

A cooperative approach to river rehabilitation



Project name: Caring for the Campaspe
Financial year story collected: 2013-14

Caring for the Campaspe is a four-year (2012-16) project delivered by the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) aiming to protect and enhance 400ha of vegetation along the Campaspe River, improving aquatic and riverside ecosystem health.

The project aims to ensure the delivery of a targeted and efficient program of works for the best environmental outcome. To achieve continuity of effort and results along the river a key prioritisation principle of the project is to extend upon the efforts of previous works undertaken by land managers (both individuals and agencies).

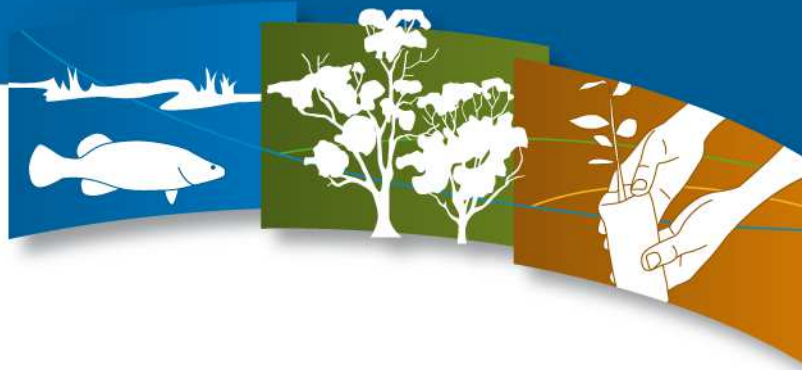
Parks Victoria manages up to 20 relatively small Crown land reserves along the river's 220km length from Ashbourne to Echuca. Windmill Bridge Streamside Reserve includes one kilometre of Campaspe River frontage located adjacent to the Kyneton-Metcalf Road on the northern outskirts of Kyneton.

Parks Victoria Ranger Brendan Smith, who is also president of the local Tylden Landcare and member of the Upper Campaspe Landcare Network, had worked diligently on enhancing the environmental values of the reserve for several years.

"Prior to the Caring for the Campaspe project the Campaspe River fought its way through a thick and in some places impenetrable growth of Crack Willow. Over the years Parks Victoria and the Upper Campaspe Landcare Network partnered in poisoning the Crack Willows throughout the reserve with the help of local contractors.

"However, there was never enough funding to allow the removal of the standing, dead Crack Willows. The project had commenced but was unlikely to proceed further until the Caring for the Campaspe project was initiated by the North Central CMA" Mr Smith said.

Mr Smith was the key liaison point for the North Central CMA, assisting with the provision of background information, coordinating site visits with Bendigo TAFE students (Diploma of Conservation and Land Management) and negotiating the onground works agreement. Mr Smith's willingness to share his knowledge of the site was invaluable for North Central CMA project staff,



and shared generously with the Project Reference Group during a pre-works site visit on 14 August 2013.

Mr Smith played a key inter-agency liaison role between the North Central CMA and Parks Victoria and with neighboring landholders, particularly during the burning phase of the willow removal works. His personal passion for the site assisted with the protection of threatened plants during removal process, such as the rare Australian Anchor Plant (*Discaria pubescens*).

“Rivers (channels) occupy a small area of the land but a huge change has occurred due to the landscape scale nature of this project. This is a fairly high profile site and people have a genuine interest in the future of the project. People may be used to Crack Willows being removed from our rivers as there are less comments today about “the mess” than there was a few years ago. People can now visualise the future of the Campaspe River at Windmill Bridge” Mr Smith said.

Mr Smith describes many significant changes as a result of the Caring for the Campaspe project.

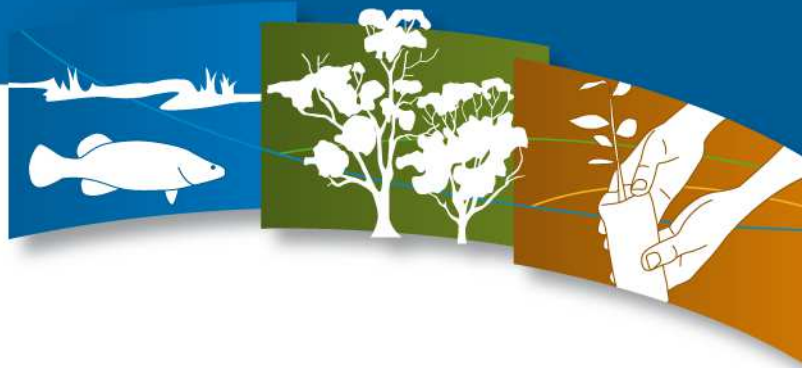
“A natural area is being rehabilitated; people have demonstrated support and a connectedness to the project; well attended revegetation days have already occurred; the local economy has had a stimulus from the project; the growing native vegetation will benefit neighbouring biodiversity; and the reputation of our organisation’s may be enhanced from involvement in the project” Mr Smith said.

