

PROJECT UPDATE:



LODDON STRESSED RIVER

December 2011

Welcome to the last edition of the *Loddon Stressed River* project update for 2011.

In the months since our last update the team has been working exceptionally hard to manage flood recovery efforts whilst also implementing project work.

As mentioned in the August update the North Central CMA conducted flood impact assessments on many previous work sites and public assets after the widespread flooding across our region this time last year. As a result of the flooding, many of the projects on-ground and community engagement activities had to be postponed.

Thankfully some drying out at proposed work sites has occurred and our Catchment Restoration Officers have been able to commence the fencing, revegetation and fish habitat reinstatement work as planned prior to the floods.

You may also recall from the last project update, that the Kerang Weir Fishway monitoring equipment was awaiting water levels to fall before the final antenna could be installed. In late August we received confirmation that the river levels had dropped which allowed the final equipment to be installed and the PIT tag readers were activated. This means that all tagged fish moving through the fishway will now be recorded.

This is a momentous achievement for the Loddon Stressed River team, as the solar powered PIT tag reader system is the first of its kind in north central Victoria.

Keep an eye out for the new signs which will be installed at the fishway in the near future, providing more information on the new PIT tag reader and fishway monitoring.

ON-GROUND WORKS August 2011-December 2011

Fish Monitoring

- Conducted tagging of fish at Kerang Weir to monitor fish movement

Kerang Fishway

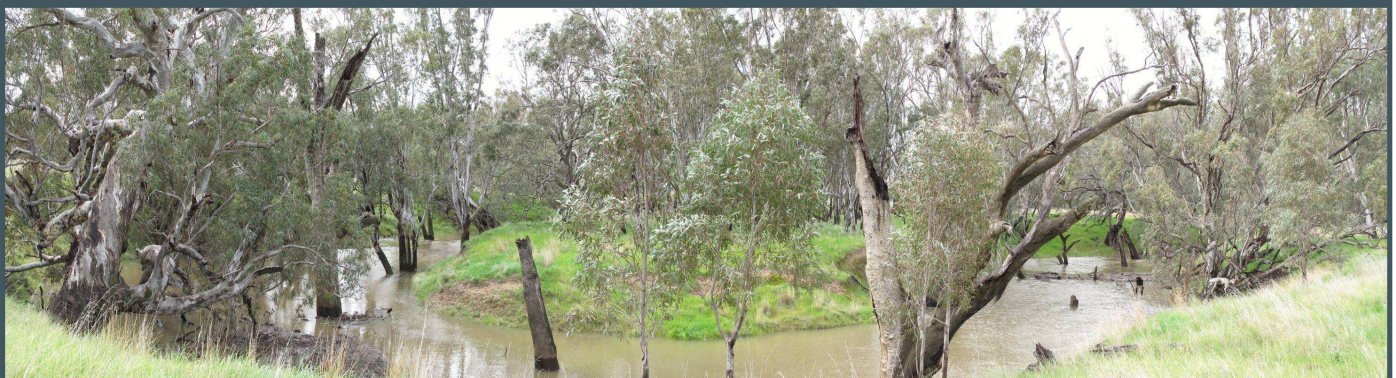
- Installation of monitoring equipment completed and PIT tag reader activated

Riparian Protection and Enhancement

- Riparian fence pegging and installation underway. Since 2003 the project has protected 350 km of river with fencing and off-stream watering systems and a total of 50% of river frontage has been fenced along the main stem of the Loddon
- Reinstatement of flood damaged riparian fencing and revegetation through the North Central Flood Recovery Employment (FREP) Crew
- Establishing new works sites and providing extension to over 150 project participants

The Loddon Stressed River team and the North Central CMA would like to offer condolences to Rob O'Brien's family and colleagues on his passing.

Rob's love, passion and knowledge of the Loddon River were valued by all who knew and worked with him.



Loddon River at Ellerslie Road. Photo by Bridie Velik-Lord

FLOOD RECOVERY UPDATE

Flood Recovery Employment Program (FREP)

The North Central CMA has continued repairing flood damage to property, infrastructure and key environmental assets thanks to the State Government's \$2.7 million *Flood Recovery Employment Program*.

The program provides employment to community members who have been adversely affected by the floods last spring and summer.

Adrian Martins manages the program and emphasises re-establishing the resilience of rural and regional communities is a high priority for the North Central CMA. "To date we have employed 56 community members, either full or part-time, across the North Central CMA region"

The crews have recently been delivering revegetation work on behalf of the *Loddon Stressed River* project and have also been working with the Loddon Shire to complete rubbish removal, weed management work and reinstating fencing along the Loddon River.

Natural Disaster Environmental Recovery program

The North Central CMA has received funding from the Australian Government for a *Natural Disaster Environmental Recovery program* to support the community to undertake environmental flood recovery works.

This funding has been provided for projects that:

- 1) Repair damage from the recent floods to previous environmental protection works such as revegetation or fencing
- 2) Protect or enhance environmental benefits from the floods such as natural regeneration.

Grants of up to \$20,000 will be made available to individuals, Landcare groups and natural resource management (NRM) groups to help local communities build resilience and capacity in the face of floods and other environmental disturbances.

North Central CMA staff have contacted all landowners that were eligible for this assistance, but should you have any queries regarding your eligibility please contact North Central CMA on (03) 5448 7124.

Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Funding (NDDRA)

In August, the North Central CMA received \$9.04 million from the Natural Disaster Relief Fund to deliver a range of flood recovery works in north central Victoria over the next two years.

CEO Mr Damian Wells has said that "Works will continue across the region until September 2013. \$4.3 million is allocated to erosion control and \$1.95 million to riparian fencing and revegetation. Other works include blockage removal, river structure repairs, strategic levee repairs, removal of silt from drains and stream gauge repairs. We will also employ new staff to help deliver the works".

The benefits of the Natural Disaster Relief Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) funding to the region are significant. The North Central CMA will now be able to repair flood damaged works on properties where we have previously partnered with landholders and there will be ongoing protection of important environmental assets.



Revegetation work along Tullaroop Creek. Photo by Tess Grieves

What's New! COMMUNITY RESOURCES

North Central Waterwatch-Frogs Field Guide

Waterwatch, Landcare and North Central CMA staff are thrilled to have launched a frog field guide for our region.

The guide is for anyone interested in learning more about the frogs that call the north central Victoria region home. The guide is a handy size, great to use in the field and contains lots of information that can assist with identifying a frog, its eggs or tadpoles'.

Twelve species of indigenous frogs are known to this region, including two threatened species that are listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*; the Growling Grass Frog (*Litoria raniformis*) and the Bibron's Toadlet (*Pseudophryne bibroni*).

For more information about the frogs of our region or a copy of the Frogs Field Guide, visit www.nccma.vic.gov.au or phone (03) 5448 7124.

Loddon River Poster Series

The *Loddon Stressed River* project team and North Central Waterwatch have developed a series of biodiversity posters which focus on the Frogs, Fish and Water Birds of the Loddon River.

The Loddon River poster series has been developed as an educational resource for school children. The series highlights the endangered and threatened species of our region, their characteristics and habitat types.

The poster series will be distributed to Waterwatch schools, local shire offices and libraries for everyone to enjoy.

If you would like a copy of the poster series, contact Tess Grieves on (03) 5448 7124.



Growling Grass Frog. Photo by: Nick Layne

Legacy Project - RIVER ADVOCATES

River Advocates has been developed as part of the Loddon Stressed River Legacy Project. River Advocates is a program that will bring together key people with a passion for the Loddon River to develop a network of like minded people across catchment to promote, advocate and talk about the Loddon.

North Central CMA staff and *Loddon Stressed River* working group members have nominated passionate and committed community members to be apart of the program which has been developed to celebrate and acknowledge these valuable people, their communities and contributions to protecting the Loddon River.

Over the next 6 months the River Advocates will be provided with a 2 day Loddon River catchment tour to network with both the other Advocates and industry professionals. Guest speakers will present at showcase North Central CMA work sites along the Loddon and discuss on various topics relating to community involvement in natural resource management (NRM).

The North Central CMA, through the *Loddon Stressed River* project, will facilitate the network and provide training and skills development for participants. In addition to the tour, River Advocates will be invited to training and workshop sessions, which will cover a variety of relevant topics including grant application writing, communication and engagement skills and community driven NRM.

The *Loddon Stressed River* team is thrilled to offer this opportunity to the nominated members of our Loddon River community. An engaged and informed community has always been a priority within our project and the people along the Loddon and its tributaries have been an integral part of our project's large scale delivery and success.

This is a pilot project within the North Central CMA and is being conducted in conjunction with the Upper Loddon and Campaspe project.

FIELD DAYS AND MEETINGS

Working Group Meeting

The *Loddon Stressed River* working group met at the Bridgewater Hotel in November. The next meeting is planned for February 2012.

Naturally Loddon- A Wonderland in Spring

The *Loddon Stressed River* team hosted a free community event at Durham Ox in September, as part of the annual Loddon Shire *Naturally Loddon festival*. The day included cultural crafts, Waterwatch activities and canoe trips along the creek. A big thank you to everyone that helped to make this day such a success.

Wise Water Ways conference

Loddon Stressed River team member Tess Grieves attended the annual Wise Water Ways conference in Wangaratta. The workshop is a week long course for river managers featuring sessions with industry experts and extensive field work to consolidate works monitoring and evaluation methodology.

State Waterwatch Conference

North Central Waterwatch invited the *Loddon Stressed River* project to present at the annual Waterwatch conference held in Bendigo in November.

Tess Grieves presented to the group on site at Serpentine Creek, Durham Ox, before canoeing downstream to meet local landholder and project participant, Laurie Maxted for a presentation on the benefits of being involved with the *Loddon Stressed River* project.

Graduate Certificate in River Health

Congratulations to team members Emma Wolters and Glenn Merrick on their graduation from their year long Graduate Certificate in River Health course at Melbourne University.



Getting ready to canoe at Serpentine Creek during the Naturally Loddon festival. Photo by Emma Wolters

WHAT'S COMING UP?

- Continued delivery of on-ground work complementing flood recovery work
- Fish monitoring at the Kerang Weir fishway
- Surveying in-stream habitat conditions in the lower Loddon and Pyramid Creek
- 1st year monitoring of selected works sites
- Continued macroinvertebrate monitoring
- Delivery of community engagement activities through the Loddon Legacy Project
- River Advocate catchment tour and training workshops



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Loddon Stressed River team!