

fostering biodiversity

photos lucas piera & geoff russell



Biodiversity can be described as the variety and quantity of plant and animal species, including microorganisms, and the eco-systems they live within. It is essential for our existence: each species, no matter how small, has an important function and the greater the diversity the more naturally sustainable we become.

Protecting and encouraging biodiversity is vital and fundamental in the security of ecological, biological and social necessities including:

- Protection & Filtration of Water Resources
- Soil Formation & Protection
- Nutrient Storage & Recycling
- Pollution Absorption
- Climate Stability
- Ecosystem Balance
- Natural Disaster Recovery
- Food Variety & Production
- Medicinal Resources
- Wood Production & Products
- Plant Lifecycle
- Breeding stocks
- Gene Pool Diversity
- Education & Research
- Recreation & Tourism

Biodiversity and conservation are not always associated with a local water corporation, but Westernport Water has developed clear intent to improve biodiversity within their business and region.

Benita Russell, Environment and Sustainability Coordinator for Westernport Water, stated that “along with providing quality drinking water and wastewater services to our community, we also have a stewardship role to conserve biodiversity on the land we own to benefit the region.”

In 2008 Westernport Water undertook a biodiversity review which aimed to identify the ecological values on areas of land they owned and managed. The review was undertaken by one of Westernport Water’s key partners, the Bass Coast Landcare Network. A number of significant flora & fauna species that required further management and protection were identified. Since completion of this review, Westernport Water has been actively working towards their protection.

The Landcare & Westernport Water partnership has been going strong for over a decade. Bass Coast Landcare Network Coordinator, Joel Geoghegan, views the partnership as a real success story. “The Westernport Water/Landcare partnership is contributing to a number of great landcare programs delivering educational, conservation and agricultural benefits to the community. It’s a mutually beneficial partnership that we hope will continue well into the future.”



the genetic diversity of species. Wildlife is free and safe to move between masses of native scrub or forest that was previously cleared land. Bass Coast Landcare Network has been integral in developing strategies with Melbourne Water (management authority for Salt Water Creek) to combat the pressures of wallaby grazing, and creating exclusion zones allowing vegetation in the wildlife corridor to establish.

Water Quality Improvements for Candowie Reservoir

Particular plant species have a fundamental role in naturally filtering contaminants in water runoff before it reaches a reservoir, and Westernport Water will be applying these sustainable techniques to the land surrounding the Candowie Reservoir to further improve water quality. Bass Coast Landcare Network has been contracted to provide the correct plant species and undertake the revegetation of land surrounding the reservoir.

Landholder education & support for the Candowie Catchment

Candowie Reservoir is an open catchment relying on landholders and farmers within the catchment area to manage their activities to prevent pollution entering the reservoir. Westernport Water supports a dedicated Landcare facilitator to educate and assist these landholders to undertake on-ground works to reduce nutrient and sediment loads entering the reservoir. The exclusion of livestock grazing on the water’s edge is a priority essential to improving water quality.

“I’m very grateful for all the support I receive through the Bass Coast Landcare Network and its partners. It enables me to undertake revegetation works in the creeks and gullies that I view as essential to the sustainable management of my farm. The benefits are obvious: it’s a nicer place to live for me and my cattle, it’s easier and safer to manage as I am not losing stock in steep boggy gullies, and I contribute to a healthier catchment. It’s a win-win situation”. (Local Candowie landowner, and active Landcare member, Ian James).

Projects and initiatives have included:

- ‘Wildlife Corridor’ revegetation of Saltwater Creek
- Revegetation to improve water quality in the Candowie Reservoir
- Education & support for landholders surrounding the Candowie Catchment

Joel was delighted to report “Catchment enhancement works involving revegetation and erosion control have multiple advantages, and biodiversity in particular benefits enormously. Preliminary monitoring and anecdotal evidence confirms this. Native birds recolonise areas very quickly and in larger areas the classified Southern Brown Bandicoot has been observed. “This is wonderful news and a reward for our hard work.”

Wildlife Corridor – revegetation of Salt Water Creek

A ‘wildlife corridor’ is a passage of land planted with indigenous vegetation which allows flora and fauna to move across the wider landscape, improving access to food, water and shelter, and increasing



For information on landholder responsibilities in a drinking-water catchment area, check out the Department of Health publication ‘Protect our Waters, Protect our Health’. www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/water/.