



EAST GIPPSLAND
CATCHMENT
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY



The Snowy River

Improve the health of the Snowy River by restoring environmental flows and in stream and riparian ecosystems.

Message from the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

Improving the health of the Snowy River is a high regional priority.

To achieve this, State and Federal Governments have set a target to return 21% of the Snowy's natural flows from Jindabyne Dam by 2011 with supporting funding of \$375 million. The Bracks Government has committed a further \$40 million to help improve the Health of the Victorian reach of the Snowy River and other Snowy related investigations.

It is clear that where statewide and regional priorities match, opportunities arise to fund initiatives to meet those goals.

The East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) and the East Gippsland River Health Strategy (EGRHS) detail these goals and priorities. Both documents can be found at (www.egcma.com.au).

Over the next few weeks we will provide information in this newspaper about the work now underway and work still to be done on the Snowy River and its catchment. I hope you find these features informative and take up the personal challenge to assist us in protecting and restoring the Snowy.

Jane Rowe, Chair

WHY DO WE NEED MORE WATER IN THE SNOWY?



Concept drawing of Jindabyne Dam

In the 1960's the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme was developed out of a simple concept to trap the snow melt in the upper reaches of the Snowy River and divert it west through a series of dams and tunnels to the Murray and Murrumbidgee River systems for irrigation. Energy created as the water falls would be used to generate electricity.

Since then the average flow in the Snowy River at Jindabyne is about 1% of the natural flow, causing lower Snowy flows, approximately 53% of what they were before the Snowy River Scheme was developed. The loss of high spring flows associated with snow melt in the mountains has caused the greatest change to the lower Snowy River.



Upper reaches of Snowy River

OUR ICONIC RIVER

From the slopes of Mount Kosciusko in NSW to the coast at Marlo the Snowy River flows for over 500km through a broad range of landscapes. Unique to Australia, the Snowy Mountain Rivers are sourced from Australia's major alpine region.

The Snowy is a highly valued and precious river. The entire Victorian length of the Snowy River has been given Heritage status due to its spectacular gorge, native fish diversity and outstanding botanical values.



Upper reaches of the Snowy River

The Snowy River ensures wonderful canoeing and rafting opportunities from the NSW border to the Buchan River with stunning scenic landscapes.

It flows within traditional lands of the Krowathunkoolong Gunai/Kurnai people. It has several significant Indigenous Cultural Heritage sites and was considered an important route for people gathering food from the sea and from the mountains.



Ariel view of the Snowy River at Jarrahmond

Just like we need water to live, a river needs enough water to sustain its life and the lives of the plants and animals dependent on it. With reduced flows, weeds such as willows and blackberries establish and spread within the river more easily. Fish migration and breeding are interrupted and introduced fish species have better opportunity to flourish in the slower and warmer water as native fish numbers decline.

Further downstream, increased levels of sediment have filled pools and reduced fish habitat. Salt water from the estuary is now found seven to ten kilometres further upstream than in past times. Native riparian vegetation is unable to adjust to the increased levels of salinity which results in exposed banks and erosion. Increased flows, released from Jindabyne in a coordinated way will provide occasional low level flooding in spring and help maintain a diverse stream bed for animals and plants.



Willow infestation in upper catchment



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NEXT WEEK:

We look at ways of improving environmental flows and willow control in the Snowy.