

# Improving knowledge sharing

## WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT.....

WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL WATER AND WHY IS IT NEEDED FOR GUNBOWER ISLAND?

WHY WILL ENVIRONMENTAL WATER BE DELIVERED IN SOME YEARS AND NOT OTHERS?

WHY HAVE NATIVE FISH SPECIES AND NUMBERS ON GUNBOWER ISLAND DECLINED OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS?

WHAT ARE THE FORECAST CHANGES IN TEMPERATURE AND RAINFALL AND THE RESULTANT REDUCED MURRAY RIVER FLOWS PUBLISHED BY THE CSIRO FOR 2015?

WHAT ARE THE RARE AND THREATENED SPECIES THAT INHABIT GUNBOWER ISLAND?

WHICH MIGRATORY BIRDS VISIT GUNBOWER ISLAND?

WHY DOES ACTION TO CONTROL EXOTIC WEEDS NEED TO BE STAGED RATHER THAN ATTEMPTING LARGE SCALE ERADICATION AT ONE TIME?

WHAT IS THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GUNBOWER ISLAND FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE?

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT WETLANDS AND LAGOONS ON GUNBOWER ISLAND DRY OUT?

Survey respondents reported a strong connection to Gunbower Island and an interest in management activities.

However, respondents also indicated they had a low level of knowledge about topics included in the survey.

The knowledge topic for which most respondents said they had sound or very sound knowledge was: *Why it is important that wetlands and lagoons in Gunbower Island dry out?* (25% reported sound or very sound knowledge) followed by *The benefits of applying environmental water for native birds, mammals and fish* (24%).

The survey results indicate that the CMA could improve the way it communicates about the science behind our projects.

The CMA will publish responses to the knowledge topics included in the survey on its website and in the next copy of the Flooding for Life community newsletter.



We now know more about what the community values about Gunbower Island, what their concerns are and where they would like more information. This will help us to better target our communication and community engagement activities in regards to our work on Gunbower Island.

A full copy of the Social Benchmarking Report can be downloaded from [www.nccma.vic.gov.au](http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au) or by contacting the North Central CMA on (03) 5448 7124.



**NORTH CENTRAL**  
Catchment Management Authority  
*Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People*

## GUNBOWER ISLAND SOCIAL BENCHMARKING SURVEY RESULTS



A community survey, commissioned by the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA), provides valuable information that will assist with the development, implementation and evaluation of Gunbower Island projects.

The survey, conducted by Charles Sturt University in 2014, provides an insight into the knowledge, values and concerns of the community in regards to the CMA's work on Gunbower Island.

Interviews were conducted with 23 participants and a survey sent to 500 randomly selected town residents and rural property owners. The survey achieved a response rate of 58% and will be repeated again in 2017 to compare against the benchmark data.

### Common themes

The survey results highlighted some common themes amongst the majority of survey respondents.

#### **Locals love Gunbower Island!**

Gunbower Island is highly valued by the local community. Many residents have lived in the local area for decades and appreciate the forest for its unique environment, along with the recreational, economic and environmental opportunities it provides.

The majority of local residents surveyed believe that Gunbower Island enhances their quality of life. A common theme amongst respondents was the long tradition of recreational activities undertaken on the island.

**95%**

The number of respondents that value Gunbower Island as a place for recreation and an attractive place to visit

#### **Most respondents regularly spend time on Gunbower Island**

98% of respondents had visited the Island and 95% of survey respondents had undertaken some activity on the island in the last 12 months. On average, each respondent visited Gunbower Island every three weeks.

#### **High level of support for community involvement in management**

More than half of the survey respondents felt a personal obligation to protect Gunbower Island and 58% of respondents felt an obligation to protect Gunbower Island as part of a group.

**93%**

The number of respondents who agreed that it is important for the local community to play a part in protecting Gunbower Island.

#### **High level of concern about management issues on Gunbower Island**

Most respondents strongly supported management activities such as weed control, however, there was greater uncertainty about environmental water as a management tool.

### CONTACT

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## What does the community value about Gunbower Island?

Gunbower Island is a very important place for most local people, "It is part of what makes life here good", said one respondent.

Recreational, economic (tourism and fire wood collection) and environmental values were important to most survey respondents.

Almost all respondents valued Gunbower Island as a place for recreation and as an attractive place to visit, with 95% selecting important/very important ratings.

Gunbower Island was also valued for providing habitat for plants, animals and migratory birds.

A vast majority of respondents valued Gunbower Island as a place to preserve for future generations, and many valued it as a place to connect with nature and learn about the environment.

Interviewees spoke of the recreational values of Gunbower Island, "A lot of activities come from the forest."

Hunting, fishing, camping, timber collection, European and Aboriginal heritage, and just enjoying the peace and quiet were mentioned.

*"I have fished out there since I was in nappies... we would head out there after milking at least once a week"* said one respondent.

For others, water skiing and swimming in the creek were important.

Interviews with Traditional Owners and representatives of the Aboriginal community highlighted the spiritual importance of the Island for Aboriginal people.



## What are the community's concerns about Gunbower Island?

The issue rated of highest concern to survey respondents was European carp (91%), a concern echoed by a number of interviewees. One informant said: "Carp are the worst thing. The biggest disaster".

Concern about blackwater caused by weed control activities and environmental watering were the next two top rated issues. Survey respondents were also very concerned about the impact of foxes and aquatic weeds.

As one informant explained,

*"It does break your heart to see a turtle build a nest, lay 15 eggs and a fox eat them the next day. Terribly sad and disappointing"*

Other issues of concern raised by interviewees included rubbish dumping and the rubbish left behind by campers; undergrowth, fuel loads and

fire risk; erosion caused by wakeboarding along Gunbower Creek; and confusion between the boundaries of the National and State Park.

Traditional Owners and Aboriginal stakeholders reinforced concerns raised by other interviewees, including the release of pest animals for hunting. These interviewees also highlighted the protection of Aboriginal heritage, including from the impact of logging and the collection of bardi grubs.

The CMA takes the concerns of the community very seriously, and will take the issues raised in this survey when planning its work in Gunbower Forest.

