

MEDIA RELEASE

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Partnership delivers early Christmas present for native fish

A clever recycling initiative will see the placement of 'eco logs' into the Ovens River near Wangaratta.

Thanks to a partnership between Spotless and the North East CMA, trees that were removed for army works at Wadsworth Barracks, Bandiana will be utilised for a native fish habitat restoration program.

The 'resnagging' work will aim to improve the environment for native fish in the Ovens River by creating additional shelter and breeding sites.

"Traditionally snags were removed from rivers to make them navigable or because it was believed that they caused additional flooding at times of peak flow," explained Mr Peter Sacco, CMA River Health Operations Manager.

"We now know that 'snags' are an important part of overall river health."

The North East CMA and the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research are monitoring works on 'demonstration reaches' along the Ovens River with a view to assessing their benefits. Their work is being funded by the Murray Darling Basin Commission.

So far, the CMA has removed black willow to improve native fish habitat along the Ovens, erected fencing to exclude stock and undertaken weed control.

The restoration program has fostered some interesting and effective partnerships.

"We're working with many groups, including Spotless Defence Services Bandiana, the Alpine Shire, private landholders and local anglers," said Mr Sacco.

The CMA recently held information sessions for local angling groups and featured information about the native fish demonstration reach project at the Wangaratta show. It plans to run a series of community events related to the project in 2009.

The Lower Ovens River is a Victorian Heritage River due to its status as one of the last unregulated rivers in the State, its active floodplain, intact riparian vegetation and healthy native fish community.

Photo opportunity:

Excavators will be placing 'eco logs' into the Ovens River at Fischers Lane, approx 3 kms from Wangaratta on **Wednesday, 17 December** between 9am and noon.

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