



NORTH EAST  
CATCHMENT  
MANAGEMENT  
AUTHORITY

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Cash incentives helping landholders keep Ovens healthy

In the face of ongoing severe drought across Victoria, there's a glimmer of hope for the environment in the State's North East.

Farmers and crown land leaseholders are taking practical steps to protect the environmental health of one of Victoria's most significant heritage rivers – the Ovens.

Land managers are utilising funding from a program called River Tender to protect 1200 (twelve hundred) hectares of floodplain and 115 (one hundred and fifteen) kilometres of Ovens River frontage – the equivalent of a return trip from Wangaratta to Bright.

River Tender is a Victorian Government initiative that is funded through the Victorian Water Trust and managed by the North East Catchment Management Authority (CMA).

Additional cash incentives will soon be available through River Tender with expressions of interest open until 28 February 2007.

According to Project Manager with the North East CMA, Ms Natalie Ord, River Tender is very different to traditional funding programs.

“It's an auction-style incentive program which means that landholders and leaseholders apply for funds by submitting a bid to undertake works that will improve river health along the Ovens, such as weed control, stock management and fencing, erosion control and planting of native trees, shrubs and grasses,” explained Ms Ord.

“After the closing date, the North East CMA compares all bids received and then allocates River Tender funding to works that offer the best value for money – not necessarily the lowest bid.”

Ms Ord said land managers who make a successful bid receive an initial payment, followed by annual payments over five years on completion of works set out in a management agreement.

“In this third round of River Tender we will be allocating funds for works in the main stem of the Ovens River, as well as Reedy Creek, the Buckland Valley, Devils Creek and Morses Creek in the Upper Ovens area,” said Ms Ord.

Rounds One and Two of River Tender were a great success with forty four landholders signing up to management agreements that will protect the health of almost 1200 hectares of floodplain property and 115 kilometres of river frontage along the Ovens.

“We're keen to extend the protection and repair of the Ovens River and encourage people to find out more about Round Three of River Tender,” said Ms Ord.

The North East CMA selected the Ovens as a focus for River Tender funding as it is a high priority area in the Statewide Regional River Health Strategy and has special status as a Heritage River in the lower section.

“The Ovens River is in good condition and relatively intact throughout its entire system. It provides a vital input to the larger Murray Darling Basin System, so it is important to encourage environmental works that will ensure its health does not deteriorate,” she concluded.

#### ENDS

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact: Mary-Anne Scully, Media and Communications Consultant .Tel: **0408 685 225** or (02) 6043 7600

#### 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.