



NORTH EAST  
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## MEDIA RELEASE

Issued: 31 January 2008

### New blueprint set to improve wetland health in North East

As World Wetlands Day (2 February) approaches, the North East CMA has released a new blueprint to help manage the future needs of wetlands in the region.

The North East is home to almost two thousand wetlands with eight listed in the “*Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia*” - Black Swamp, Ryans Lagoon, Davies Plain, Mount Buffalo Peatlands, Lake Hume, Lake Dartmouth and the lower section of both the Ovens and Mitta Mitta rivers.

These wetlands are significant for the environmental benefits and ecosystems services they offer, particularly habitat and feeding grounds for fauna.

They are also a vital link to healthy rivers, yet the North East has significant areas of the State’s most depleted wetland habitats and some of the least represented categories in Victoria’s network of protected areas.

“Wetlands can be easily damaged by intensive grazing, drainage to reclaim the land, salinity, nutrients, pest plants and animals and trampling, so we needed to develop a long term strategy to ensure that our Region’s wetlands are protected and managed sustainably,” said Sarah Daniell, North East CMA Environmental Water Reserve Officer.

The new strategy highlights the important roles that wetlands play within the region and identifies how people can better contribute their skills and knowledge to achieve better outcomes for wetland

It is the culmination of a two year study across the Region that was commissioned by the North East CMA and funded by the Natural Heritage Trust. It was supported by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Parks Victoria, Department of Primary Industries, Goulburn-Murray Water, Local Government and the community.

Stage one involved the development of a wetland inventory and assessment of wetland condition and values. Most of the assessment took place on farms as the study identified that ninety percent of the region’s wetlands are on private land.

Stage two involved the preparation of targets, management objectives and an action framework to enhance the biodiversity and ecological values of the region’s wetlands.

“Many farmers and community groups helped us to locate wetlands during the study and gave us great insights into the changes in their health over time,” explained Ms Daniell.

“We are confident that we now have a practical strategy that will help to ensure that the North East CMA and our partner agencies can protect and improve the region’s wetlands and the living resources that depend on them.”

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*Suggested photo opportunities:*

Lake Moodemere (located near Rutherglen), Mount Buffalo Peatlands (located near Bright)

For further information or to arrange an interview please contact:

**Sarah Daniell**, Environmental Water Reserve Officer - **(02) 6043 7627 or 0428 256 247**.

Sarah is available for interview Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> January; Friday 1<sup>st</sup> and Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> February; and Monday 4<sup>th</sup> – Friday 8<sup>th</sup> February.

**Mary-Anne Scully**, North East CMA Media & Communications: **0408 685 225**

*Wetlands – key facts (continued over...)*

- Wetlands are areas that have acquired special characteristics through being wet on a regular or semi-regular basis. The term 'wetlands' includes swamps, billabongs, lakes and saltmarshes, bogs, soaks, mudflats and mangroves.
- World Wetlands Day is celebrated each year on 2 February. It marks the date of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar. The theme for 2008 is "Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People."
- The North East region provides a home to 1,952 wetlands that cover almost 40,000 hectares; including a range of wetland types such as shallow freshwater marshes, freshwater meadows and deep freshwater marshes. Also the North East alpine and subalpine areas contain Victoria's largest collection of mossbeds! Ninety percent of the region's wetlands occur on private land.