“Stage 2 of the Campaspe rehabilitation has been completed with the removal and burning of dead willows following poisoning in Stage 1. This has removed competition for naturally recruiting and planted native vegetation, protected the existing native vegetation, made the site more open and accessible and ensured planned future works more achievable.

“Removal of the dense Crack Willow cover will also stimulate weed growth - this will require ongoing weed maintenance for some years. I will expect native aquatic plant growth to dominate the channel this year, e.g. Water Ribbons as more light reaches the channel” Mr Smith said.

Mr Smith describes the evidence of change is both obvious and more subtle.

“There is physical evidence that Crack Willows have been poisoned and removed then burnt.”



Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People

“People are interested in coming to a site where they can get easy and safe access; the community have demonstrated they are willing participants in revegetation programs especially along rivers” Mr Smith said.

This was shown when over 30 people from the Kyneton Scouts, Joeys and Cubs spent the afternoon of Saturday 31 May 2014 planting an additional 160 plants along the river bank. This supplemented the 4,500 plants planted by Conservation Volunteers Australia at the site.

For Mr Smith, the inter-agency and neighbour liaison was what he most enjoyed about his involvement in the Caring for the Campaspe project. He will also enjoy seeing the native vegetation growing over the next ten years.

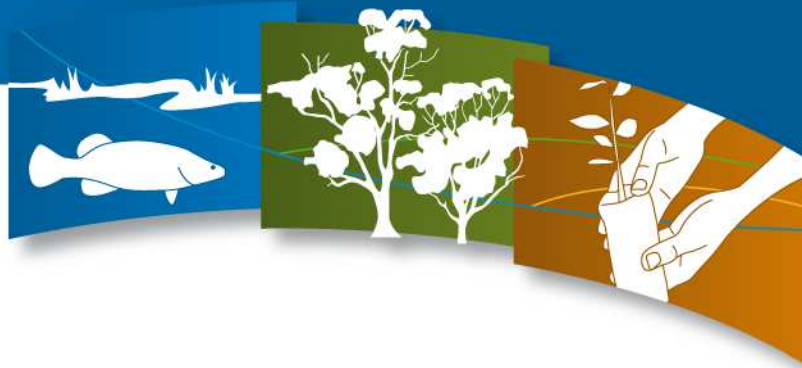
The \$3.73M Caring for the Campaspe project is funded by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries.



Willow-lined Windmill Bridge Streamside Reserve in foreground (December 2010)



Standing dead willows adjacent to the heritage-listed Windmill Bridge (August 2013)



Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People



Willow removal in progress (January 2014)



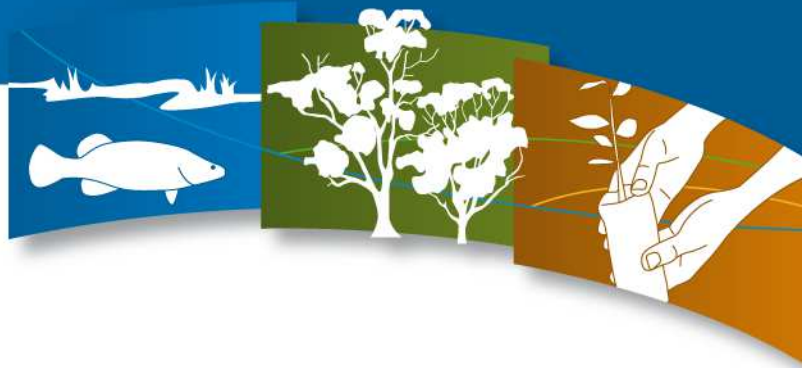
Willows remaining to be burnt by Parks Victoria in May 2014



Revegetation underway by Conservation Volunteers Australia (May 2014)



Brendan Smith presents to the Project Reference Group on-site (August 2013)



Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People



Kyneton Scouts, Joeys and Cubs complete the tree planting (May 2014)