

Community engagement, capacity building and the 2012-2018 North Central Regional Catchment Strategy – a discussion paper

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Purpose: *This discussion paper attempts to articulate our current understanding of the North Central CMA community, defined in the 2008- 2010 North Central CMA Community Engagement Strategy as “with whom the North Central CMA will engage” and includes priority actions and some innovative solutions for seeking community input to the developing RCS.*

1. Introduction

The North Central Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) is the key planning document that will set regional priorities for the future management of natural resources across the north central Victoria. The RCS will cover a six-year period (2012-2018) and aims to provide focus, coordination and direction for all natural resource management work in the region. It will strengthen the links between rivers, landscapes and people in this unique region. This discussion paper has been written to assist in the development of the renewed North Central RCS.

The main aim of community engagement and capacity building is to achieve an informed and engaged community that continues to manage natural resources sustainably in the North Central CMA region. The RCS aims to set a direction for natural resource management that is clearly understood and supported by all members of the regional community.

The North Central CMA understands the importance of ensuring that everyone in the community has a chance to contribute to setting priorities for the region. We commenced this process in 2009 and will continue to engage with the community and other stakeholders about what they value and how they would prioritise management of our natural assets.

The North Central CMA recognises that the timeframe for the development of the RCS coincides with community consultation about the Basin Plan and the Regional River Health and Environmental Water Strategy. The North Central CMA will work to ensure that our community engagement maximises the use of community member’s time and minimise the risk of ‘consultation fatigue’.

2. Background

The North Central CMA is responsible for the preparation of the RCS as stipulated in Part 4 Division 1 of the *Catchment and Land Protection Act* (CaLP Act) 1994. The North Central RCS is currently due for renewal and the North Central CMA Board has responsibility for oversight of the process. The North Central RCS Renewal commenced by reviewing the most recent RCS.

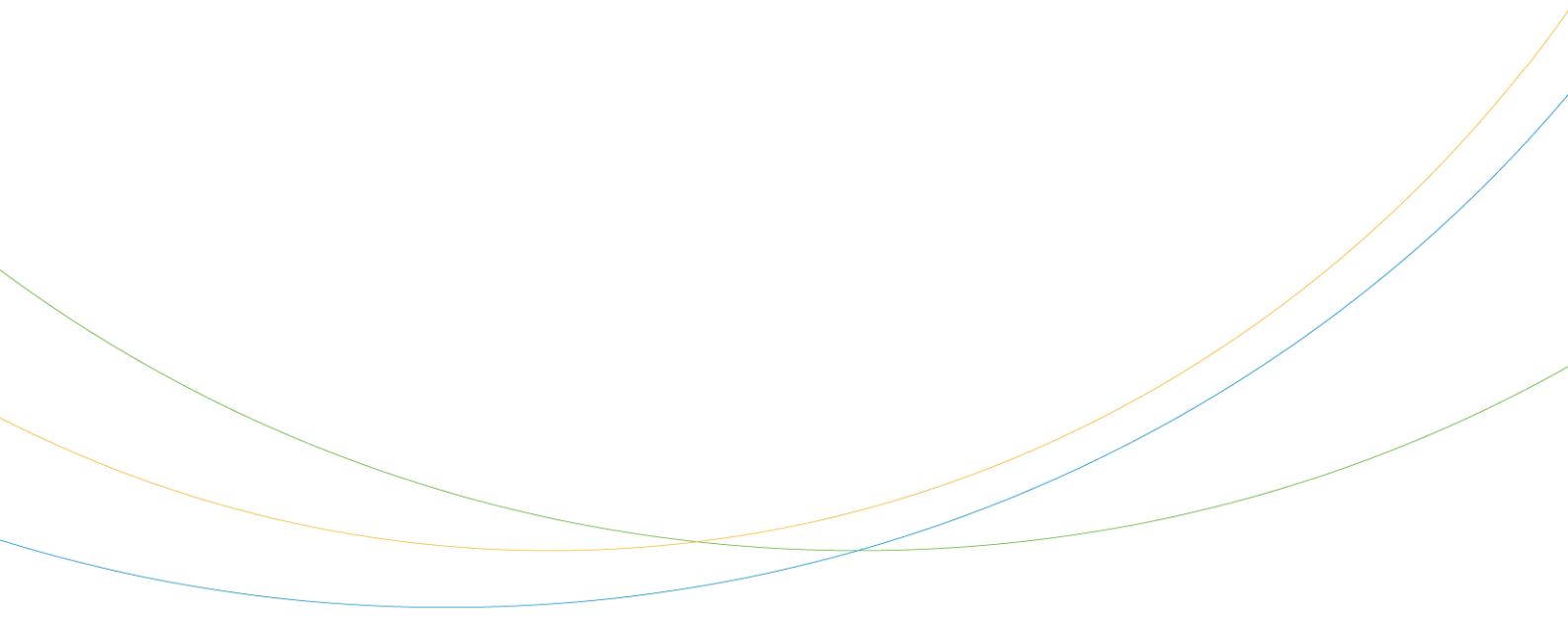
In 2009 the North Central CMA commenced the RCS renewal process and undertook extensive community and stakeholder consultation to identify the region’s significant natural resource assets. Since identifying these assets, there has been a hiatus in the RCS renewal process due to proposed CMA amalgamations and delayed endorsement of the RCS Guidelines. With the decision by the Victorian Government to continue with ten separate catchment management authorities the RCS renewal is now back on track.

