

## A partnership approach

Gunbower Forest is a large River Red Gum Forest of international significance that has suffered a serious decline in condition in recent years from lack of water. Through The Living Murray's Gunbower Forest project, works will be undertaken to provide water to protect and improve the forest's health.

Gunbower Forest is important from an environmental perspective and also for industries such as tourism and logging. Social and cultural connections have been established through the long-term use of the forest by many people.

The forest is also a designated wetland of international importance through its inclusion on the Ramsar list, a global environmental treaty. This means that governments have committed to taking all steps necessary to ensure the maintenance of the forest's ecological health.

Through the Gunbower Forest project, the following organisations are working together at different levels and with the local community to oversee the large investment into protecting and improving the health of the forest.

### Murray-Darling Basin Authority

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) is an Australian Government agency responsible for planning the management of water resources across the Murray-Darling Basin. Several programs are implemented through the MDBA, including The Living Murray program.

The Gunbower Forest project is delivered by the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) in partnership with Goulburn-Murray Water, and Parks Victoria, and coordinated at a state level by the Department of Sustainability and Environment. It is part of The Living Murray program, a joint initiative of the New South Wales, Victorian, South Australian, Australian Capital Territory and the Commonwealth governments, coordinated by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. Together with Koondrook-Perricoota Forest in NSW, Gunbower Forest is one of The Living Murray's six icon sites.

### The Living Murray

The Living Murray program was established in 2002 in response to evidence of declining health in the Murray River and aims to achieve a healthy working river system for the benefit of all Australians. At the time, it was Australia's most significant river restoration program in terms of scale, investment and political support.

The Program has acquired water entitlements to be used at six icon sites along the Murray River, including Gunbower-Koondrook-Perricoota Forest. Infrastructure projects are currently underway at each icon site to allow the environmental water to flow into these areas and achieve set ecological objectives. Monitoring is undertaken to determine results, which are widely communicated.



Photo: North Central CMA

Agency staff involved in The Living Murray program visit Gunbower Forest.

### River Murray Water

River Murray Water is the part of the MDBA that operates and manages the Murray system. It oversees water storage and delivery, operation of salinity mitigation schemes, navigation, recreation and tourism and other functions. River Murray Water owns the infrastructure built in Gunbower Forest through The Living Murray program.

## Department of Sustainability and Environment

The Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) has several functions within Gunbower Forest. Firstly, it is responsible for the implementation of all aspects of The Living Murray program in Victoria, including those undertaken at Gunbower Forest.

Secondly, DSE oversees Victoria's environmental watering program in partnership with catchment management authorities, Parks Victoria, the Commonwealth Department of Environment Heritage and the Arts, and the MDBA. Environmental water priorities are set each year based on where the best results can be achieved with the volume of water available.

Finally, DSE is responsible for managing the Gunbower State Forest. This includes pest plant and animal management, providing timber for sustainable forestry, firewood collection management, protecting landscape, archaeological and historic values and providing recreational and educational opportunities.

## Parks Victoria

Parks Victoria is responsible for managing the parks on Gunbower Island, including Gunbower National Park, the River Murray Reserve and Spence Bridge Education Area. The organisation aims to conserve, protect and improve natural and cultural values in these areas, as well as provide quality services and information to park users.

## North Central CMA

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) looks after river health in North Central Victoria and is responsible for managing environmental water entitlements locally on behalf of the Victorian Minister for Environment. North Central CMA is the regional Icon Site Coordinator for Gunbower Forest under The Living Murray program. It is therefore responsible for coordinating infrastructure projects and environmental water through this program. It also manages projects to undertake monitoring and to improve the health of Gunbower Creek.



*North Central CMA staff member monitoring birds in Gunbower Forest*

*Photo: North Central CMA*

## Goulburn-Murray Water

Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW) operates and maintains water delivery infrastructure in the Torrumbarry Irrigation District, including Gunbower Creek, where aquatic weed management and control is also undertaken. Environmental regulators are operated on behalf of the infrastructure owners (River Murray Water) at the direction of the environmental water manager (North Central CMA). G-MW is required to provide environmental water to Gunbower Forest in a way that doesn't impact on other water demands (e.g. those of local irrigators). G-MW is involved in the detailed design of infrastructure works current planned for Gunbower Forest.

## CONTACT

This fact sheet is one of a series providing information on the Gunbower Forest project. Further fact sheets and other project information are available from the North Central CMA on 03 5448 7124 or by visiting [www.nccma.vic.gov.au](http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au).

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