






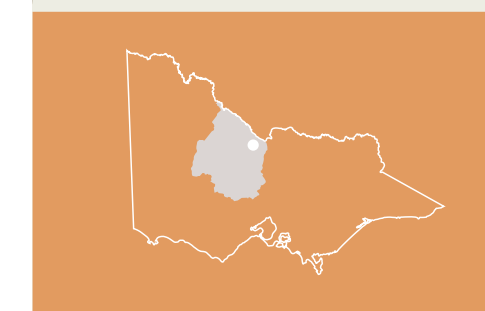
Table 1 Options for future administrative arrangements – Bullock Creek River Improvement Trust area drainage

Option	Community Surface Drains (CSDs)				Regional Drains				Features of the arrangement		
	Degree of local control management	Condition	Level of service	Compliance / enforcement if a landholder causes an obstruction	Degree of local control management	Condition	Compliance / enforcement if a landholder causes an obstruction	Works on Waterways Permit required	Durability of the option	Written agreement	Cost recovery for the level of service
Option A Individuals continue to maintain community surface drains running through their properties 	Individually managed	No change	No change	No enforcement Affected individuals would take legal action against a neighbour through VCAT	Unmanaged	Potential slow decline	CMA can undertake enforcement within 12 months of unauthorised works	Individuals need a Works on Waterways permit to carry out maintenance	Low	No	Nil
Option B Neighbours choose to cooperate to maintain drains through amicable agreements 	Neighbours manage cooperatively Good control over CSDs	Potentially some improvement	Service level maintained for some areas	Landholders working together would potentially reduce the need for compliance	Good control over local sections of Regional Drains.	Regional Drains would potentially improve	Voluntary Some landholders may see a local problem and use their own resources to fix it	A group of landholders can obtain a permit to carry out maintenance	Low-Medium	No – Amicable agreements may cover allocation of resources and costs	Low costs may be shared across a few
Option C Neighbours cooperate to collectively maintain drains through written agreements A community drainage scheme can be established under the <i>Water Act 1989</i> . The Agreement is registered on the titles of the properties involved 	Neighbours manage cooperatively Good control over CSDs Optional formal committee of management	Potentially some improvement	Service level maintained for some areas	Landholders working together would potentially reduce the need for compliance A well-written agreement empowers the group to maintain the community drains, even where land has changed hands and the new owner is uncooperative	Good control over local sections of Regional Drains	Regional Drains would potentially improve	Landholders working together would potentially reduce the need for enforcement	Landholders potentially provided with easier access to Works on Waterways permits	Medium	Yes – Can apply to both CSDs and Regional Drains	Low costs may be shared across a few Cost sharing rules could be included in the agreement
Option D Neighbours collectively manage drains through written agreements with a formal committee of management and with some government support Under the <i>Water Act 1989</i> , councils could, at the request of and on behalf of the committee, collect levies from participating landholders where there is a special benefit 	Good control over all sections of CSDs within agreement area	Good – Likely improvement in condition of drains	Service level maintained within agreement areas	Landholders working together would potentially reduce the need for enforcement A well-written agreement empowers the group to maintain the community drains, even where land has changed hands and the new owner is uncooperative	Good control over all sections of Regional Drains within agreement area	Regional Drains would potentially improve with ongoing maintenance as required	Yes – Rates can be imposed on benefiting properties Cost will depend on level of service is desired (set by the Committee of Management)	Landholders in the agreement area potentially provided with easier access to Works on Waterways permits North Central CMA facilitates a rural drainage management plan setting out how the environmental and cultural impacts and maintenance of drains will be managed	Medium to High Greater level of certainty	Yes	Yes – Rates can be imposed on benefiting properties Cost will depend on level of service desired (set by the committee of management)
Option E below can be added to any of the above options											
Option E Drainage Course Declaration under Section 218 of Water Act 1989 Under the <i>Water Act 1989</i> , the Minister can declare a drainage course on any stretch of land where water flows. This could cover the entire drainage network, including the CSDs. The declaration must specify the Authority or public statutory body that will administer the drainage course 	Individually managed	Good – Likely improvement in condition of drains	No change	Administering body can require the landowner in the drainage course to remove any obstructions so that the drainage course is kept open. Administering body can recover cost to remove obstructions if landowner does not comply	Unmanaged	Potential slow decline	Administering body can require the landowner in the drainage course to remove any obstructions so that the drainage course is kept open Administering body can recover cost to remove obstructions if landowner does not comply	Individuals need a Works on Waterways permit to carry out maintenance	Medium to High Greater level of certainty	Yes	Yes – Rates can be imposed on benefiting properties. Cost will depend on level of service desired Similar arrangement as previously existed under the BCIT

