

**Monday 21 August 2006**

## **\$6.3 MILLION FOR NORTH EAST ENVIRONMENT PROJECTS**

The Bracks Government will put \$815,000 into improving the health of the Ovens River, and with it the Murray, as part of a \$6.3 million environmental package for the North East region in 2006/07.

The project will include planting and fencing of native vegetation, willow removal, the stabilisation of stream bed and banks, the removal of barriers to fish passage, landholder workshops and conservation agreements.

Environment and Water Minister John Thwaites said the funding to the North East region is part of \$70 million in Victorian Government funding for a broad range of environmental projects across the state in 2006/07 to be managed by Catchment Management Authorities (CMA).

“The \$70 million funding will pay for salinity, erosion control, water quality, river health, land and biodiversity projects in Victoria’s 10 CMA regions,” Mr Thwaites said.

This year’s funding from the State Government for the North East region will include:

- \$2.9m for River Health
- \$1.1m to combat weeds and pest animals
- \$500,000 for Second Generation Landcare
- \$250,000 for Land Management
- \$230,000 for Sustainable Irrigation, and
- \$200,000 for Native Vegetation

Mr Thwaites said the State Government is the CMAs’ major source of funding, and provides the fuel for large-scale environmental achievement.

“Last year, the CMAs used funding from the State Government and other sources to provide for nearly 60,000 hectares of native vegetation to be enhanced, rehabilitated or replanted,” he said.

“In partnership with landholders, the CMAs set out to protect more than 8,000 hectares of land under conservation agreements, and take actions to protect nearly 3,000 hectares from salinity in irrigated areas across the state.

“Locally, the *Integrated Land Environmental Management Program* exceeded its targets last year, with more than 500 people attending soil health training days, and will this year provide more training and works including native vegetation planting and protection, and the establishment of improved pastures,” Mr Thwaites said.

“Designed to provide more habitat, fight salinity, and improve water quality and soil health, it will focus on the Indigo Valley, Upper Black Dog Creek, Carboor-Bobinawarrah, and Greta Valley areas,” he said.

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“These are State Government investments in the issues and areas that are most important to the environment and productive farming,” Mr Thwaites concluded.

The projects being funded align with each region’s community-based Regional Catchment Strategy. The range of organisations and groups that deliver projects include community and landholder groups, CMAs, the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Primary Industries.