3. Target audiences

The target audience groups for community engagement about the RCS fall within four broad categories:

- **General Community** - the people who live, work, or visit the catchment. The general community includes traditional landowners, urban communities, recreational and educational groups as well as the general public
- **Land users** - an important target group that are directly affected by North Central CMA programs and projects and include farmers and landholders, as well as absentee landholders and lifestyle landholders.
- **Partners** - key collaborators, investors and stakeholders of the CMA. These include State and Commonwealth Government agencies and authorities, local government, non-government agencies, environmental groups, industry and business stakeholders
- **North Central CMA employees** - these include Board members, NRMC members, CMA staff, consultants and contractors.

For the purpose of the 2012-2018 RCS the more specific target groups are included in Table 1.



Target group	Stakeholder	Stakeholder analysis/Activities
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General community Angling community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic and print media North Central CMA website and 'Have Your Say' web page
Regional NRM community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blampied Kooroocheang Landcare Group Buloke & Northern Grampians Landcare Network Connecting Country Inc Loddon Uplands Landcare Consortium Loddon Plains Landcare Network Inc Mandurang Strathfieldsaye Landcare Network Upper Campaspe Combined Landcare Group Mid-Loddon Landcare Network Kara Kara CMN Wedderburn CMN Northern United Forestry Group Bendigo Field Naturalists Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Bush Heritage Australia Conservation Volunteers Australia Friends Groups (of Victorian National Parks and Reserves) [e.g Friends of Terrick Terrick NP] Other Landcare groups and environment networks North Central Waterwatch Community Monitors Individuals involved in NRM and connected to the RCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A conversation over dinner (with staff, NRMCM and Board members) Leveraging planned group/network activities (e.g monthly meetings) Electronic and print media North Central CMA website and 'Have Your Say' web page <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - asset list will be populated by postcode for easy search and validation Monthly 'Groundcover' newsletter Quarterly Waterwatch newsletter Contribute to Network newsletters Landcare Gateway Training for local communities to take action and protect locally important assets. This may include community INFFER training, workshops on writing successful funding proposals, accessing the asset database, and strategies for effective monitoring and reporting.
Government	<p><i>Victorian Government</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Sustainability and Environment Victorian Catchment Management Council Department of Primary Industries VRFish Parks Victoria EPA Victoria Aboriginal Affairs Victoria Department of Planning and Community Development VicSES CFA VicRoads RDA <p><i>Australian Government</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Murray-Darling Basin Authority Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Department of Transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMA Chairs & CEOs Forum Leveraging planned group/network activities (e.g monthly meetings) Letters to key personnel North Central CMA website and 'Have Your Say' web page DSE North West Working Group Victorian Landcare Team
Local government	<p>CEOs and Statutory Planning Managers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Greater Bendigo Council Campaspe Shire Council Central Goldfields Shire Council Gannawarra Shire Council Hepburn Shire Council Loddon Shire Council Macedon Ranges Shire Council Mount Alexander Shire Council Pyrenees Shire Council Buloke Shire Council Northern Grampians Shire Council Swan Hill Rural City Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letters to all CEOs Face-to-face meetings Electronic and print media North Central CMA website and 'Have Your Say' web page Local Government Forum briefing
Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Central Agribusiness Forum VFF Central Highland Agribusiness Forum Birchip Cropping Group Meat and Livestock Australia Northern Victoria Poultry Cluster Other production and industry groups/bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bendigo Business Council Direct communication with industry bodies Letters to all appropriate contacts in these organisations North Central CMA website and 'Have Your Say' web page
Non-government organisations Not for Profit groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust for Nature Greening Australia Conservation Volunteers Australia Mt Alexander Sustainability Group Bendigo Sustainability Group Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Central CMA website and 'Have Your Say' web page Letters to all appropriate contacts in these organisations

