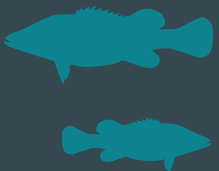


Loddon River near Newbridge. Photographer: Stephen Malone.

The North Central region includes



TWO internationally significant wetland complexes



and is home to many threatened species, such as the Murray cod, Murray hardyhead and Australasian bittern

2.5 North Central

The North Central region is part of the Murray-Darling Basin and contains the Campaspe, Loddon, Avoca and Avon-Richardson river basins. The waterways of north central Victoria are remarkable natural assets and include two internationally significant wetland complexes – Gunbower Forest and the Kerang Wetlands Ramsar sites. They are home to many rare and threatened species, such as the Murray cod, Murray hardyhead and Australasian bittern. The region’s waterways provide important recreational opportunities including fishing, swimming, camping, boating and bushwalking.



Top: Reedy Lagoon, Gunbower Creek. Bottom: Caring for the Campaspe Reference Group inspecting riparian works undertaken by Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises, Campaspe River, Redesdale. Photos courtesy of North Central CMA.

Community engagement and partnerships in the North Central region

Effective community engagement, and growing and strengthening partnerships, are critical for delivery of key priorities outlined in the North Central Waterway Strategy. Community engagement and partnership activities undertaken in the North Central region include:

- The Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owners reached a landmark recognition and settlement agreement with the Victorian Government in 2013 - through the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* - covering 260,000 hectares of Crown land. Dja Dja Wurrung has now produced its first Country Plan (Dhelkunya Dja). Many of Dja Dja Wurrung's aspirations and goals identified in the Country Plan align closely with the objectives and vision within the North Central CMA's Regional Catchment Strategy. The Dja Dja Wurrung's Recognition and Settlement Area covers much high value riparian land including those of the Loddon and Campaspe systems. The CMA will be working in partnership with Dja Dja Wurrung to plan, develop and deliver projects that meet both Dja Dja Wurrung's and the CMA's aspirations for natural resource management in the region.
- The CMA is working with the Barapa Barapa Traditional Owners to gather and document rigorous and defensible knowledge of Aboriginal uses and values of stream and wetlands within Gunbower Forest. The information collected through the project will enable the development of a set of principles and a framework to guide the cultural flow objectives for Gunbower Forest.
- The CMA's Caring for the Campaspe project supports the river-related aspirations of the eight Landcare groups along its length. Collaboration between the CMA and the Ashbourne Landcare Group secured \$58,000 over

two years through a Communities for Nature grant. The grant involved two community planting events, providing just over seven kilometres of fencing materials and 13,800 plants to 23 landholders along the river from the Wombat State Forest headwaters to the Tylden-Woodend Road. The Caring for the Campaspe project contributed the fencing, revegetation and weed control contractors to complement the materials provided by the grants.

- The CMA continues to work closely with the region's water corporations. It signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Coliban Water to work collaboratively in an effort to provide an integrated approach to catchment management in drinking water catchment areas. The initial focus is to improve riparian land management leading to improved water quality in the Upper Coliban in conjunction with the community.
- A regional survey by Charles Sturt University on behalf of the CMA gathered data about landholders' views on natural resource management including rivers and wetlands. This information will help the CMA and partners understand landholder perspectives, tailor engagement and measure change in landholder views over time.

“The waterways of north central Victoria are remarkable natural assets and include two internationally significant wetlands.”

Caring for the Campaspe



The North Central CMA worked in partnership with dairy cooperative Murray Goulburn to fence and revegetate several kilometres on the Campaspe River near Rochester. Photographer: David Kleinert

The Campaspe River extends more than 220 kilometres from the Great Dividing Range near Ashbourne to Echuca on the Murray River. The river contains many threatened plants and animals, and is highly valued for the social and economic benefits it provides to adjacent landholders, towns and surrounding communities. Lake Eppalock, located midway along the river, provides domestic and irrigation water for north central Victoria and is a popular tourist destination.

The Campaspe provides a source of food and shelter for both terrestrial and aquatic fauna, including Murray cod, platypus and threatened terrestrial species such as swift parrots and squirrel gliders.

The Caring for the Campaspe project, established in 2012, works with the community to improve the riparian land of the Campaspe River. The project is guided by a project reference group and offers incentives on both public and private land for fencing, woody weed and willow control, off-stream watering and revegetation. Works completed up to 2014 include 24 km of fencing, 29 ha of revegetation, 23 ha of willow control, 82 ha of woody weed control and two off-stream watering systems. In total, 142 ha of riparian land along the river has been maintained and improved to 2014.

A strong and active community engagement program has produced a number of events and publications that have been well-received with the project actively promoted in all forms of media to a broad cross-section of the community. As a direct result of the project, the Waterwatch River Detectives program expanded from two to eight schools along the Campaspe River. They actively collect and share water quality and habitat monitoring data with the CMA and between schools.



