

MEDIA RELEASE

Issued: 5 March 2009



CMA fire recovery work helping to protect river health

Rehabilitation of waterways is now a crucial part of the fire recovery effort in Victoria's north east.

In the wake of devastating fires around Beechworth, Stanley, Rosewhite and Mudgegonga, the North East Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is working to restore and protect river health.

Firstly, the North East CMA is helping the Department of Sustainability & Environment (DSE) to repair containment lines that were put in adjacent to streams and waterways during the fires.

River Health Operations Manager, Mr Peter Sacco, said CMA crews were using a mix of river health expertise and heavy equipment to undertake the rehabilitation work.

"During the fires, bulldozers built containment lines across or near creeks, sometimes on private property," Mr Sacco said.

"Together with DSE, we are now rehabilitating these areas, particularly by building runoff lines and replacing debris on the cleared areas to prevent future erosion and silting up of waterways."

Mr Sacco said the CMA was also responding to calls from farmers who are concerned about post-fire damage to waterways on their property.

"We have conducted inspections of the waterways affected by the fires to determine the extent of damage and how to then best support landholders as part of the future recovery effort," he said.

Finally, the CMA recently assisted with development of an emergency stabilisation and rehabilitation plan for the Ovens district. Water quality is a critical component of this report.

"Heavy rainfall over a short period of time now poses the biggest threat to water quality in the North East," Mr Sacco said.

"We are very concerned about the potential impact of flash floods in our region, particularly in areas that have been damaged by the fires."

"We congratulate DSE for acting so quickly on initiating key fire recovery work. Time is of the essence."

Photo opportunities: Professional hi res images of CMA fire recovery work are available. For further information or to arrange an interview please contact: Mary-Anne Scully, North East CMA Media & Communications – **Tel: 0408 685 225**