

2014/15 Annual Report Summary for the Community



Highlights

Goulburn Broken CMA again delivered strong on-ground works in 2014/15 via community natural resource management (NRM) groups and farmers. Priorities were focused on helping communities and associated ecosystems increase their resilience, consistent with the Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS).

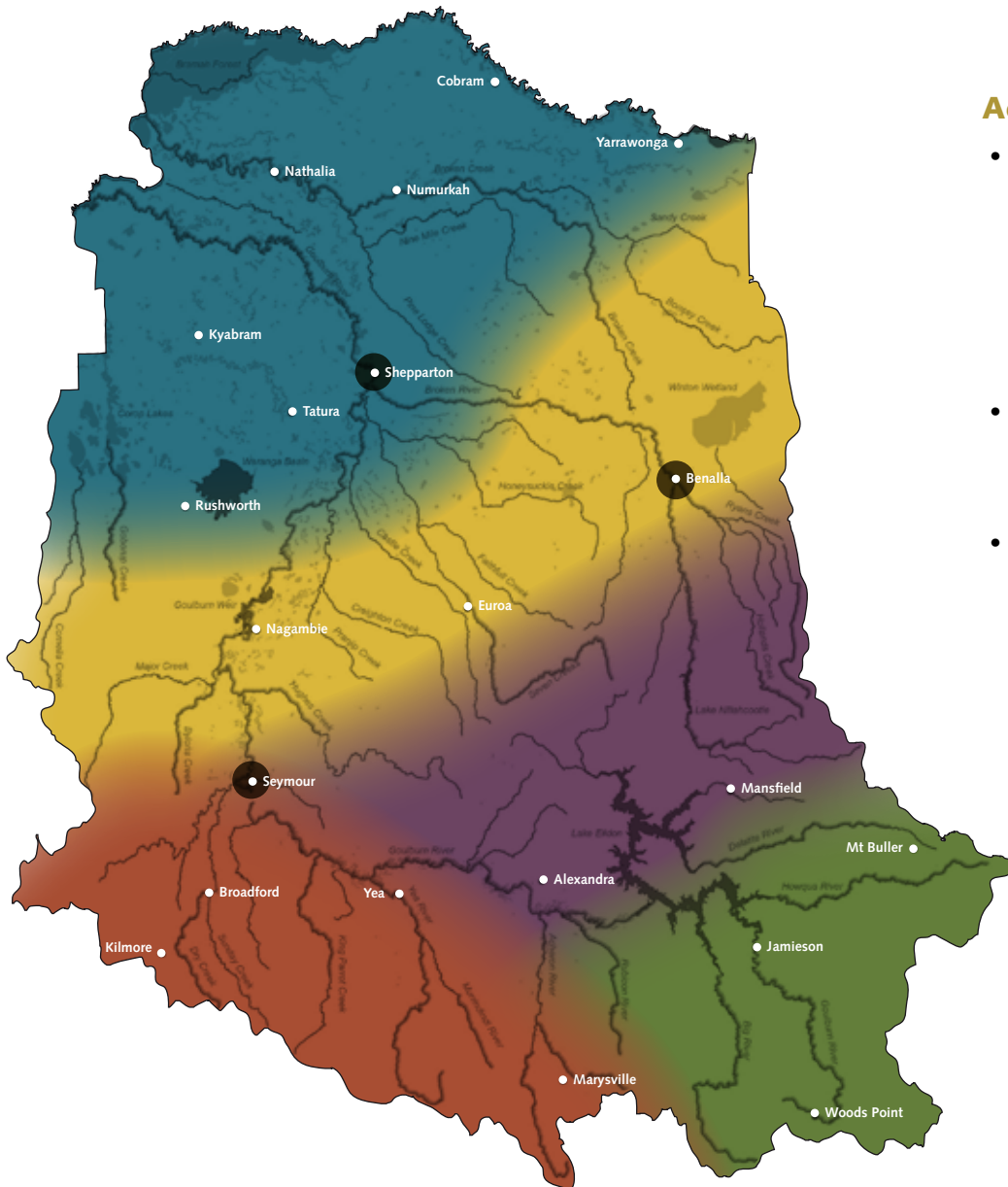
- Local Plans for the six Social Ecological Systems (as broad geographic regions) that make up the Goulburn Broken Catchment continue to be developed. Directions in the RCS were reconfirmed and refined and local land, water, biodiversity and productivity priorities were identified during community workshops and other consultation.
- Round 3 of the Farm Water Program (Tranche 1 of the Victorian Farm Modernisation Project (VFMP)) began with \$30 million for 136 projects. These projects will generate over 15 gigalitres of water savings with 9 gigalitres transferred to the Commonwealth government for environmental watering.
- More than 339,000 megalitres of environmental water was delivered to support fish, water bugs and vegetation in the lower Goulburn River, lower Broken Creek and key wetlands. A highlight was successful Golden perch spawning in the Goulburn River.
- Works in and around waterways to protect improve the condition of rivers and wetlands included 70 kilometres of fencing streams and rivers, 2,317 hectares of weed control and adding 357 pieces of instream woody habitat to priority waterways.
- The Goulburn Broken CMA finalised the Victorian Government's Fruit Industry Employment Program. The program provided employment and training to orchardists and orchard workers while the industry transitioned in the wake of reductions to SPC-Ardmona's fruit intake in mid-2013. The program employed 40 people, supervised by the Goulburn Broken CMA and its partners; Greater Shepparton City Council, Moira Shire Council, Goulburn Murray Water and Parks Victoria. Outcomes included 1,500 hectares of weeds controlled, 7,500 native seedlings planted and 67 kilometres of fences removed, repaired and built.
- Goulburn Broken CMA continued to lead or contribute to several important flood studies and implementation plans, including the Eildon to Murchison Flood Mapping Project, Mansfield Flood Mapping Project, and the Euroa Post Flood Mapping and Intelligence Project.
- The Australian Government National Landcare Programme - funded project, Beyond Soilcare, saw the Goulburn Broken CMA partner with the community and the Victorian Government to deliver workshops, farm tours and field days that aim to increase the sustainability and productivity of the region's agricultural sector. Working with 30 Landcare and producer groups and four schools, the project provided education on soil sampling and soil test interpretation, fertiliser and lime management, and sustainable farm practices. The project also worked with the Yorta Yorta, Taungurung and Dja Dja Warrung Traditional Owner groups to develop and run two workshops on soils, geology and links with Dreamtime stories.
- The impact of fire was again witnessed in 2014/15 with three significant fires burning about 13,500 hectares at Stewarton, Boweya and Creighton's Creek in mid-December. With help from the Uniting Church and Blaze Aid volunteers and prisoners from Beechworth and Dhurringile, 1,900 indigenous trees and shrubs and 1,500 grasses and sedges were planted to rehabilitate these and more than 30 kilometres of fencing was repaired or replaced.

