



NORTH EAST  
CATCHMENT  
MANAGEMENT  
AUTHORITY

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Roadside sand piles signal improved river health

Growing stockpiles of sand on the south side of Wangaratta are connected to a major waterway health program underway near the town.

The North East Catchment Management Authority is extracting sand from Fifteen Mile Creek to remove a 'sand slug'.

The CMA has so far removed three thousand cubic metres of sand – an amount equivalent to three hundred dump trucks.

CMA River Health Manager, Andrew Briggs said removal of the 'sand slug' was an important component of the Fifteen Mile Creek Waterway Action plan, the environmental repair program guiding the works.

"A major build up of sand in-stream is bad news. A 'sand slug' effectively smothers habitat by filling in log crevices and other nooks where fish and other animals like to breed," explained Andrew.

The 'sand slug' is the result of both erosion up-stream and the legacy of past practices. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, the present Fifteen Mile Creek channel, downstream of Greta West as far as Wangaratta, was excavated to drain wetlands in the area to reclaim them for farming. The flow from these wetlands was subsequently directed into Fifteen Mile Creek.

Mr Briggs said sand extraction will recommence next summer when flow levels allow.

"The North East CMA improves local waterway health in a planned way. We started this project by removing willows and other exotic tree species that were restricting water flows throughout the reach of Fifteen Mile Creek. After the sand extraction, we will start fencing and plant native trees, grasses and shrubs to help stabilise the creek banks."

The work on Fifteen Mile Creek is being funded by the Victorian Government's "*Our Water, Our Future*" large-scale river restorations project.

"These repair works will ultimately see a reduction in the level of sand entering the Wangaratta urban area and benefit the health of the heritage listed Lower Ovens River," concluded Andrew.

The North East CMA is working across the Region to improve river health, through Waterway Action Plans on many other rivers and streams including the Reedy Creek, King River, Mitta Mitta River, Kiewa River and Koetong Creek.

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For further information or to arrange a photo/interview, please contact:  
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**The North East CMA region – key facts:**

- covers approximately 1.9 million hectares of North East Victoria;
- contributes an estimated \$3.24 billion to the National economy each year;
- supplies 38% of total water to the Murray Darling Basin;
- key industries include agriculture, forests, tourism and valued added processing;
- more than 55 per cent consists of public land.