For more information on Options A to E visit www.nccma.vic.gov.au/plans-studies

BULLOCK CREEK RIVER IMPROVEMENT TRUST DISTRICT MANAGEMENT PLANNING PILOT STUDY

November 2019



Information for landowners whose properties drain to the following waterways:

- Blind Creek
- Bullock Creek
- Calivil Creek
- Pompapel Creek
- Seven Months Creek
- Welches Creek
- Western Depression



Bullock Creek at Pyramid Hill

The Bullock Creek River Improvement Trust District management planning study is one of eleven pilot studies across Victoria to investigate future management arrangements of rural drainage systems.

This brochure describes the history of the Trust and possible options for future drainage management for those landowners in the study area outlined in Figure 1 (over page) to consider.

2018 Victorian Rural Drainage Strategy

In 2016, the Victorian Government commenced a consultation and review for the future management of rural drainage systems that resulted in the 2018 Victorian Rural Drainage Strategy.

The Strategy sets out new rules, protocols and support mechanisms to enable landowners and government agencies to overcome past barriers to the repair and management of degraded rural drainage systems.

Under the new approach, landowners are empowered and supported to choose how they want to manage rural drainage.

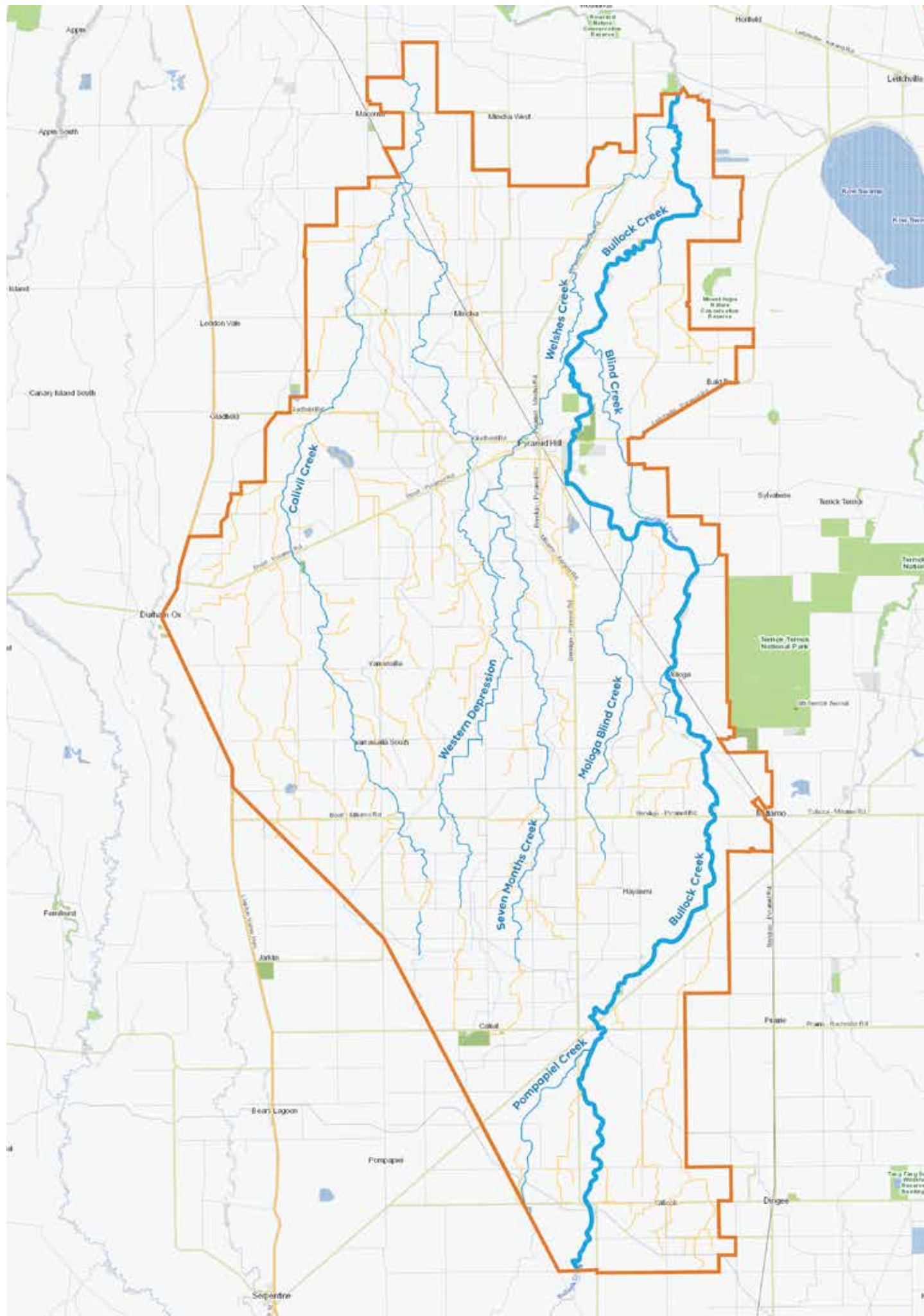


Figure 1 Bullock Creek River Improvement Trust pilot project area boundary.



2019

History

Bullock Creek is one of several natural watercourses that collect and carry water across the Tragowel Plains. European settlement and development of the area caused changes to the watercourses which reduced their flow capacity and contributed to locally raised watertables and salinisation. The causes included:

- dams built on the watercourses
- unseasonal flows created by outfalls from irrigation channels and irrigation runoff
- the use of watercourses to deliver regulated domestic and stock water.



Flood marker and lignum in Bullock Creek

These causes led to excessive growth of cumbungi and lignum and contributed to sedimentation.

The Bullock Creek Improvement Trust formed in 1970 with the objective of carrying out works to restore flow capacity to the watercourses to enhance drainage and mitigate flooding.

River Improvement Trusts were set up as a means of accessing government funding to carry out major works on watercourses. River Improvement Trusts were established under the *River Improvement Act 1958* which ensured the work of the trusts was coordinated with local government and landowner input.

The Act also empowered Trusts to collect rates from benefiting properties for capital works and annual maintenance. Local government collected rates on behalf of trusts. From 1976 to 1990 the rate paid by landowners whose properties drained to the Bullock Creek ranged from 0.7 to 1.0 cents in the dollar on the net annual municipal value. (Source: Government Gazette).



