

# North Central Waterwatch Story of Change

Steph Carter 2019



North Central Waterwatch and the City of Greater Bendigo are working together to improve the health of, and community connection to, Bendigo Creek.

The Bendigo Creek Citizen Science project launched in 2018, with dedicated volunteers collecting and reporting important information about waterway health to allow for a better understanding of the impacts of improvement projects over time.

Steph Carter is studying Conservation and Land Management at Bendigo TAFE and explains how and why she became involved in the Bendigo Creek Citizen Science Program.

*"I had very limited knowledge of environmental issues in general, until we moved to the country in 2015.*

*"I was originally from the city and the suburbs. When we moved, it took me a while to find my feet. I started to embrace the country lifestyle and also wanted a career change, so started studying Conservation and Land Management.*

*"I became more aware of the nature around me and little by little started to understand more about our waterways, land clearing and things that have happened since European occupation.*

Steph became involved in the Citizen Science program through her studies, facilitated by the strong partnership Waterwatch has with Bendigo TAFE.

*"Through my studies, we had opportunities to do stuff with the CMA, waterbug monitoring, mapping willows and things. Then I started to develop a real interest in waterways and found out there was an opportunity to volunteer and get involved in this project. That was the steppingstone for me.*

*"I got in contact and said I wanted to get involved in Waterwatch. I live in Maldon but because I come in to TAFE most days, spend a lot of time in Bendigo and cross the Bendigo Creek on my way in. It was easy for me to access.*

*"I love being closer to nature and having a better understanding of things. I didn't know what EC (electrical conductivity as a measure of salinity) was before, or what the phosphate levels meant. Now I don't even need to look at the data interpretation table, now I know when the water quality is good or not, just by my results.*


Steph feels a great sense of pride, too. One of the aims of the Citizen Science program is to increase custodianship of the creek.

*"I love that every month when I go out to do my water testing, I have that sense of ownership. I'll be looking around and feeling a great sense of pride, particularly the frog ponds at Number 7 (reservoir). I'll pick up litter, I want to keep the site clean, just things like that. My husband comes out with me as well and we get out of the house together for a few hours. We both get to appreciate it".*

*"That pride, it's filtered into other areas of my life too - like a recent revegetation project on my property. I just want to do good for the environment. It's ever increasing and it's making me a better person.*



Steph testing salinity at her monitoring site at the headwaters of the Bendigo Creek



*"I like to be part of the greater good. I know that you rely on volunteers to collect this data, so you can figure out what's going on (with the creek) and together we are all trying to make things better. All the volunteers are part of a greater good, and that's awesome. That's really important to me.*

*"As part of my course, we have three sites we monitor out at Crusoe Reservoir. I was watching some of my classmates doing the water testing and was having fun teaching them how to do it better, teaching them about the water quality and the macros (waterbugs monitoring) and sharing knowledge. I have so much more knowledge now, and I get a really positive vibe sharing that and helping others to understand it too."*

When asked about her hopes for the future of the Bendigo Creek, Steph says:

*"I hope to see in the future that the quality of the water is the best it can be, that there is lots more animal life and that they can use the creek. And I hope that more and more people have that sense of pride and ownership like I do."*

The Bendigo Creek Citizen Science Project is proudly supported by the City of Greater Bendigo.

The Victorian Government is supporting community partnerships through Waterwatch and other Citizen Science initiatives to address local waterway priorities.

These priorities are being addressed as part of the government's \$222 million investment to improve catchment and waterway health across regional Victoria. This investment is a key component of Water for Victoria – the government's plan for management of our water resources now and into the future.

## For more information

Telephone 03 5448 7124 or visit  
[www.nccma.vic.gov.au](http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au)

