem and shelter for stock.

Traditional Owner Contractor Carl Atkinson says the project has also provided a valuable learning environment for Indigenous staff to partner with local famers in biodiversity conservation projects.

"The Dookie Biolinks partnership has enabled us to work in the field with farmers, learn more about land management and seed propagation and given us a good understanding of native animal and plant species," Mr Atkinson says.

"It allows us to bring young Indigenous people out into the field to learn about their cultural heritage, the crew gets the opportunity to do the type of work we couldn't get anywhere else, and we have built up a good reputation in the area.

"It also gives our young folk an employment experience, which we didn't have before in this field, that will help them continue ongoing employment."

To date the crew has completed a total of:

- 60 hectares of remnant protection;
- 90 hectares of revegetation;
- 40 hectares of wetland protection;
- pest plant control on Dookie roadsides; and
- 12 kilometres of fencing.



## King Parrot Creek Project

Community input is the key to the King Parrot Creek Project's success. The project aims to protect and enhance the riparian environment along the King Parrot Creek and its major tributaries; support and build community capacity after natural disasters such as the Black Saturday fires; and continue to create awareness about the significant population of Macquarie Perch population in the waterways.

The project, funded through the Victorian Government's Securing Priority waterways – On Ground Works Program, has had input from a range of groups and organisations but it's the efforts of a working group, made up of landholders, community members and agency representatives that has led to some excellent outcomes and activities. This includes a fish circus (a community day to promote fish and river health awareness); a stream walk; establishment of a Waterwatch program that involves five community members monitoring the creek's water quality; and fish surveys that confirmed Macquarie Perch were in the creek.



One of the most significant results of the project was driven by landholders, who identified blackberries as a major concern - many saying they felt overwhelmed with control tasks and frustrated at others not undertaking their responsibilities.

As a result DEPI has been contacted and a compliance program was put in place for 30 landholders along the creek to undertake blackberry control during 12/13; a good neighbour program was established with work on unlicensed crown land areas due to be undertaken during 13/14; and VicRoads and the local council, on being informed of the blackberry compliance program, sprayed roadsides. All landholders have been informed of the compliance process and of the assistance available through Goulburn Broken CMA, Upper Goulburn Landcare Network and the Blackberry Taskforce to manage the pest weed.

Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority

Tel: 03 5820 1100

Email: [reception@gbcma.vic.gov.au](mailto:reception@gbcma.vic.gov.au)

[www.gbcma.vic.gov.au](http://www.gbcma.vic.gov.au)

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# 2012/13 Annual Report Summary for the Community



The 2012-13 financial year proved to be another challenging one for the Goulburn Broken Region, with flood and fire affecting communities across the Catchment. Economic challenges – low dairy prices, a downturn in demand in the canning fruit industry, the high Australian dollar - have affected primary producers, their families and workers, with a flow-on effect to the local economy worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

The nature and impact (or shocks) of these challenges on the Catchment's people, land, water and biodiversity can only heighten the importance of understanding their interconnectedness. Details of how the Catchment community can respond to this complex relationship between social, environmental and economic factors are outlined in the Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) 2013-2019, launched by Victorian Environment and Climate Change Minister Ryan Smith on May 15th, 2013. Developed in partnership with the Catchment community, the RCS signals an exciting phase for the Catchment and the Authority.

## Achievements<sup>1</sup> during 2012-13

Output <sup>1</sup>	Achieved	Target <sup>2</sup>
Remnant vegetation fenced, hectares	1,982	860
Long-term conservation agreements, hectares <sup>3</sup>	329	200
Indigenous revegetation (planted), hectares	2,957	1,262
Irrigation drains built, kilometres	1	1
Reuse systems installed, numbers	25	35
Landforming/Lasergrading (ha)	12,662	10,449
Weeds treated, hectares	953	801
Rabbits and foxes treated, hectares <sup>4</sup>	29,749	1,075
Bed and bank protection actions, kilometres	0.65	0.35
Whole farm plans prepared, numbers	186	185

i. Detailed outputs relating to each investment area are explained fully in the 2012-13 Annual Report  
ii. Targets are determined by considering levels of government funding as listed in the Corporate Plan  
iii. More information available in the 2012-13 Annual Report  
iv. The 2012-13 target is low because additional funding was obtained during the year, after the Corporate Plan was finalised