We wish to pay tribute to our valued colleague, Wayne Tennant, who passed away on 4 August 2015.

What's been happening across the Catchment?

Across the Catchment, the landscape, people, threats and priorities differ. To address these differences, six social-ecological systems have been identified in the Regional Catchment Strategy through consultation and research. These systems don't have sharp boundaries, but they do share similar characteristics and issues that 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. A description of activities achieved in each social-ecological system during 2014/15 is provided here.



Productive Plains



Foothills and floodplains towards the north of the Catchment

- **Predominantly dry farming**
- **More habitat loss, aging farming populations and declining social connections are the main threats to biodiversity and farming futures**

Activities and events:

- Communities for Nature project 'Practical parrot action' built and installed 75 nest boxes for the threatened turquoise parrot and set up monitoring sites on properties in the Warby Ranges area. This project has been well supported by local communities through the efforts of the Broken Boosey Conservation Management Network.
- Large damaged trees cleared following the Creightons Creek fire sourced as snags for Macquarie perch project on the Hughes Creek.
- Incentives to paid to landholders to revegetate along waterways and protect remnant sites increased habitat connectivity across the landscape.

- **Agricultural Floodplains**
- **Productive Plains**
- **Commuting Hills**
- **Upland Slopes**
- **Southern Forests**
- **Urban Centres**

Agricultural Floodplains



Northern floodplain with Murray River along boundary with NSW

- Landscape highly modified for agriculture
- Major investment in on and off-farm irrigation infrastructure recently
- Barmah National Park highly valued internationally important breeding site for many bird species
- Long history of community leadership in managing land and water problems

Activities and events:

- "John Dainton's Role in Mending the Goulburn Broken" book documenting the history of community engagement in addressing the salinity problem in the Catchment launched.
- The Farm Water Program consortium won the Australian Water Association's Victorian and Australian Innovation Awards.
- Round 4 of the Farm Water Program worth \$50 million (2nd Tranche of the Victorian Farm Modernisation Program) launched.
- Yorta Yorta Co-management plan launched at Barmah Forest.
- Moodies Swamp had its largest ever environmental water allocation delivered between October and December 2014. This was to encourage Brolga breeding and to promote the growth of the EPBC (1999) listed Rigid-water Milfoil.