Target group	Stakeholder	Stakeholder analysis/Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wimmera Mallee Sustainability Alliance • Bendigo District Environment Council • Other locally based NRM/sustainability groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Australian Plants Society (SGAP Victoria) ➢ Victorian National Parks Association ➢ The Victoria Naturally Alliance ➢ Australian Conservation Foundation ➢ Australian Ecosystems Foundation ➢ Bush Heritage Australia ➢ Environment Victoria ➢ Gould League ➢ Greening Australia 	
Water corporations – Urban Water corporations – Rural	CEOs; Water Services Committees; Planners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coliban Water • Central Highlands Water • Goulburn-Murray Water • Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water • Lower Murray Water • NVIRP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Central CMA website and ‘Have Your Say’ web page • Letters to all CEOs in these organisations
North Central CMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board and NRM • Executive team members • Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal communication and presentations • North Central CMA website and ‘Have Your Say’ web page • North Central CMA will implement a program of community engagement training for all project staff to maximise the opportunities for engagement around the broader RCS in each of its projects.
Neighbouring CMA’s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goulburn Broken CMA • North East CMA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Central CMA website and ‘Have Your Say’ web page
Education Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Trobe University • Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE (BRIT) • Monash Uni Rural School • Catholic College • Bendigo Senior Secondary College • Bendigo South East Secondary • Girton Grammar School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Central CMA website and ‘Have Your Say’ web page
Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultants involved in previous RCS review and implementation of 2003–2007 RCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Central CMA website and ‘Have Your Say’ web page • Letters to all CEOs in these organisations

Target group	Stakeholder	Stakeholder analysis/Activities
Traditional Owner Groups <i>Registered Aboriginal Parties</i> <i>Native Title Applicants</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, (RAP) • Barapa Barapa Nations Aboriginal Corporation, (RAP Applicant) • Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation (RAP) • Taunurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (RAP) • Wamba Wamba, Barapa Barapa, Wadi Wadi Native Title Group (Applicant) • Jaara Jaara Aboriginal Corporation • Gourramjanyuk Aboriginal Association Inc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous facilitator and NRMC and other Indig facilitator to meet with mobs on country
Indigenous industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native Title Services Victoria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Central CMA website and 'Have Your Say' web page • Letter to David Lucas
Indigenous Community Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative • Kerang Aboriginal Community Centre • Bendigo Local Indigenous Network Council • Kerang Local Indigenous Network • Swan Hill Local Indigenous Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous facilitator and NRMC and other Indig facilitator to meet with mobs on country

4. The principles of successful community engagement and empowerment

The North Central CMA's community engagement strategy identifies the key aspects of successful engagement. These are:

Ownership

- Involving the community early in projects, preferably at the project planning stage
- Considering issues that are important to a local community
- ***Using a flexible approach to community engagement that includes a variety of tools and processes***

Valuing local knowledge and skills

- Actively listening to and respecting differing community views and perspectives
- Seeking to understand the range of community views, perspectives and motivations
- Incorporating local knowledge and skills into project design and processes
- ***Identifying key local community members who are well networked and knowledgeable about local issues, and who are able to disperse information to community members***
- ***Using local community resources, such as meeting venues, wherever possible***

Integrity and Honesty

- Providing feedback to the community on "this is what we heard" and how it influenced the decision
- Seeking genuine engagement, not tokenistic or contrived, with the community in good faith and with good will towards the community
- Acknowledging partners, including the community, when celebrating successes
- Following through with commitments made to communities and making sure there are sufficient funds to resource commitments

Clear purpose

- ***Providing clear explanation of the aims of the engagement process to the community and stakeholders***
- Providing a clear outline of what is negotiable and not negotiable
- Determining if any community engagement activity is being undertaken by other agencies in similar timeframes to that planned by North Central CMA

Clarity about Roles

- Clearly defined roles for partners, the community and stakeholders are developed collaboratively

Concise and effective communication

- Making available all information in plain English and in a clear, concise manner
- Making sure information is distributed through a number of avenues, such as media, website, local newsletters
- Ensuring community members have time to become well-informed, and implementing timelines for community engagement are realistic.

5. Community Engagement, Asset Protection and Enhancement

▪ **Regional Perspective**

The RCS will provide an overview of land and water resource values and threats, trends and regional drivers. Issues such as climate change and demographic change will also be considered as part of RCS development.