Strong partnerships underpin all the Authority's programs. An outstanding example of how effective partnerships are in building the Catchment's resilience is the success of the Farm Water Program, delivered by a consortium of Northern Victorian agencies led by the Goulburn Broken CMA. Through the first two rounds of the program, 382 projects worth \$100 million have been funded through the Victorian and Commonwealth governments, saving a total of 52 gigalitres.

The Goulburn Broken CMA also continued to work with the Victorian and Commonwealth Environmental Water Holders, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and Goulburn-Murray Water, to deliver a total of 249,255 megalitres of environmental water. These flows support fish, macroinvertebrate and vegetation in the lower Goulburn River and lower Broken Creek and waterbird breeding events in the Barmah-Millewa Forest.

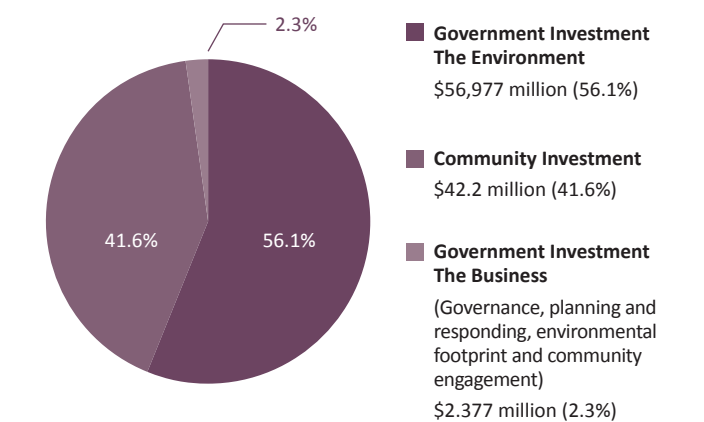
Commonwealth funding of almost \$13 million from the Caring for our Country program was critical to protecting and improving the Catchment's landscapes and biodiversity. Between 2010-11 to 2012-13,

this significant investment resulted in an additional 420 hectares of the Catchment being protected through conservation agreements, over 72,000 hectares being covered by property management plans, 3,000 hectares being treated for pests animals and plants and 3,000 hectares being managed for natural regeneration, with a further 900 hectares being revegetated with indigenous vegetation.

The Goulburn Broken CMA was also pleased to secure \$590,000 of funding through Stream One of the Australian Government's Regional Natural Resource Management Planning for Climate Change Fund to develop a sub-strategy to build new climate change information into the Catchment's regional planning approach. The project will be implemented over the next three years.

The Goulburn Broken CMA would like to acknowledge and thank Peter Ryan and Russell Pell for their leadership and contribution as Board Chair and Director respectively in the Catchment between July 1, 1997 and September 30, 2013.

## Goulburn Broken Investment share





# What's been happening across the Catchment?

Responding to issues such as climate variability, floods and fire requires a Catchment-scale approach and local action. Across the Catchment, the landscape, people, threats and priorities differ. Six social-ecological systems have been identified through consultation and research. These systems don't have sharp boundaries, but they do share similar characteristics and issues which give them a unique identity.

Why are they important? They shape what can be done to build and maintain resilience so that the best combination of people, land, biodiversity and water outcomes, valued by the local community, can continue to be provided.

