

CATCH UP



NEWS FROM THE NORTH EAST CMA

SKILLS AND FUNDING BOOST FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Sustainable agriculture is set to forge ahead in the North East with news of national funding and the appointment of a dedicated position to support landholders and industry.

Twelve projects from the Region have attracted a total of almost \$1 million funding from the Australian Government's 2005/2006 National Landcare Community Support Program.

Eight of the twelve projects are new for the North East, with more than half based in the Upper Murray.

"This is an exciting and important time for sustainable and productive agricultural developments in this Region,"

said North East CMA Chief Executive, John Riddiford.



The National Landcare Program is funding groups in the High Plains, the King Valley and Upper Murray. The focus of work ranges from soil health in waterways to sustainable management of water for improved grape quality, improved pasture husbandry for wool and the promotion of sustainable landuse systems.

Mr Riddiford also welcomed the appointment of Lachlan Campbell as a new Manager of Sustainable Agribusiness for the Region.

"We developed this position in conjunction with the Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum. Lachlan's role is funded through the National Landcare Program office, The Department of Primary Industries - Victoria, Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum, and the North East Catchment Management Authority".

Visit www.necma.vic.gov.au for more details.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

The environmental health of streams and rivers in North East Victoria is improving and the incidence of water salinity and gully erosion is reducing.

But the quality and extent of native vegetation in our Region declined over the last year.

These are just some of the findings from our 2004/2005 Catchment Condition Report.

The Report is like an annual health check on our Region's key natural resources.

This report showed that work being undertaken by the North East CMA and its many partners is making a difference. In 2004/2005, we;

- Reduced salt loads in NE streams by 300 tonnes;
- Built knowledge about surface soil acidity with more than 160 landholders attending training and field days;
- Reduced gully erosion with 52 gullies treated; and
- Helped to control pests with more than 6,500 hectares of rabbit control completed.

However, results in the area of native vegetation were disappointing. Throughout 2006, we will continue to work hard to improve this area.



John Riddiford
Chief Executive
North East CMA



(L-R) – Alec McKinnon (Upper Murray Landcare Network), Melinda Short (CMA Advisory Committee), Hon Peter McGauran (Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry), Lyn Coulston (CMA Board) and Tony Jarvis (CMA Advisory Committee) at the the launch of the 2005/2006 National Landcare Community Support Program in Corryong

Diverse, Healthy Landscapes, Vibrant Communities

OUR CATCHMENT ASSETS

LAND – A SNAPSHOT Approximately 55% of the North East consists of public land, including National Parks, State Forests, wilderness areas, nature reserves and plantations. There are approximately 2,300 private properties in the region. Livestock grazing is the primary agricultural pursuit, with pastures representing more than half of the region's agricultural land.

The North East Regional Catchment Strategy takes an asset-based approach to managing the natural resources of the region. It identifies programs designed to protect land assets, including: implementing a salinity program grants to sustain productive agricultural practice, community capacity building activities and; supporting environmental management systems (EMS).

The 2004/2005 Catchment Condition Report showed that the North East CMA and its many partners made progress in protecting the region's land assets, including; improving surface soil

acidity; reducing gully erosion and; addressing pests, including rabbits, wild dogs and foxes.

The CMA will continue its focus on sustainable land management in 2005/2006. It has allocated \$1.9 million for sustainable agriculture, soil health, salinity, pest plant and pest animal programs. There will be a new focus on sustainable agricultural projects funded by the National Landcare Program and an increased understanding of the impact of rising acidity levels.

For further details, visit: www.necma.vic.gov.au or telephone the CMA on (02) 6043 7600.



Members of the North East CMA team, friends & family enjoyed Australia Day sunrise at Mount Cobbler

FROM THE TEAMS

Strategy and Partnerships

What a fantastic seed season! Now that peak collection is nearing completion, the cleaning process takes over. Thanks to Wangaratta Greencorps for their help at the Everton depot. Eskdale has been selected as one of 23 towns to receive Victorian Government funding to carry out a feasibility study into their sewage system. The CMA is trying to access funds to carry out a similar study into the Eskdale water supply. More than 20 landholders have formed the North East Environmental Management Services group. The group will join Australian Landcare Management Systems and be audited by CMA staff in March 2006.

Corporate Services

'Organisation Green Team' – The CMA is developing a waste wise minimisation and energy efficiency program. Brooke McLeod (NE Regional Waste Management Group) is helping us to devise a combined waste and energy audit. The audit and program will be developed over the next 4 months with implementation to commence next financial year.

Water Program

The team has received more than 40 expressions of interest for the innovative River Tender program. We are busy preparing a Fisheries Management Plan and recently completed a risk assessment on in-stream structures with the Marine Safety Authority. Field operations are in full swing across the catchment, including extensive willow and poplar clearing. Welcome to new field staff; Brian Montgomery, Vitto Conticchio, and Tim McCormack.

KEY DATES

1 MARCH Soil Health Annual Event – "Soil Restoration to Improve Productivity" – an Ovens Landcare Network initiative. Venue – Whorouly Community Recreation and Function Centre (Footy Oval), Memorial Park Drive, Whorouly (20 minutes south of Wangaratta) Bookings – Ovens Landcare Network. Tel: 03 5728 2105 email: jhermiston@bigpond.com

19 - 23 MARCH Veg Futures 2006 – The conference in the field will be held in Albury-Wodonga Tel: 02 6023 6300 or visit www.greeningaustralia.org.au for more info.



Did you know ?
The North East CMA contributes 38% of total water to the Murray Darling Basin.