



**NORTH EAST
CATCHMENT
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY**

MEDIA RELEASE

5 June 2006

Environmental flows study on Ovens River set for next step

Local knowledge is continuing to play an important role in a river health project underway in the Myrtleford area.

A recent streamside information session held on the banks of the Ovens River at Myrtleford gave locals a chance to provide some pointers and ask questions of scientists working on an Environmental Flow Determination study.

The North East Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is undertaking the study to help determine the environmental water requirements for the Upper Ovens River and its associated tributaries above its junction with the Buffalo River.

North East CMA Environmental Water Resources Officer, Matt O'Connell, said local knowledge was critical to helping river scientists understand local conditions of the Upper Ovens River.

"Our information session at Apex Park was attended by 15 people with a wide cross-section of interests, including farmers, irrigators, local residents and business people, recreational user groups, Landcare and field naturalist groups. These people spoke to the scientists about historical flows over periods of up to 50 years – an invaluable source of information," he said.

The expert panel at the streamside session included; Dr Andrew Sharpe (a freshwater ecologist), Dr Bruce Abernethy; (a geomorphologist); Dr Jane Roberts (a botanist) and Dr Simon Treadwell (a fish ecologist)

A team of surveyors will visit environmental flow sites along the Ovens over the next few weeks to collect cross-sectional profiles of the river.

The Upper Ovens River above Myrtleford has been divided into eight sections for the study – three on the Ovens River main stem itself, Morses Creek, Buckland River, Happy Valley Creek, Barwidgee Creek and Buffalo Creek.

Using field notes and survey data, the scientists will determine environmental flow requirements for the various environmental assets within each section of the river.

"For example, the scientists have highlighted the importance of river flows in supporting the Mountain Galaxias and other important fish populations in the creeks and streams in the Upper Ovens catchment," said Mr O'Connell.

Mr O'Connell said the Environmental Flow recommendations for the Upper Ovens River were scheduled for completion by September.

For further information or an interview about this release, contact:

Matt O'Connell, Environmental Water Resources Officer **Tel: 02 6043 7628**

Mary-Anne Scully, CMA Media & Communications Consultant **Tel: 0408 685 225**

Environmental flows – what are they ?

- Environmental flows aim to supply water for the environmental needs of the river to ensure it continues to be healthy.
- The timing, volume and quality of environmental flows are all critical aspects and, like the natural flow of rivers, different combinations will provide a different range of benefits for each ecosystem.
- Environmental flows ensure that key chemical, geomorphological, and ecological processes necessary for healthy river ecosystems can function.