

MEDIA RELEASE –

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North East contributing to Statewide salinity snapshot

Schools and community groups across the North East are taking part in a hands-on environmental program that aims to build a picture of salinity levels across Victoria.

Students and adult volunteers are this week collecting and testing water samples from dams, bores and creeks to support the “*Saltwatch*” program .

Now in its 20th year, “*Saltwatch*” is an environmental monitoring program that helps communities better understand the salinity problem. It is Australia's longest running community monitoring program.

The North East Catchment Management Authority and Department of Primary Industry (DPI) are supporting the “*Saltwatch*” drive in the Region .

The CMA's Waterwatch team is visiting schools to run salinity information sessions and help with testing of water samples.

“Students are bringing in samples from local dams, bores and waterways, “ explained Regional Waterwatch Coordinator, Ms Carolyn Humby.

“ After testing the samples, the students upload the results onto a “*Saltwatch*” website. These collated results will help to create a picture of where salinity is occurring in Victoria.”

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is encouraging farmers to get involved in “*Saltwatch*” by offering to test water from dams and bores during May.

“ If you know the salinity levels in streams, dams and groundwater that you use for stock or domestic purposes, you can decide on any potential impacts of using the water, “ said Kylie Macreadie from DPI.

Farmers can bring any bore, stream or dam water in a jar/bottle (need 1 cup) and attach a registration form at the DPI front counter in Wangaratta or Wodonga.

“The test only takes about 30 seconds and the tests can be given to you immediately or sent to you”, said Kylie.

For information on Waterwatch visits to schools, contact:
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Key points about the Kiewa River Catchment

- ❑ The Kiewa River catchment (estimated catchment area of 1,700 km²) is located between the Ovens and Upper Murray River Basins and joins with the Murray River, 6 km downstream of Lake Hume.
- ❑ The Kiewa River supplies water for hydro electricity, urban and agricultural uses. Predominant agricultural uses in the catchment include dairy, horticulture and viticulture in addition to domestic and stock requirements.
- ❑ The hydrology of the Kiewa River is significantly altered over the summer (low flow) period by the diversion of water. In particular there has been an alteration in the magnitude of summer flows while the duration of low flow events has increased.
- ❑ Some sections of the Kiewa River are identified in the Regional River Health Strategy as Ecologically healthy whilst others have been significantly altered by Europeans.
- ❑ The Kiewa River Floodplain contains significant Freshwater meadows and Shallow Freshwater marshes.
- ❑ The Kiewa River and its tributaries has a diverse native fish fauna with twelve native species (and seven exotic species) recorded in the system. Of the assemblage of nineteen species of fish in the Kiewa River system, twelve are native species and seven of which are acclimatised exotic species. Five of the native species, Murray cod, Macquarie perch (*Macquaria australasica*), golden perch (*Macquaria ambigua*), mountain galaxias (*Galaxias olidus*) and flat-headed galaxias (*Galaxias rostratus*), are considered threatened in Victoria. Murray cod and Macquarie perch are also listed under the Victorian *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*.
- ❑ The Kiewa River is also considered an important recreational angling water, focused mainly on introduced species such as brown and rainbow trout.
- ❑ The Kiewa River provides important unregulated flows to the environmentally valued Murray River.