A community workshop on the Campaspe River at Elmore, April 2015. Photo courtesy of North Central CMA

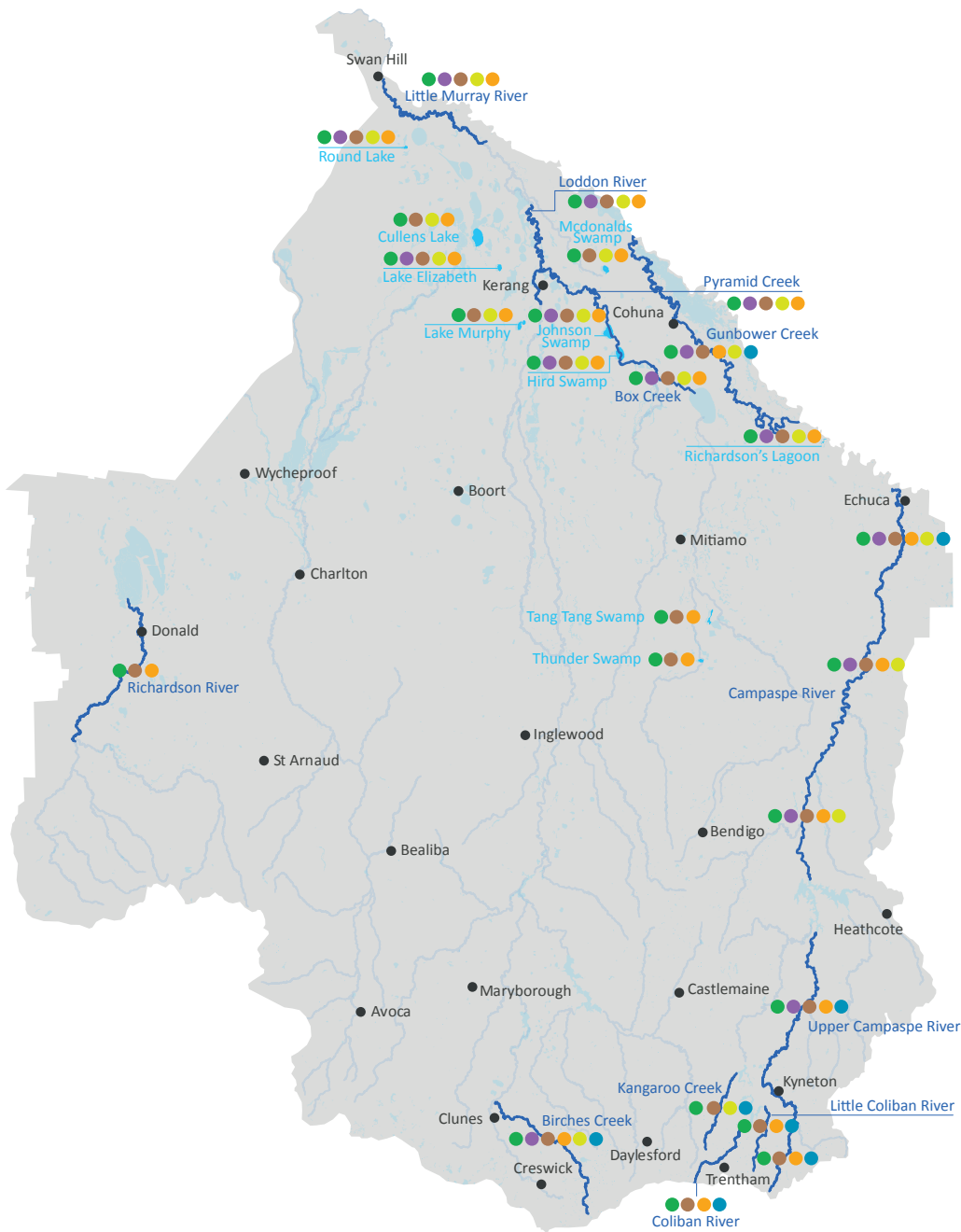
Active partnerships have been fostered with the three Traditional Owner groups along the river (Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Yorta Yorta), including delivery of onground works and communication events and materials. The Dja Dja Wurrung's Recognition and Settlement Agreement covers the length of the river from Kyneton to Rochester.

Several Landcare groups have also received grants to undertake riparian works along the river.

North Central riparian priorities and outcomes

The priority waterways for riparian management are shown in the map below. They are based on priorities contained in the North Central Waterway Strategy and provide guidance about the location of riparian management activities planned for the five-year period 2015-16 to 2019-20. The riparian outcome measures and their aspirational targets are provided in the table below.

Figure 7 North Central priority waterways for riparian management



- Priorities**
- Wetland priorities
 - River and creek priorities
- Environmental values**
- Native vegetation
 - Native fauna
 - Native fish
- Economic values**
- Town water supply
 - Irrigation supply
- Social values**
- Recreation

Table 6 Riparian outcome measures and aspirational targets 2015-16 to 2019-20

Riparian outcome measure	Aspirational target
1. Length of riparian land where works have been undertaken to protect or improve its condition	470 km
2. Area of waterway vegetation works undertaken to improve the health and resilience of waterways	850 ha
3. Number of landholders who have worked with the CMA to undertake riparian works	310