Commuting Hills



Mountainous southern and south western urban fringe

- Public and private forests support many plant and animals including threatened Golden Sun Moth
- Land use also supports range of agricultural industries and lifestyle communities
- People drawn to area for natural beauty and lifestyle and commute to Melbourne for work

Activities and events:

- Kilmore Flood Study launched highlighting the partnership between the Mitchell Shire Council and the Goulburn Broken CMA.
- \$120,000 from the Victorian Government secured to investigate current and legacy problems from sand/gravel mining on the Goulburn River floodplain.
- Large-scale woody weed control program continued on the Yea River. A community survey identified removal of woody weeds as a community priority.
- American sustainable farming expert Joel Salatin presented to more than 200 community members in Seymour.
- Activities to help implement the four-year on-ground works program included social surveys in the Yea River area and electrofishing in the King Parrot Creek, Yea River and mid-Goulburn River to help assess fish populations, with a focus on Macquarie perch. In King Parrot Creek, 386 Macquarie perch were caught in the assessments sites: the most since surveys started in 2006.
- Victorian Government funding announced to support flood mitigation studies which will cover the Marysville, Buxton and Taggerty areas.

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:

- Two-day workshop held in the Strathbogie Ranges region with Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, Goulburn Broken CMA staff, Landcare facilitators, the Lade family, and led by Geomorphologist Neville Rosengren, who discussed the formation and cultural significance of the landscape in the local area.
- New and part-time landholder days organised by the Strathbogie Ranges Conservation Management Network attracted over 100 landholders.
- Mid-Goulburn River (from Lake Eildon to the Goulburn Weir) flow study completed to guide environmental water management in the river and the development of the Goulburn River environmental water management plan.
- Annual monitoring by Arthur Rylah Institute confirms populations of Macquarie perch and Two-spined Blackfish have increased more than 10-fold as a result of Hollands Creek rehabilitation project.

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:

- Work with Taungurung community to protect the ecological character of Alpine bogs continued.
- Ongoing works continue to manage feral animals and weeds on public land.

Urban Centres/ Catchment wide

The Goulburn Broken Catchment:

- **Covers 2.4 million hectares, about 10.5 per cent of Victoria**
- **Main centres include Shepparton, Seymour and Benalla**
- **Population of 204,000 includes 6000 Indigenous Australians**
- **Yields more than 3,500 gigalitres or 10.5 per cent of the Murray Darling Basin's water**
- **Agriculture is a significant contributor to the Catchment's economy with a gross value of agricultural production of almost \$2 billion**

Activities and events:

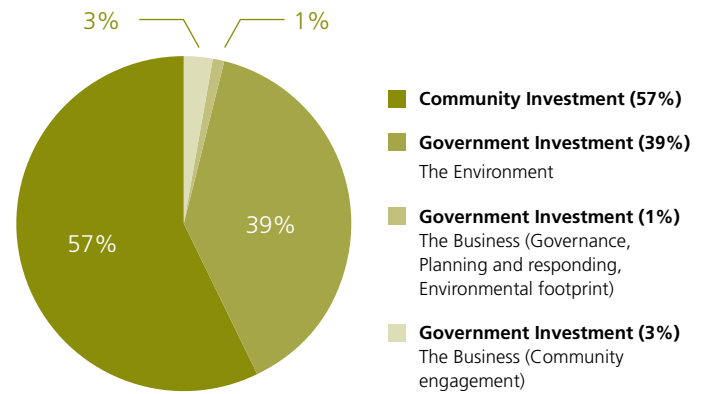
- The Draft Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy discussed with community, local government and agencies in an information session held in Shepparton.
- Goulburn Broken CMA is a partner with the Goulburn Broken Greenhouse Alliance in the \$5 million Watts Working Better project rolling out across the eight local councils in the Goulburn Broken Catchment, as well as Wangaratta. This is the second largest street light project in the world, behind New York.
- Australian Government funded Biodiversity Fund projects resulted in 845.43 hectares of revegetation and 606.16 hectares of remnant protection.
- Launch of iSpy Fish App, allowing anglers and agencies to report native and pest fish species by uploading photos and catch detail (species, weight, location, etc.) to an iSpy Fish Facebook page and the Goulburn Broken CMA website, where data is collated to assist river and wetland management.
- Resilience seminar attended by over 50 people to update the catchment on Regional Catchment Strategy progress.
- Annual three-month Biodiversity Spring community education celebration - 38 events held across the Catchment, including weeklong floodplain ecology, box ironbark and grassy woodland courses. Biodiversity Spring was coordinated through the Euroa Arboretum.
- Goulburn Broken CMA hosted the NRM for Climate Change Murray Basin Stream 2 Cluster.
- Groups and individuals improving environmental health in the Goulburn Broken Catchment were recognised at the 2015 Goulburn Broken Community Natural Resource Management (NRM) Awards. Winners were Kerri Robson (Hubert Miller Perpetual Award); Yea High School Junior Landcare Group (Junior Landcare Team Award); Strathbogie Ranges Conservation Management Network (Community NRM Network Award); Yea Wetland Committee of Management (Community NRM Group Award); Glenn Thompson, Wyuna Landcare Group (Community NRM Sustainable Farming Award); and Gary Deayton, Moira Shire Council (Recognition of Long-term Community Partnership Award).
- Goulburn Broken Indigenous Consultation Group formed, including representatives from Yorta Yorta Nation and Taungurung Clans and a number of education and training organisations.
- Beyond SoilCare worked with the Yorta Yorta, Taungurung and Dja Dja Warrung Traditional Owner groups to develop and run two workshops around soils, geology and links with Dreamtime Stories.
- More than \$215,000 provided through the Victorian Government's Victorian Landcare Grants Program for 17 projects that support community NRM groups' efforts to tackle weeds such as blackberry and gorse, provide practical land-management advice to small, new and absentee landholders and run environmental education programs in schools.

Achievementsⁱ during 2014/15

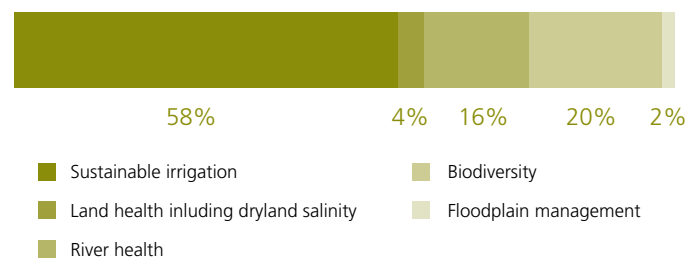
Output ⁱ	Achieved	Target ⁱⁱ
Remnant vegetation fenced, hectares	694	276
Long-term conservation agreements, hectares ⁱⁱⁱ	112	45
Indigenous revegetation (planted), hectares	549	756
Irrigation drains built, kilometres	0	0
Reuse systems installed, numbers	9	9
Landforming/Lasergrading, hectares	4,220	6,507
Groundwater pumps installed, numbers	0	0
Weeds treated, hectares	3,359	1,037
Rabbits and foxes treated, hectares	22,880	22,487
Bed and bank protection actions, kilometres	1.00	0.34
Fishway structures installed and barriers modified	0	0
Aquatic habitat works	0	0
Threatened species projects, numbers	0	0
Whole farm plans prepared	71	110

i. Detailed outputs relating to each investment area are explained fully in the 2014-15 Annual Report
 ii. Targets are determined by considering levels of government funding as listed in the Corporate Plan
 iii. More information available in the 2013-14 Annual Report

Goulburn Broken investment share



Government Investment - The Environment



What's next?

