

A Healthy Coliban Community



The region

The Upper Coliban catchment provides raw water for drinking water purposes for more than 130,000 people. It also has a range of additional environmental, social and economic values.

The region is culturally rich with a number of significant sites along waterways where Traditional Owners have sourced native plants, medicines and food for thousands of years.

“From an Aboriginal perspective there is much cultural, spiritual knowledge to be shared with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.”

Dja Dja Wurrung Elder.

Agricultural production, including cropping and grazing of cattle and sheep, is an important land use in the upper Coliban catchment.

Historical land management practices have resulted in extensive loss of riverside vegetation, which impacts water quality and river health.

The catchment is facing known threats from existing and future developments, uncontrolled livestock access to waterways and riparian areas and from climate change.

The project

North Central CMA and Coliban Water, together with Traditional Owners the Dja Dja Wurrung, are implementing a 20 year plan, ‘A Healthy Coliban Catchment’ project, to protect the upper section of the Coliban River and its long-term water supply, while boosting habitat connectivity, sustainable land use practices, and building cultural and lifestyle value across the region.

It is one of the most robust and integrated approaches to catchment management undertaken to date in Victoria.

With a clear vision and action plan, the North Central CMA and Coliban Water are working with local councils, community groups landholders and communities on a range of voluntary on-ground projects and actions.

The project is also developing a potential planning scheme overlay to protect future supplies of drinking water and the environmental and cultural values that make the area so sought-after.

A community reference group is providing local input and knowledge as works are rolled out.

continued over

The community

To ensure the project vision could be achieved, it was important the project partners had a good understanding of communities with the Coliban River Catchment, particularly

- ▶ landholder identity
- ▶ values attached to their property (Figure 2), and
- ▶ importance of environmental and social issues, beliefs about climate change, dams and the efficacy of best-practice natural resource management.

In 2018 Professor Allan Curtis (formerly Professor of Rural Sociology at Charles Sturt University and now with Decoy Media and Marketing) undertook a social research survey in the Coliban catchment to better understand:

- ▶ landholder identity (Figure 1)
- ▶ values attached to their property (Figure 2)
- ▶ importance of environmental and social issues, beliefs about climate change, dams and the efficacy of best-practice natural resource management.

Landholders with more than two hectares from the Hepburn and Macedon Ranges shires were invited to complete the survey - 851 potential respondents with a 50 per cent response rate.

Results from the survey show 65 per cent of land owned in the project area is owned by full-time or part-time farmers. Interestingly, 44 per cent of respondents identified as non-farmers which is representative of the area's diversity (Figure 1)

Results from the survey provide project partners with other important landholder data and insights, such as difference in values attached to properties based on farmer identify (Figures 2 and 3). These insights are informing the project's engagement with the community and shaping the natural resource management activities.

Current and future development pressures in the Hepburn and Macedon Ranges shires present challenges in protecting and improving the catchment.

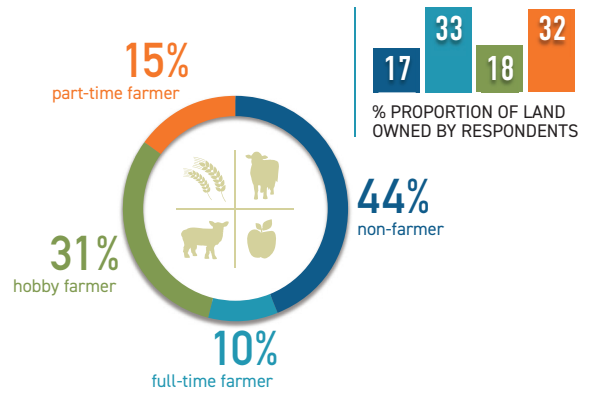


Figure 1: Identity as farmer



Figure 2: Important community values attached to their property

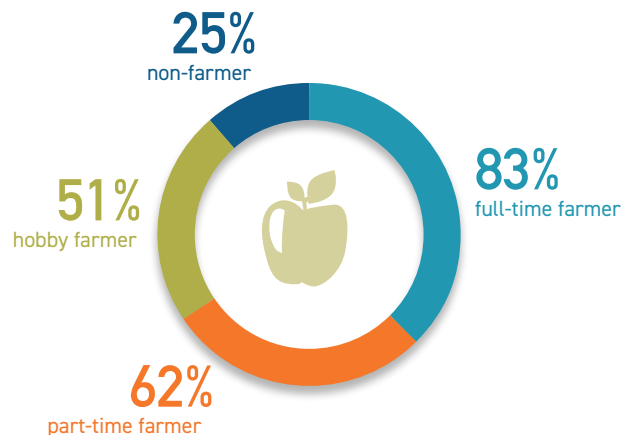


Figure 3: Sense of accomplishment in producing food and fibre for others, including family. Difference in values attached to property based on farmer identity.

For more information and to get involved: Phone 03 5448 7124 | Web nccma.vic.gov.au | coliban.com.au