



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority

Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The North Central Catchment Management Authority acknowledges Aboriginal Traditional Owners within the region, their rich culture and spiritual connection to Country. We also recognise and acknowledge the contribution and interest of Aboriginal people and organisations in land and natural resource management.

FRONT COVER IMAGE: Carys Lamb, Arrabella Dietz and Jan Robertson at the site of the old swimming pool on Trent Creek in Trentham. The Friends of Trentham Creeks and Reserves received a \$4975 Landcare grant to remove weeds and revegetate the creek. PHOTO: *Sandy Scheltema*

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Australian Government

National
Landcare
Programme



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Two Decades of Change

Over the past 20 years, the North Central CMA has worked with local communities, Traditional Owners, community groups, industry, and all levels of government to deliver environmental water and improve riparian habitat, support productive agricultural land, link healthy biodiversity, and adapt our landscape to a changing climate.

In particular, our partnerships with the Victorian Government and the Australian Government have enabled these achievements to be achievements of the entire region, something every town, city, neighbourhood and community can be proud of.

The following is a list of 20 highlights over the past 20 years, providing a small snapshot of the work done to deliver lasting change across our catchment.



Who We Are

Our Vision: Sustainably managed land, water and biodiversity resources that support productive and prosperous communities now and in the future.

Our Mission: We create natural resource management partnerships and programs that deliver lasting change.



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Designed by Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung artist Clive 'Bidja' Atkinson, our logo represents the sky and the sun, the land, and the water.

"The land is your mother. You are born of the land, and go back to the land."

Clive Atkinson



20 years
of service



One
face



Many
landscapes



Landcare

“Before our funding I doubt that many local school children knew the creek was there or could give it a name. Now they know it, they enjoy it, they work to enhance it and they share their passion, knowledge and skills with their families.”

Nicole Howie, North Bendigo Landcare Group

The Landcare movement started in our region in 1986, when a group of local farmers from Winjallock formed the first Landcare group in Australia.

North central Victoria is now home to more than 160 Landcare and community natural resource management (NRM) groups, comprising of more than 5,500 volunteers.

With our help over the past 20 years, enthusiastic, capable and active community groups and individuals are working to protect the region’s natural environment.



160 Landcare groups supported



5500+ volunteers



11 Landcare Networks



Large Scale River Projects

“Since we fenced the river we have noticed a gradual improvement in the river and its surrounds. There are more natural reeds growing, with more bird life in the trees and more ducks, fish and platypus in the river. Also the erosion of the banks is not as prevalent.”

Leigh Williamson



56% of
Loddon
fenced



457ha
Campaspe
land protected
forever



292ha
weeds
removed

North central Victoria is home to four significant rivers – the Campaspe, Loddon, Avoca and Avon-Richardson – which form part of the Murray-Darling Basin.

As the caretakers of these waterways, and everything in them, it is our responsibility to deliver projects and programs with the community, to protect them forever.

We do this through environmental flows, fencing, revegetation and weed removal. We also manage pest plants and animals, to help build resilience in our rivers.



“I care for the area and that’s why I signed up. I hope it is protected in the future and other generations can enjoy it like I have.”

David Hines, local landholder

York Plains

The York Plains Wetlands are a connection of eight wetlands along the Avon River and provides important biodiversity and ecosystem services in a largely depleted agricultural landscape.

The wetlands are spread over an area of 3,500ha with 89 per cent of the important vegetation on private land.

The York Plains project worked at the request of the local community to protect and restore the biodiversity and cultural values of the wetlands by mitigating the twin threats of rising saline groundwater and the removal and damage of native habitat.



415ha
protected
forever



11
landholders



1100ha
perennial
pasture
planted

Flood Response Program



*“It’s just been phenomenal.
It’s like waving a magic wand.”*

Julie Begg, Cornish Hill

In 2010–11, after 10 years of drought, some of the worst floods on record inundated the region. An estimated 25% of our catchment area was flooded, about 780,000 hectares.

The response was as large and as swift as the event itself. Backed by the state and federal governments, our Flood Response Program planted nearly 300,000 trees and repaired 265km of fencing.

On top of that, works prevented more than 600,000m³ of sediment from eroding, reducing the risk of further damage. Works crews made up of local people affected by the floods worked across all areas of the catchment to help local communities recover.

From these floods, 11 flood studies and plans were developed across the region to plan for future flood management.



280,000
plants



600,000m³
sediment
erosion
avoided



265km
waterway
fences
repaired



82ha
weeds killed



21,000ha
pest animals
controlled



16 events and
workshops

Northern Plains Grasslands

Vast areas of the Patho Plains, lower Avoca grasslands and Bunguluke were previously cleared for agriculture, with the native vegetation that remained on private land providing irreplaceable habitat for native plants and animals.