Piped culvert in the Bullock Creek

Works carried out on the Bullock Creek and other waterways included:

- breaching the old dam banks
- removing or replacing poorly designed culverts
- excavating shallow channels through the cumbungi.

In conjunction with the work on the designated regional waterways, community surface drains were built to improve the connection of properties to the waterways. The community surface drains are owned by the landowners of the properties served, not the Trust.



1991

2019 Bullock Creek viewed from Pyramid Hill (note the increase in vegetation along the creek line since 1991).

1991 Bullock Creek viewed from Pyramid Hill looking past the golf course and clubhouse.

What is rural drainage?

Rural drainage is defined as infrastructure and functions related to the collection, and timely removal, of excess water generated by high rainfall to support agricultural production.

The works carried out by the Trust were successful in improving flow capacity of watercourses which in turn improved productivity of farms by reducing waterlogging of farmland following large rainfall events. The works also lowered watertables and trees regenerated in areas where they were dying in the 1970s due to high watertables.

With the creation of the catchment management authorities (CMAs) in 1997, River Improvement Trusts across the state were dissolved and their assets and responsibilities were transferred to CMAs. The watercourses of the Bullock Creek Improvement Trust became the responsibility of the North Central CMA.

Current Management

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (North Central CMA) cannot levy rates on properties and has been unable to attract any funding to undertake routine maintenance of the watercourses within the Bullock Creek Drainage Network.

The North Central CMA has been successful in gaining some government grants to assess the condition of the waterways and to carry out some works to remove obstructions. However, the North Central CMA has no on-going source of revenue to pay for on-going maintenance of the drainage network. There is a risk that the flow capacity of the drainage network will degrade over time.

Future Management Options

North Central CMA is seeking direction from landowners served by the Bullock Creek Drainage Network regarding future administrative arrangements. A change in the arrangements for managing the system might be needed to ensure it continues to provide the service that landowners need. Options include, but are not limited to, those in Table 1.



A community surface drain through a canola crop where it enters a roadside drain.



Bullock Creek choked with lignum near Mitiamo.

For more information on Options A to E visit www.nccma.vic.gov.au/plans-studies