## URBAN CENTRES

### Shepparton, Seymour and Benalla

- Biodiversity is poor but urban people value the rivers and remaining vegetation for recreation
- Provide employment, housing, schools and services surrounded by farming and lifestyle properties on Goulburn and Broken River floodplains
- Water is pumped from the rivers for domestic use and runs off into rivers following storms
- Large diverse populations

#### Activities and events:

- The Exhibition of Visual Art and Architecture titled 'Water Aesthetic Responses to the Goulburn Broken Catchments' opens with strong support from the Goulburn Broken CMA.
- More than 300 people participate in Goulburn Broken CMA's Carp Muster at Victoria Park Lake in Shepparton.
- Partnership with Wilmot Road Primary School confirmed to provide positive male role models to students through assistance to the Learning Club.
- Queensland, Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Victorian attendees at the National Cabomba Workshop, hosted by the Goulburn Broken CMA at Benalla, develop a best management practice booklet. Thirty-eight community members attend a weed identification day run in conjunction with the workshop.
- The Goulburn Broken CMA competed in the Shepparton Dragon Boat races to raise funds for the GV Community Fund.
- Goulburn Broken CMA had a site at the Seymour Alternative Expo for the first time.
- Shepparton and Dookie Men's sheds built 170 nest boxes for the Whroo Goldfields and Broken Boosey Conservation Management Networks.

## AGRICULTURAL FLOODPLAINS

### Northern floodplain with Murray River along boundary with NSW

- Landscape highly modified for agriculture with remaining vegetation fragmented and found mainly on waterways, wetlands and roadsides
- Irrigation supports dairy, horticulture and cropping and a large food processing sector with major investment in on and off-farm irrigation infrastructure recently
- Barmah National Park highly valued internationally (Ramsar listed) important breeding site for many bird species
- Long history of community leadership in managing land and water problems

#### Activities and events:

- The 10 gigalitre target for Farm Water Program Round 2 (Victorian On-farm State Priority Project funding) is met.
- Julian Cribb addresses the Sustainability Conversations forum at Shepparton, hosted by the Goulburn Broken CMA's Land and Biodiversity Program and the Goulburn Valley Environment Group; and the 10 Rs of Food Security forum at Tatura, hosted by the Sustainable Irrigation Program Advisory Group in partnership with the Regional Landcare Facilitator
- Environmental flows in the lower Broken Creek are aimed for the first time at improving fish habitat during the breeding and migration season.
- The Yorta Yorta Youth Journey engages students in cultural activities with Elders, community members and Indigenous Park Rangers and a documentary and promotional video is created.
- Environmental water delivered down the lower Goulburn River stimulates native fish breeding and helps establish vegetation on river banks.
- Two cameras in a Barmah Forest wetland are '3G connected' to remotely monitor waterbird breeding as 2,950 megalitres of environmental water is delivered to the forest.
- Information session on developing environmental outcomes through irrigation whole farm planning, hosted by Goulburn Broken CMA, includes attendees from Department of Environment and Primary Industries, irrigation surveyors and design companies, local government and Goulburn-Murray Water.
- More than 100 people attend sessions on bats at Numurkah and Wunghnu, hosted by the Broken Boosey Conservation Management Network.
- One hundred and ten people attend the two-day Barmah-Millewa Forest Research Conference in Shepparton.

## PRODUCTIVE PLAINS

### Foothills and floodplains towards the north of the Catchment

- Habitat provided by vegetation along waterways, roadsides, ranges and spring-soak wetlands
- Dryland farming includes cattle, sheep, cropping and viticulture and many farms remain in same families for generations with average farming populations ageing
- Rivers and creeks in moderate condition and wetlands in moderate to good condition.
- Landcare and conservation management networks establish sustainable farming practices and protect threatened species

#### Activities and events:

- Seventy farmers attend soil test interpretation workshops in Upton Hill, Costerfield and Caniambo in partnership with industry, the Burnt Creek, Graytown-Costerfield and Sheep Pen Creek Landcare groups and Beyond SoilCare project.
- Fifty-five people attend the Whroo Goldfields Conservation Management Network's tree planting day at Costerfield, including overseas visitors, Mandalay Resources staff, Monash University students and local landholders.
- Community, Landcare, Department of Environment and Primary Industries and CMA partners meet in Violet Town for the Land Health Forum.
- Two YouTube videos are developed, including interviews with local landholders who have taken up long-term management agreements with the Caring for our Country Threatened Grassy Woodlands Project.
- Thirty local farmers interested in direct marketing their produce attend a bus tour to the National Environment Centre with the Beyond SoilCare project.