▪ **Asset Themes**

The North Central RCS will outline the overall description for different asset themes within the region and highlight the priorities assets within each theme. The Asset Identification process is already complete and is the basis for the priority setting. INFFER provides a transparent and robust process to identify cost-effective priorities for investment. It is expected that all priority assets identified in the RCS will have full INFFER assessment undertaken prior to inclusion in the draft RCS.

▪ **Community Engagement and Empowerment around Assets**

Effective community engagement is critical for the success of the RCS. This will require 'closing the loop' with the community members and other stakeholders involved in the 2009 asset identification process and engaging the broader community in the RCS. The North Central CMA is a project funded organisation that can only protect and enhance a small number of high priority natural assets at any one time. The RCS will outline how the CMA will support local communities to take action and protect the other locally important assets identified during the 2009 consultation. This could include community INFFER training, workshops on writing successful funding proposals, accessing the asset database, and strategies for effective monitoring and reporting. North Central CMA will implement a program of community engagement training for all project staff to maximise the opportunities for engagement around the broader RCS in each of its projects.

▪ **Partnerships**

Strong partnerships will be required to develop and implement the RCS. This will be a focus to ensure key stakeholders are fully engaged in the RCS development and take ownership over actions for which they may be responsible.

▪ **Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI)**

MERI will be important to ensure that the CMA can measure against the targets in the RCS and ensure a consistent approach across the region.

6. The five principal RCS Communication and Community Engagement Tools

• **Community and forums**

Close the loop by running a series of face-to-face forums in key regional centres to revisit the asset database, validate the asset data and workshop how to access and use the database.

• **Leveraging existing Landcare network/group activity**

Support Landcare networks and groups to maximise their existing communication and engagement opportunities. This role will be shared by staff, Board members and NRMC members.

• **Leveraging existing stakeholder communication activity**

Participate in stakeholder meetings/forums to maximise their exposure and input to the developing RCS. This role will be shared by staff, Board members and NRMC members.

• **Print media and electronic media**

Communicate information about the developing RCS via press releases, advertorials and existing communication channels such as the monthly 'Groundcover' newsletter.

- **North Central CMA website and social media**

The North Central CMA website will be used for two way community participation in the developing RCS. Multimedia will be added to our existing website and a social media page will be established that provides opportunity for the community to be engaged effectively, efficiently and safely.

7. Indigenous Engagement

There are many facets of engaging with the Indigenous communities in north central Victoria. One opportunity is provided by the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* and two of the settlements in the process of negotiation. These involve the Dja Dja Wurrung and the Wadi Wadi, Wamba Wamba and Barapa Barapa of north central and north western Victoria. Agreement is likely during the early life of the renewed RCS and will provide both clarity and new opportunities for building relationships and creating employment, particularly for working on country.

More broadly we need to engage in dialogue around questions that include:

- The aspects of the natural environment in north central Victoria that the Indigenous community value
- What the mobs are doing and how the RCS can align with current initiatives such as the Dja Dja Wurrung 'Whole of Country Plan' in preparation.
- What can we do together? Can we align dreaming stories with priority natural assets?

Key actions that can be undertaken as part of the RCS Indigenous engagement include:

- Produce a short story in 20:20 format highlighting the Indigenous values of a priority natural asset
- Recognise in the RCS the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* and the range of positive benefits it provides to the Traditional Owner groups:
 - Recognition of traditional ownership for all the world to see
 - Joint management with ownership of national parks
 - Natural resource management agreements
 - Transfer of land for cultural or economic purposes
 - Transfer of land for economic purposes
 - Land use activity agreements to regulate future developments on crown land (simplifying the future act regime)
 - Sustainable funding for TO corporations to provide a sound governance base upon which economic development can build

Key questions to ask the Indigenous community about achieving their aspirations include:

- Q1. *Can you tell us about your natural resource management goals? What they are and why did you decide on them for your area/organisation?*
- Q2. *What are the steps you need to take to reach these goals?*
- Q3. *Is there something that we could do to make it easier for you to achieve your goals?*

8. Monitoring and reporting

A range of quantitative techniques will be used to monitor community engagement including:

- Number of people who attend public meetings
- The number of users visiting the RCS site on the North Central CMA's website
- The number of comments received regarding the RCS via the 'have your say' portal on the North Central CMA's website
- The number documents downloaded from the North Central CMA's website relating to the RCS
- Individuals engaged in the RCS will be mapped to illustrate the extent of the engagement

Seek qualitative feedback from the NRMC regarding quantitative data.

9. Attachments

Appendix 1 – 2008-2010 Community Engagement Strategy