The five-year project, funded through to 2018 by the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme, targets the protection and enhancement of regional hotspots of grasslands, grassy woodlands and seasonally herbaceous wetlands.

The project aims to improve the condition of 10,000 ha of grassy ecosystems through an adaptive management program to improve the viability of threatened species, including the red swainson-pea, slender Darling-pea, spiny rice-flower, turnip copper burr, plains-wanderer, and striped legless lizard.

“The most significant change for us is being able to see some understory plants coming up, surviving, and I can’t wait to see what that is going to look like across our property in 5 years from today. It will be a massive change.”

Peter Morison, landholder



Buloke Biolinks

“We’ve learnt a lot doing this and if we can help protect and create places for the birds and animals to live then that’s a bonus.”

Alicia Guild, Donald High School student

Increasing the extent and quality of native vegetation in the Buloke Shire was seen by locals as a key priority of the community in the early 2000s.

Working with the Mallee CMA, the local shire, the Birchip Cropping Group, local Landcare networks and the community as a whole, the project increased the biodiversity of the region through revegetation and fencing works.

Over two years, hundreds of thousands of trees and shrubs were planted and more than 1000ha of vegetation was protected and enhanced.





244,000 trees
and shrubs
planted



1000ha
vegetation
protected and
enhanced



100kg
native seed
planted

Farming for Sustainable Soils



“A really good thing about the local FSS group is that we can have trial plots in our own district. We need local knowledge about how to manage our soils.”

Gary Pollard, Wycheproof

The soils of north central Victoria, together with the region’s water and vegetation resources, form the essential base that both natural ecosystems and agriculture depend upon. The health of the land is intimately linked to the health of the soil.

Farming for Sustainable Soils recognises soil as an important asset that should be protected and managed for future generations. Achieving this goal means working collaboratively with regional farming communities in the quest for greater soil integrity pursued through an adaptive, community-based learning approach.



440 farmers
involved



80% reported
progress



240 increased
their
knowledge



350 farmers
employed and
trained



46 project
partners



100+ sites
improved

Drought Employment Program

"It just gives us a purpose to keep going... yeah, we're a lot happier. And the environment we are working under is not a stressful one."

Colin Domasche

Over the past 20 years, our region has suffered two major droughts, hitting our communities hard. In response, our Drought Employment Programs have provided much needed off-farm income for local landholders, providing employment and training opportunities to drought-affected families in the agriculture sector.

It also provided an opportunity to improve community assets and undertake projects to protect and enhance the local natural resources.





