



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People

Environmental Watering of Gunbower Forest

The health of Gunbower Forest has been given a significant boost with the delivery of 98 GL of environmental water using the Hipwell Road Channel.

Environmental water delivery

A new channel, regulator and weir were constructed at Hipwell Road, just outside Cohuna as part of The Living Murray program. These new structures were operated for the first time in the winter/spring of 2014, delivering life giving environmental water to Gunbower Forest.

Approximately 3,800 ha was flooded from early May to late December 2014, including 1,180 ha of wetlands and 2,570 ha of river red gums. Of the water delivered to the forest, 42% was returned to the Murray River via the forest's natural outfalls.

The environmental watering action at Gunbower Forest was managed by the North Central CMA, delivered by Goulburn-Murray Water and allocated by The Living Murray program and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder.

Small-bodied native fish, including Australian Smelt and Carp Gudgeons, bred in their thousands. As water levels were receding towards the end of the watering event, 14,000 of these small-bodied fish were monitored moving from the forest into Gunbower Creek through the fish lock at the Hipwell Road Channel.



Wetland plants germinated, flowered and set seed across the forest in response to the flooding.

The Wavy Marshwort, with its beautiful and delicate fringed yellow flower, can be seen in Black Swamp and Reedy Lagoon. River Swamp Wallaby Grass, a nationally threatened species, has also responded to the water, creating a carpet across large parts of Reedy Lagoon.

Results and achievements

Monitoring undertaken by North Central CMA staff and specialist scientists has kept track of how plants and animals are responding to the environmental watering event.



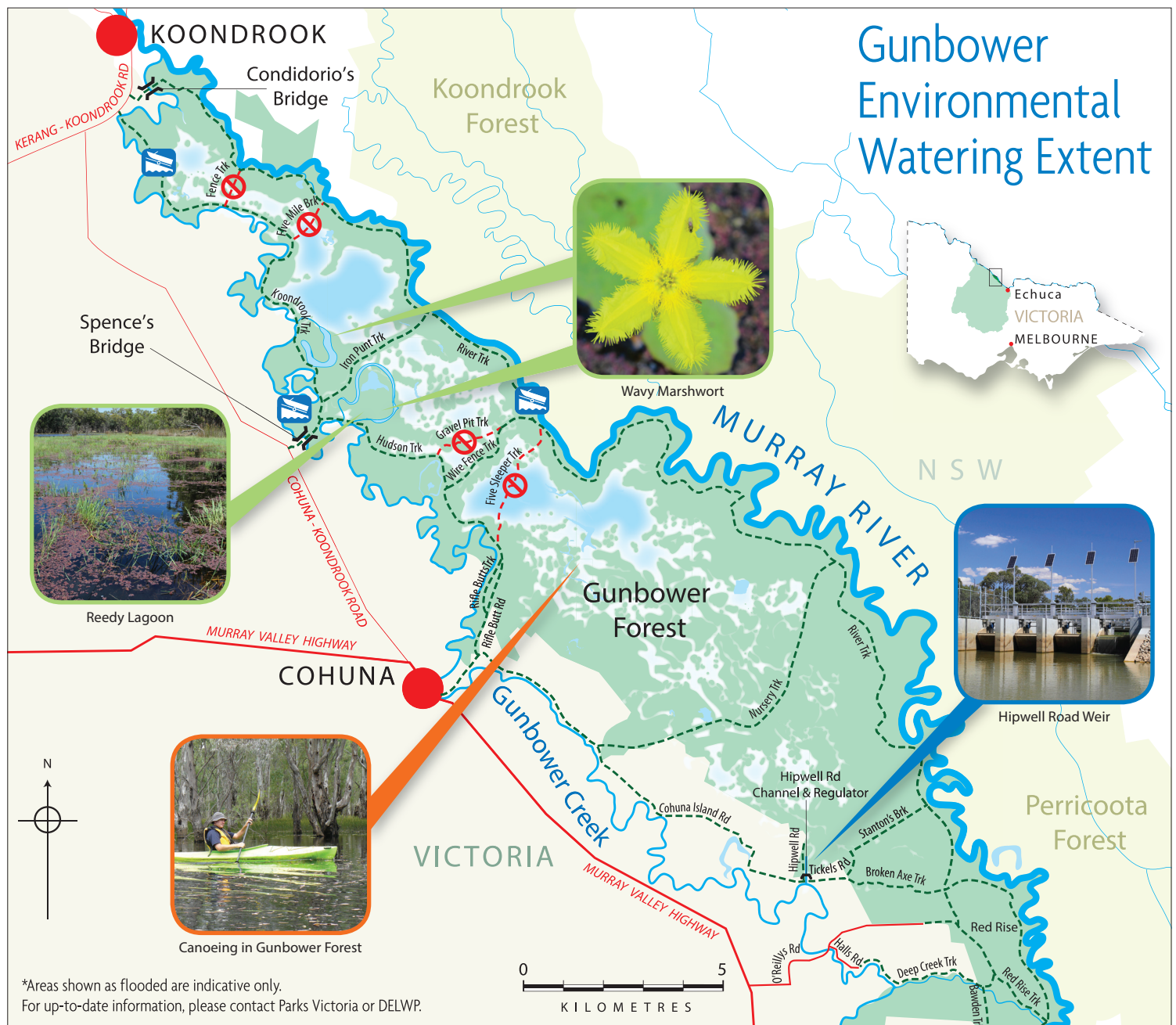
Water quality

As the water recedes, water the colour of 'gum leaf tea' can be seen within the forest. This water is expected to remain in parts of the forest over the coming months as it slowly evaporates over summer. Water quality was closely monitored during the watering event and remained within acceptable predicted levels.

Fish, vegetation and waterbird monitoring will continue over the next four months, the results of which will help us to plan future watering in Gunbower Forest.



The Living Murray is a joint initiative funded by the New South Wales, Victorian, South Australian, Australian Capital Territory and Commonwealth governments, coordinated by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. The Victorian Environmental Water Holder prioritised this water release as part of its *Seasonal Watering Plan 2014-15*, which aims to improve river and wetland health across the State.



Access to the forest over the summer period

Nursery Track, Wire Fence Track, Iron Punt Track and Stanton's Break are now open as water across Gunbower Forest subsides. Access to the forest also continues to be available on elevated areas including the **River Track and Koondrook Track**.

It is recommended that the river is accessed via **Koondrook Track, Nursery Track, Wire Fence Track or Stanton's Break**. Although some tracks remain temporarily closed, there are still plenty of opportunities to access and enjoy the forest, creek and river areas and all campsites remain open.

LEGEND

- Gunbower Forest
- Flooded Area as of Jan 2015
- Access Track Closed During Watering Event
- Access Track Open

To find out more, visit the public access map at www.delwp.vic.gov.au

Information is also available by calling DELWP on 136 186 or Parks Victoria on 13 1963; or by contacting the Gateway to Gannawarra Centre, Cohuna.