



NORTH EAST
CATCHMENT
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY

MEDIA RELEASE

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CMA seeks community advice for Upper Ovens River study

Local knowledge is set to play a key role in helping scientists better understand the environmental condition of the Upper Ovens River.

The North East Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is inviting people who know the Upper Ovens well to participate in a study called an Environmental Flow Determination.

The study will help to determine the environmental water requirements for the Ovens River and its associated tributaries above its junction with the Buffalo River.

North East CMA Environmental Water Resources Officer, Mr Matt O'Connell, encouraged people to nominate as a Community Contact that will provide input into the study.

"We're hoping to draw together locals who have an intimate knowledge of water resources and environmental assets in the Upper Ovens River catchment," said Matt.

"During the study, we will ask local contacts to assist with selection of representative sites and reaches and to assist scientists develop flow objectives."

The Environmental Flow Determination study will involve a FLOWS assessment - the Victorian endorsed method for determining the environmental water requirements for a healthy river.

"This method is a rigorous, clear and independent process that links environmental objectives with flow requirements", explained Mr O'Connell.

The Upper Ovens River is one of the priority, unregulated catchments identified in the Victorian Government's "Our Water, Our Future" action plan for the development of a Stream Flow Management Plan. When completed, the Environmental Flow Determination will feed into the development of the Upper Ovens Streamflow Management Plan.

Mr O'Connell said the revised Water Management Plan for the Upper Ovens River is intended to create a balanced and sustainable sharing of available water between all stakeholders in the Upper Ovens catchment, including the environment, licenced diverters, and non-consumptive water users (recreation and aesthetics).

Interested community members have until Wednesday 12 April 2006 to register an interest in becoming a community contact. Nomination forms are available from the North East Catchment Management Authority. Tel: (02) 6043 7600.

Interview/photo opportunities: Matt O'Connell, Terry McCormack (North East CMA Waterways Project Officer), Dr Andrew Sharpe (Ecologist – SKM, Melbourne) and Dr Bruce Abernethy (Geomorphologist, SKM Melb) will be available to discuss this project at

- ❑ **Myrtleford**– Wednesday 29 March, 1.45pm – 2.15pm at Rotary Park
- ❑ **Bright** – Thursday 30 March, 8.30am – 9am at Tourist Info Centre

For further information contact: Matt O'Connell on 02 6043 7628 or 0427 220 506

▲ *See following page for quick background re Upper Ovens catchment*

Key points about the Upper Ovens Catchment

- ❑ The Upper Ovens River catchment (estimated catchment area of 1,580 km²) is located in the Ovens Basin and is defined as the catchment area upstream of the junction with the Buffalo River at Myrtleford. The catchment area of the Ovens River above Bright is about 490 km², increasing to an area of around 1200 km² at Myrtleford. The Buckland River is the major tributary, with an area of around 470km².
- ❑ The Upper Ovens River supplies water for urban and agricultural uses. Predominant agricultural uses in the catchment include tobacco, horticulture, aquaculture and dairy in addition to domestic and stock requirements.
- ❑ The hydrology of the Upper Ovens River is significantly altered over the summer (low flow) period by the diversion of water for urban and agriculture demands. In particular there has been a decrease in the magnitude of summer flows while the duration of low flow events has increased.
- ❑ The Upper Ovens River is identified in the Victorian River Health Strategy as an Icon River.
- ❑ The Upper Ovens River Floodplain contains significant Freshwater meadows and Shallow Freshwater marshes. The river and its tributaries are significant because of the assemblage of 11 species of freshwater fish, of which Mountain Galaxias (*Galaxias olidus*) and stocked Trout Cod (*Maccullochella macquariensis*) have conservation status in Victoria.
- ❑ The Upper Ovens River is also considered an important recreational angling water, focused mainly on introduced species such as brown and rainbow trout.
- ❑ The Upper Ovens River provides important unregulated flows to the environmentally valued heritage listed lower Ovens River and the Murray River.

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.