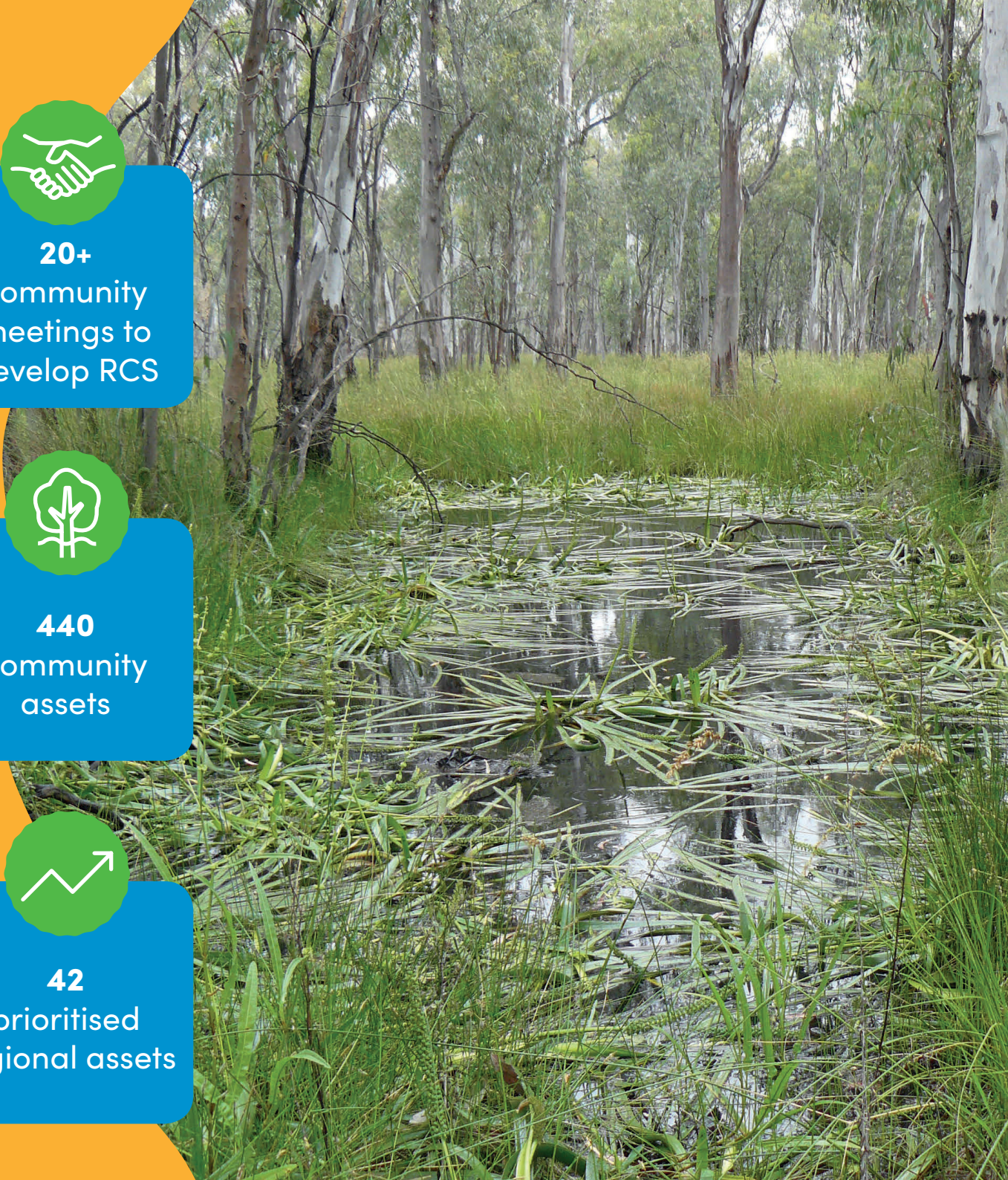
20+
community
meetings to
develop RCS



440
community
assets



42
prioritised
regional assets





Regional Catchment Strategy

“This process unearthed a rich picture, where local knowledge was overlaid with existing scientific information to help in the development of priorities for future action.”

David Clark, North Central CMA Chair

Over the past 20 years, our Regional Catchment Strategies have articulated North Central CMA’s long-term vision for the management of our natural resources.

At their core is a vision to support communities active in protecting and enhancing the integrity of its catchment.

To do this, the RCS sets regional priorities for the management of natural assets, and overall direction for investment and coordination of effort by landholders, partner organisations and the wider community.

Land and Water Management Plan

“The volume of water transferred to the environment under the Farm Water Program is equivalent to the environmental water requirements of the central Murray wetlands under most climatic conditions.”

LWMP report

Integrating community efforts to improve the region’s land, water and environmental assets is a great way to achieve change.

This plan provided a framework for that, and for future investment to bring about the best possible outcomes on both public and private land.

With a focus on managing the threat of salinity and improved sustainability of land and water use, it protected internationally significant wetlands, waterways and forests.

Another key aspect of the plan was to increase agricultural productivity and enhance the social capacity of our communities.





10,000ML+
water
savings



50,000ha
whole-farm
plans



92km
waterways
reopened

Gunbower Watering

*“Visiting Gunbower Forest was
heaps better than going to the zoo
or the aquarium.”*

**Kirra, St Killians Primary School
Grade 2 student**



Gunbower Forest is an internationally recognised wetland that spans 20,000 hectares along the Murray River floodplain. It is Australia's largest inland island, includes one of the most significant remaining areas of river red gum forest in Australia, and is an important cultural heritage site for the region's Traditional Owners.

Its protection has been a key focus of ours over the past 20 years. The impacts of regulation and climate change mean that without the delivery of water for the environment, many of the rare plants and animals of the forest will disappear.

Since 2003, managed floods have been delivered, culminating in the \$13.5 million construction of the Hipwell Road regulator and channel in 2013.



199,340ML
water
delivered



15
years of
flows



2500ha
river red gums
watered



600,000
volunteer
hours



22,400
River Detectives
students



117 sites
monitored
each year

Waterwatch

"I now have a commitment to the Loddon River and all rivers. My knowledge about water in the environment has largely been formed by my involvement with Waterwatch, driving me to become an advocate and writer for rivers everywhere."

Waterwatch Volunteer

Waterwatch aims to increase the knowledge and skills of the community, supporting them to become custodians of local waterways.

