

River Health Incentive Program Frequently Asked Questions



1. Who can apply?

Anyone who owns land adjoining a waterway or manages public land adjoining a waterway as a licensee or Committee of Management.

As funds are limited by annual budgets, preference will be given to projects on our priority waterways and/or those projects that achieve significant environmental outcomes. A list of our priority waterways can be viewed in the Goulburn Broken Waterway Strategy 2014 - 2022.

2. What constitutes a waterway?

A waterway is defined as a natural water course that is either spring fed or has a greater than 60ha catchment.

3. What is riparian land?

Riparian land is any land that adjoins or directly influences a body of water. It includes:

- the land immediately alongside small creeks and rivers, including the river bank itself;
- gullies and dips which sometimes run with water;
- areas surrounding lakes; and
- wetlands and river floodplains which interact with the river in times of flood.

It is important not to think of riparian land as just a narrow strip along each riverbank. Depending on the nature of the land (floodplain, gorge or valley) and the adjacent land use (national park, farming, forestry, urban housing), the width of riparian land that needs special management will vary.

4. Why manage riparian land differently?

Riparian land is usually highly productive and has often been cleared and used for intensive grazing, cropping or irrigation purposes. The vegetation on riparian land usually reflects the better soils and greater moisture found in the lower parts of the landscape, providing wildlife corridors and refuge for animals in times of drought or fire.

Riparian land performs a vital link between land and water ecosystems. Its productivity makes it vulnerable to over-use and to practices that cause it to deteriorate. Good management of riparian land can yield numerous benefits at both the property and catchment scale.

5. Why apply for assistance?

In addition to receiving advice and financial incentives to improve river health, benefits to the landholder can include:

- Increase in land value
- Improved stock management (retention, water supply and safety)
- Improved water quality
- Improved bed and bank stability
- Increased native wildlife
- Improved farm productivity (stock, pasture and crop shelter)

6. What is a Riparian Management Agreement or RMA?

A Riparian Management Agreement (RMA) is a legally binding document that details the river health project proposed. Following site assessment and negotiation with the River Health Officer, the RMA will record the agreed on-ground work activities, along with associated subsidy rates, timeframe and responsibilities for delivery.



RMA's also contain a section on future site management, to clarify expectation and assist the Landholder with management decisions to achieve riparian improvement. A clear understanding of ongoing management responsibilities is particularly relevant to projects involving riparian protection through fencing works where a grazing regime may still be applied given agreed circumstances.

It is only on receipt of a signed RMA from the Landholder, that the Goulburn Broken CMA will commit funds to project works.

7. Does it matter whether the river frontage is Freehold or Crown Land?

Both are eligible for support however the recipient must be either the landholder of the freehold title or the licensee of the Crown Land (hold a Crown Water Frontage (CWF) licence).

As part of all riparian protection (fencing) works where Crown Water Frontage exists, the Goulburn Broken CMA will notify the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) of works, providing a copy of the signed RMA.

8. What if the Crown Land along the stream adjoining my property is unlicensed?

The Goulburn Broken CMA will assist you to take up the Crown Water Frontage licence as part of the project and will reimburse the application fee charged by DELWP.

9. When can I apply for assistance?

Contact the GB CMA at any time to discuss your interest and staff will provide advice and funding support where possible.

10. What works are funded?

Fencing, off-stream water and revegetation works are primarily subsidised activities, coordinated by the landholder. Willow removal, erosion control and instream habitat works are activities requiring specialised expertise and machinery, often at great expense. These tasks are organised and supervised by Goulburn Broken CMA staff where deemed appropriate and funding permits, usually at no cost to the Landholder.

11. How is the subsidy for fencing calculated?

Successful applicants will be offered a contribution towards the cost of permanent:

- standard rural post and wire fencing E.g. 6-7 plain wires with or without an offset electric wire, or hinge joint or equivalent mesh fencing;
- electric fencing E.g. minimum of 4 wires, two being electrified.

The subsidy rate offered will be determined against:

- catchment criteria; namely priority waterways as defined by the Goulburn Broken Waterway Strategy 2014-2022.
- site specific criteria; frontage condition and width proposed for protection.

The landholder influences the rate calculated through decision on the distance the fence is placed from the bank edge, with the greater the width the higher the subsidy rate offered.

