

NORTH CENTRAL

KEY EVENTS AND INSIGHTS

- BOOSTING NATIVE FISH RECOVERY**
 The North Central CMA, in partnership with Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW), continued the building of fishways at Cohuna and Koondrook weirs that will enable native fish, for the first time in decades, to move up and down Gunbower Creek and to the open water of the Murray River. The Victorian Environmental Water Holder and the Victorian Government co-funded the Koondrook fishway, and is part funded from the sale of water for the environment to irrigators; GMW fully funded the Cohuna fishway. The fishways complement the CMA's \$7.1 million Native Fish Recovery project to address key threats to river health and native fish populations in northern Victoria and part of the Victorian Government's \$17 million Waterway Environmental Works Stimulus Package.
- WATERWAYS AND WATER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**
 Our collective waterway project works protected more than 20,700 ha through weed and pest control, fencing of riparian zones, and grazing management. We managed the delivery of 46,000 ML of water for the environment to improve fish movement and breeding, improve water quality and vegetation health, and enhance bird breeding, feeding and roosting opportunities. Through the Living Murray project, we delivered 10.4 GL into Gunbower Creek and 2.57 GL for Gunbower Forest.
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS**
 COVID-19 restrictions impacted our traditional engagement methods, so

we adapted our approach to ensure the community is at the cornerstone of our activities. Working with our partners and the community we developed the 2021-27 draft North Central Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS). Over 270 engagement events attracted more than 3,900 participants. We engaged the seven Traditional Owner groups in the RCS renewal with each providing their perspectives on what Country means to them and how we can work together to care for it.

- SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES AND GROUPS**
 Following extensive consultation, we submitted the draft Loddon Campaspe Irrigation Land and Water Management Plan to DELWP for endorsement. Our Regenerative Agriculture program staff worked with five community groups hosting 23 events with 504 landholders who manage over 105,000 ha. Our Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator kept farmers informed about workshops, field days, webinars, research, and publications. We delivered on new irrigation development referrals, including new potential industries - hemp and truffles. We approved an increase of 1,353 ML through groundwater, channel, and Loddon River delivery to support new development, with 573 ha flagged across the region for future irrigation enterprises.
- WORKING FOR VICTORIA**
 The North Central CMA received \$607,806 from the Working for Victoria initiative to employ locals to work on improving waterway health and land management through pest plant and animal control, native revegetation, and fencing. Fifteen individuals (11.2 FTE) were employed from September 2020 to June 2021, for a combined total of 291 weeks.

OUTPUT	TARGET	ACTUAL			TOTAL
		STATE	FED	OTHER	
1. STRUCTURAL WORKS					
1.1 Channel (km)	0	1			1
1.2 Water storage (no.)	11	12		1	13
1.3 Pump (no.)	4	5		1	6
1.5 Waterway structure (no.)	20	15			15
1.9 Fence (km)	54	43	14		57
1.10 Visitor facility (no.)		72			72
2. ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS					
2.1 Vegetation (ha)	524	1,315	136	13	1,464
2.2 Weed control (ha)	2,509	3,946	101		4,047
2.3 Pest animal control (ha)	5,232	5,407	2,822		8,229
2.5 Threatened species response (no.)	8	2	5		7
2.8 Earth works (no.)	4				0
2.9 Rubbish removal (ha)		2,518			2,518
3. MANAGEMENT SERVICES					
3.1 Grazing (ha)	39	75			75
3.2 Agricultural practices (ha)	18,400		8,508		8,508
3.3 Water (no.)		46	1		47
4. PLANNING AND REGULATION					
4.1 Approval and advice (no.)	3,864	3,903			3,903
4.2 Management agreement (no.)	21	11	11		22
4.3 Assessment (no.)	798	714	125	1	840
4.4 Engagement event (no. participants)	2,549	3,040	1,457	6	4,503
4.5 Partnership (no.)	22	53			53
4.6 Plan (no.)	42	47	11		58
4.7 Publication (no.)	46	65	44		109
4.8 Information management system (no.)	3	3			3

- THE BITTERN AT WIRRA-LO**
 Two rehabilitated wetlands on private property adjoining the 66 ha Wirra-Lo wetland complex in Murrabit West are increasing opportunities for *EPBC Act*-listed Australasian bittern and growling grass frog to feed, breed and forage. The wetlands design takes in the habitat requirements of the Australasian bittern. Growling grass frogs were recorded at Wirra-Lo up until 2003.

Improved habitat and an adequate watering regime have seen them return in 2020-21. During the year the Bringing Back the Bittern project achieved 3.4 km fencing, 35 ha of rabbit control, 2,704 ha of fox control, 70 ha of increased tall marsh habitat and engaged with 164 community members and partners. This project is supported by the North Central CMA through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