## UPLAND SLOPES

### Slopes and valleys towards the south of the Catchment

- Grazing and other agricultural enterprises occur in cleared valleys surrounded by partially forested hills and vegetation along waterways
- Lake Eildon provides water for agricultural production, recreation, tourism, and river health all the way down the Catchment and beyond the boundary
- Generational farmers live alongside increasing numbers of lifestyle properties and absentee landholders

#### Activities and events:

- Sixty farmers from Yea and surrounds attend workshops on building soil health and making better lime and fertiliser decisions with the Beyond SoilCare project.
- Julian Cribb addresses the Redefining Local Productivity forum at Trawool, hosted by the Caring for our Country Beyond SoilCare Project. YouTube clips and audio CDs are produced
- Goulburn Broken CMA hosts a FishCare Victoria volunteer tour of the upper Catchment.
- Macquarie Perch population protected as part of the Hollands Creek Demonstration Project.
- Via the CFOC-funded Taungurung Clans Program: conducted weed control on private and public land; consulted with landholders about cultural artefacts in the area (included cultural mapping); and prepared a use-wear residue analysis report on a 300-piece collection of cultural artefacts found on a landholder's property.
- Commonwealth environmental water is released as a trial down the upper Broken Creek.

## SOUTHERN FORESTS

### South-east mountains, waterways and snow covered alps

- Unique alpine vegetation supports endangered mountain Pygmy Possum
- Most of the area is public land managed for conservation, but also for recreation and timber production
- Waterways are in good condition with recreation and tourism highly valued
- People live in small and seasonal communities and travel to and from this area
- The interface between private and public land is important for management

#### Activities and events:

- Engaged ARI to undertake predator control in Barred Galaxias inhabited reaches of the catchment
- Continued riparian vegetation restoration works along the Goulburn River above Lake Eildon
- Upper Goulburn Landcare Network built and installed nest boxes in areas affected by fires with the help of men's sheds, Scout groups and Bunning Warehouses.
- Via the CFOC-funded Taungurung Clans Program: treated Weeds of National Significance and assessed Alpine Bogs in the Mt Buller National Park; worked along the upper reaches of the Jamieson River – the border of National and State parks - treating blackberry and willows; and Worked on Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia peat lands in the Blue Ranges and at Mt Toobrek carrying out weed works and cultural surveys.

## COMMUTING HILLS

### Mountainous southern and south western urban fringe

- Public and private forests support many plant and animals including the Golden Sun Moth
- Land use also supports range of agricultural industries and lifestyle communities
- Waterways largely remain healthy because of the extent of remaining vegetation
- People drawn to area for natural beauty and lifestyle and commute to Melbourne for work

#### Activities and events:

- Grants of up to \$100,000 provided to NRM groups, including South-West Goulburn Landcare Network, Sunday Creek/Sugarloaf Sub Catchments Inc, Glenaroua Land Management Group and Nulla Vale Pyalong West, Glenaroua, Willowmavin, Sunday Creek - Dry Creek Landcare groups.
- Blackberry control work, community events, fish surveys and social surveys held as part of the Securing Priority Waterways – On Ground Works Program for King Parrot Creek.
- Worked with Melbourne Water to develop the Mitchell Shire Flood Plan.
- Worked with land managers on riparian restoration and monitoring of Macquarie Perch populations in the upper reaches of the Yea River and King Parrot Creeks
- The South West Goulburn Landcare Network on behalf of the CMA delivered the Clean Energy Future's Project Creating Biodiverse Carbon Landscapes project, achieving 15 ha of revegetation and 96 ha of remnant protection.