12. What fencing is eligible?

Fencing must be of a high standard, stock proof and permanent in nature, however flexibility exists given site circumstances such as flood management. Fences must be placed at a minimum width of 10 metres from top of bank for low priority waterways and 20m for high priority waterways. For practicality, average fencing widths can be applied across the site.



Where Crown Water Frontage (CWF) is present, fencing is ideally placed on or near freehold/CWF boundary. Fence alignment will generally reflect site condition and management implications, though the minimum width applicable must be achieved.

13. Am I eligible for off-stream water support?

The Goulburn Broken CMA provides funding for the provision of off-stream water only where the stream has been a permanent source of water for stock and:

- the proposed riparian fencing will exclude stock in the adjoining paddock from access to water (provided there is no other existing water source), or;
- erection of the proposed riparian fence will split a paddock into two, forming a paddock without a water source.

14. How is off-stream water funded?

Landowners are eligible for subsidies of up to 75% of the total material cost of establishing alternate water points, in the form of either;

1. Reticulated System: eligible components include tank, troughs, pipe, fittings and trenching (not including manual labour, pumps or power supply).
2. Dam Construction: eligible component is machine operation cost.

Quotations must be sought by the Landholder and will be assessed by the River Health Officer to determine if associated costs are reflective of water requirement needs based on a 5 day supply of water to stock. Landholders are able to install a more secure supply of water, however the subsidy

offered will then not be 75% of quoted cost, but of cost calculated for 5 day supply. The maximum subsidy on priority waterways is \$3,000 per 1MG or \$5,000 for reticulated systems. On non-priority waterways the cap is reduced to \$1,000 per 1MG dam or \$2,000 for reticulated systems.

15. How is revegetation work undertaken?

There are a number of options available for the delivery of revegetation works, which will be discussed and determined with the River Health Officer. The primary considerations include stream priority, site scale and landholder capacity. For small scale sites (<500 seedlings), particularly on low priority waterways, the Landholder is expected to prepare the site and plant the seedlings. The River Health Officer may either;

1. provide advice on appropriate species, quantity and local suppliers from which the Landholder is encouraged to purchase seedlings themselves and receive reimbursement of cost up to \$3.00/unit; or
2. order and supply seedlings and materials to the Landholder.

The guards remain the property of the GB CMA and if reusable (i.e. steel frames), are collected 1 to 2 years after planting.

For larger projects (around 1000 or more seedlings) the River Health Officer can coordinate contractor planting. Landholder participation is still encouraged, with site preparation for planting commonly considered their contribution to this activity.

In all instances, it is the responsibility of the landowner to maintain the area in accordance with the agreement. This generally requires no stock grazing for 3 years to enable seedlings to establish.



16. Will the Goulburn Broken CMA control weeds along the river and how?

Willows are the primary focus of CMAs when it comes to weed control, as they have many adverse impacts on river health, though other exotic trees may also be addressed. Willows are a Weed of National Significance, however unlike many other declared weeds, landholders and licensees are not held responsible for managing them. Given also the specialist skills and machinery required to control willows, CMAs most commonly coordinate these works.

Using the technique of 'drill and fill', willows are generally poisoned whilst actively growing (Spring-Autumn).

Small scattered willows may be left in-situ to decompose, however large trees and dense stands are removed. Usually a faller and excavator work together to cut the willows down, pile them up and then burn the dead limbs.

Where willows are extensive, works are staged over a number of years with no more than 300m stretches dealt with at a time. Willow control is commonly the first stage of riparian enhancement, with fencing and revegetation works following.

17. What will the Goulburn Broken CMA do about erosion?

A River Health Officer will review the erosion and with consideration to the cause, scale impacts to river health values and capacity in order to determine what (if any) action is warranted. Erosion can often be avoided or managed through establishment of a good buffer of riparian vegetation, ideally of a 20m width or more.

Where mechanical intervention is deemed necessary, the work will be costed and prioritised for budget funding. Coordinated by CMA staff, the work can entail site survey and engineering design to more accurately determine the appropriate action, which will then be implemented. Fencing and revegetation works are generally undertaken in conjunction with any hard engineering to improve long term stability.

18. What is fish habitat improvement?

There are a number of techniques applied to improve habitat for fish. Improving the riparian vegetation is important as it enhances food and shelter opportunities for aquatic life. Re-snagging rivers with logs, boulders, constructed groynes and artificial undercut banks are approaches sometimes used where relevant to the site and the targeted fish species.

For further information please phone 5822 7700 or visit www.gbcma.vic.gov.au