We love to empower individuals to contribute to natural resource management in the north central region. The North Central Waterwatch program aims to engage with local people to participate in river and wetland health monitoring activities.

Our River Detectives program takes our Waterwatch message into the classroom, delivering sustainable messages to our future generations.



Barr Creek Catchment Strategy



“In 1996 we had several paddocks that were white with salt. Today the majority of the area of those paddocks is now producing quality pasture.”

Neville Goulding

During the 1980s, the Barr Creek was responsible for the largest salt load entering the Murray River. The community developed a strategy and local farmers adopted actions to meaningfully reduce irrigation drainage flows, to then cause the groundwater levels to drop. Saline water was also diverted from the creek into Lake Tutchewop.

The result was real change, with the downstream impact and salinity levels significantly reduced.



On average, **22,000** tonnes of salt no longer enters the Murray River from the Barr Creek



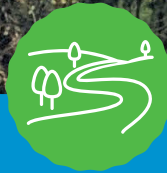
Agricultural productivity has increased as water is used efficiently and land farmed sustainably



Irrigation drainage flows have been reduced by **10,000** ML per year



4 river
basins



64 wetland
priorities



66 river
reaches
of focus

River Health Strategies

“It’s lovely to go down by the river and connect with nature. It’s a really special time.”

Cathy McCallum

With four significant river catchments and 64 priority wetlands in our region, and 13% of the state to protect and enhance, river health strategies are an important way to create change.

They focus on best practice to deliver on-ground works that create positive and lasting outcomes for the environment and our communities.

Climate Adaptation Plan

“My father would always rely on waterholes in the creek to water stock. I can no longer rely on waterholes in the creek.”

Castlemaine Farmer

Between floods and droughts, our land managers are no strangers to the impact of a changing climate. The impact on our communities and our environmental assets has been an important focus over the past 20 years.

Our Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan sets out a roadmap to better prepare for the future challenges and protect our assets.



12 priority waterways high or very high vulnerability rating



0 with a low vulnerability rating



6 community workshops to develop the plan



54 people
trained



7 Traditional
Owner groups



42 people
employed





Aboriginal Partnerships

*“I go out there now and it
makes you feel proud.”*

Dja Dja Wurrung man, Ron ‘Thunda’ Kerr

We work with Traditional Owners across the region to ensure Aboriginal knowledge, cultural values and perspectives are incorporated into natural resource management.

Engaging appropriate Aboriginal communities to participate in natural resource management projects is integral to our work. We work with Registered Aboriginal Parties, Traditional Owner groups and government departments to protect and enhance cultural heritage values.

Cultural heritage is a key part of every plan, strategy and program we create, and we are focussed on involving local Traditional Owners both on the ground and in the planning stages.



147,914
participants



5,022
events



5,335
hours

Community Engagement

"I really enjoyed meeting out on the farm and along the river with staff from the CMA and getting to know what you can do, and what can happen."

Robert Hooke, Farmer

Community engagement is central to everything we do. Building relationships with communities at a town level, in a neighbourhood, and even individually is what makes change happen.

We know the land depends on us as much as we depend on the land, and working together to enhance the region's natural assets requires everyone pulling in the same direction.





12 council
areas



421 leaders



26 days a year

Community Leadership Loddon Murray

"It re-sparked the fire in my belly."

Megan Purcell

Community Leadership Loddon Murray began in 1998, and arose from a consultation process to look at the future of the northern irrigation district following a leak in Torrumbarry Weir.

Out of this process came the Loddon Murray 2000+ Rural Partnership Program which found that the region did indeed have huge potential with good soils, an excellent climate, and good access to water, but there was a need to build local community capacity in order to empower people to take advantage of the opportunities available within the region.

As one of the original partners of the program, we are proud to say that today CLLM empowers people and inspires leadership.



LODDON MURRAY INC

Developers for
Vibrant and Sustainable Communities

au

NAME

NAME

NAME

Proudly supported by Victorian Government's Regional Circles

Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People

Whether it's building a fence, pulling out weeds, meeting a landholder, protecting a community or planning a healthy river or wetland flow, we are proud to have worked alongside the north central community for 20 years, creating natural resource management partnerships and programs that deliver lasting change.

Thank you for letting us be by your side over the past 20 years, helping manage your land, water and biodiversity resources, with an overall vision of supporting productive and prosperous communities.

We look forward to the next 20 years and the achievements we can create together.



147,914
Engagement
participants



3,221km
Fencing



51ha
Threatened
species recovery



91,231ha
Weed control



116,443ha
Pest animal
control



1,194ha
Soil treatment



80,249ha
Agricultural
practice change



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