# What's next?

## AGRICULTURAL FLOODPLAINS

- Continue to source funds for the Farm Water Program to meet demand by irrigators to modernise their farm and improve water efficiency
- Continue to integrate farm and Catchment programs with irrigation modernisation, the Farm Water Program and industry needs
- Review the Shepparton Irrigation Regional Land and Management Plan
- Develop a new approach to managing shallow watertables as part of the Shepparton Irrigation Region Salt and Water Balance Project
- Monitor ecological responses of selected wetlands to environmental watering
- Conservation Management Networks will continue to play a major role in delivering works across the Agricultural Floodplains
- The Department of Environment and Primary Industries will continue to work with community-based natural resource management groups and the Goulburn Broken CMA to identify priority areas for management of established weeds and rabbits
- Continue to build indigenous skills, knowledge and capacity to deliver works, contribute to natural resource management planning, traditional ecological knowledge and undertake indigenous projects on country

## PRODUCTIVE PLAINS

- Conservation Management Networks will continue to play a major role in delivering works to protect and improve vegetation and biodiversity across the Productive Plains
- The Department of Environment and Primary Industries will continue to work with community-based natural resource management groups and the Goulburn Broken CMA to identify priority areas for management of established weeds and rabbits
- Protect and enhance threatened grasslands and woodlands
- Continue to build indigenous skills, knowledge and capacity to deliver works, contribute to natural resource management planning, traditional ecological knowledge and undertake indigenous projects on country
- Work with landholders to define and map dryland catchment soil assets (biodiversity, structure, soil carbon storage etc) and threats (salinity, erosion, soil acidity etc)

## COMMUTING HILLS

- Carry out new flood studies for Kilmore (subject to funding)
- Protect and enhance threatened grasslands and woodlands
- Work with landholders to define and map dryland catchment soil assets (biodiversity, structure, soil carbon storage etc) and threats (salinity, erosion, soil acidity etc)

## URBAN CENTRES

- Support for flood warning and emergency management arrangements with partners, particularly the Victorian State Emergency Services and local government

## UPLAND SLOPES

- The Department of Environment and Primary Industries will provide support to groups who have demonstrated coordinated effort over a number of years to control weeds and pests
- Continue to build indigenous skills, knowledge and capacity to deliver works, contribute to natural resource management planning, traditional ecological knowledge and undertake indigenous projects on country
- Work with landholders to define and map dryland catchment soil assets (biodiversity, structure, soil carbon storage etc) and threats (salinity, erosion, soil acidity etc)

## SOUTHERN FORESTS

- Carry out new flood studies for Taggerty River catchment (subject to funding)
- The Department of Environment and Primary Industries will provide support to groups who can demonstrate sustained coordinated effort over a number of years to control priority pests and weeds
- Continue to build indigenous skills, knowledge and capacity to deliver works, contribute to natural resource management planning, traditional ecological knowledge and undertake indigenous projects on country

## CATCHMENT WIDE

- Complete the Goulburn Broken Regional Waterway Strategy
- Investigate multiple uses of environmental water with neighbouring CMAs
- Investigate the likely impacts of climate change on waterway values, particularly water quality
- Begin to implement recommendations of the Comrie Flood Review and the Victorian Environment and Natural Resources Committee's inquiry into flood mitigation infrastructure
- Prepare an interim Goulburn Broken Floodplain Management Strategy in conjunction with stakeholders
- Grants to landholders will continue to improve landscapes through a combination of remnant protection and enhancement and revegetation to link high priority sites
- Develop Geographic Information System tools to support communication packages
- Consider the implications of the Whole Farm Planning review and the most appropriate mechanism to promote Whole Farm Plans for natural resource outcomes
- Link training packages to promotion of improved soil management practices
- Continue to build the capacity of community groups and individuals to carry out their own assessments of soil health and management practices through support of demonstration trials
- All state and regionally prohibited weed sites will continue to be surveyed and treated where necessary and all properties adjoining known infestations will be inspected
- The Department of Environment and Primary Industries will continue to work with community-based natural resource management groups and the Goulburn Broken CMA to identify priority areas for management of established weeds and rabbits