- A three-month radio awareness campaign featuring students from Wilmot Road Primary School will run on commercial radio (Southern Cross Media's 3SR and High Country stations).
- Completion of Country Plan and signing of a MoU with Taungurung Clans.
- Participation in wild trout conference in Mansfield with anglers and leading scientists to discuss results and information relating to projects surveying trout populations and riparian health in the Goulburn, Jamieson, Howqua and Delatite rivers.
- Completion of the Climate Change Adaptation Planning Strategy, through stakeholder and broader community consultation. The strategy will be implemented via the SES local planning process and integrated into the review of the Biodiversity Strategy.
- Completion of Shepparton Irrigation Region Drainage review.
- Round 4 of the Farm Water Program will be rolled out and discussions with State and Commonwealth governments for the need for further investment in farm irrigation efficiency works will continue.
- Completion of the business case for the Goulburn River Constraints Management Strategy project on behalf of the Victorian Government. Development of the business case will involve regular community input and updates.
- Continue implementing the Securing Priority Waterways (On-ground Works) program. The final year of this four-year program is targeting improvement in the health of a number of priority waterways and associated wetlands, including the King Parrot Creek, Hughes Creek, Yea River, Broken River, Broken Creek and the Goulburn River.
- Granite Creek Regional Flood Mapping Project will be finished.
- The Biodiversity Strategy 2010-2015 will be updated. The update will take into account recommendations from the final review of the current Biodiversity Strategy, directions being developed under the Victorian Biodiversity Strategy (currently under development) and local plan development (also under way for each SES in the Goulburn Broken Catchment).
- As the lead agency, continue to promote activities to protect and enhance the environmental and social values of the Murray River corridor through the Tri-State Murray NRM Regional Alliance, which consists of the North East, Goulburn Broken, North Central and Mallee CMAs in Victoria, the Murray Local Land Service in NSW and the South Australian Murray Darling Basin NRM board.
- The promotion and implementation of the new Goulburn Broken Waterway Strategy, in partnership with regional agencies and the community, will continue.

CASE STUDY 1

Macquarie perch to benefit from salvaged bushfire timber



Stock-piled wood salvaged from the December 2014 Creighton's Creek fires has been used at three sites on the Hughes Creek upstream of Avenel to improve habitat for endangered Macquarie perch.

Project Manager Christine Glassford said the focus of the project was to re-establish depth and shelter in the creek by placing the salvaged timber in three pools to encourage scouring of the river bed.

"Several truck and trailer loads of salvaged timber from the Creighton's Creek fires were taken to three degraded habitat pools suitable for endangered Macquarie perch and placed within the creek," Ms Glassford said.

"Sand has been deposited in these pools over the years and has reduced the depth and habitat quality for Macquarie perch and other aquatic species. The large wood was placed strategically to encourage the movement of some sand to deepen the pools and provide shelter."

Scientists from the Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) undertook fish surveys in the Hughes Creek just before Easter and found Macquarie perch at each of the three pools.

"Some sites where Macquarie perch were found can be considered suboptimal,

so further depth and structural enhancements will be very beneficial," scientist Jo Kearns said. "The wood will also lead to an increase in the variety and number of water bugs the perch can feed on."

Ms Kearns said the results of the fish surveys in the Hughes Creek were encouraging, with numbers of Blackfish and Macquarie perch in the 'gorge section' of the creek being the highest seen for many years.

"It was particularly pleasing to find several young-of-year fish, which have hatched from eggs spawned during spring last year and many one-year-old fish in this section," she said.

CASE STUDY 2

Yorta Yorta Youth Journey a huge success



Yorta Yorta elders joined 25 young Aboriginal people in the four-day Yorta Yorta Youth Journey in late October, camping on Country through northern Victoria and southern New South Wales.

Goulburn Broken CMA Indigenous Facilitator Neville Atkinson, who was one of the guides on the journey, said the program was the perfect way to pass on traditional knowledge and demonstrate customs and laws to younger generations.

"Yorta Yorta elders Uncle Colin Walker, Denise Morgan-Bulled, Aunty Ella

Anselmi and Merle Miller passed on traditional knowledge and culture and also guided the young Aboriginal people along the way," Mr Atkinson said. "This is a traditional process, a rite of passage for Aboriginal children to move from childhood into adulthood, learning of their responsibilities to their people and Country.

"This year's Yorta Yorta Youth Journey involved young Aboriginal people from Euroa, Wangaratta, Shepparton and Echuca/Moama, and co-ordinator Khiara Harrison noticed a change in the participants over the duration of the camp; they learned respect for each other, the land, the environment and their elders."

Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation Cultural Heritage Officer Wade Morgan demonstrated how a coolamon (an Aboriginal curved dish) was taken from a river red gum, and Narjic Day Burns and Sissy Cooper from Aboriginal Dreamtime and Stories camped with the group and conducted cultural song and dance activities after dinner.

Aboriginal heritage and research officers held group workshops and talks on language, dance, song and weaving. On the last night of the journey the young people learnt a Yorta Yorta traditional ceremony from the Elders.

"It really was a memorable experience for the participants as they hiked and canoed across Country and engaged with Yorta Yorta Elders and Indigenous Parks Victoria Rangers along the way," Mr Atkinson said.

The Yorta Yorta Youth Journey was funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme and supported by the Goulburn Broken CMA, Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Parks Victoria.