The Corangamite CMA acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and waters where we work and pay our respects to the Elders past and present.

The Corangamite Regional Catchment Strategy 2013–2019 provides a vision for the integrated management of natural resources in the Corangamite region. It is a blueprint for catchment health in the future and builds on the achievements and lessons from the past.

THE VISION
A healthy Corangamite catchment valued by engaged communities.

THE GOAL
Increase the protection, enhancement and restoration of valuable natural resources to improve the health and sustainable productivity of the Corangamite catchment.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE DIRECTION

The RCS is now half way through its implementation and a mid-term review has been completed to evaluate its effectiveness to date.

Whilst the major focus for the review has been on how gaps, new information and the lessons to date may impact the final three years of implementation and the RCS renewal, the review has also highlighted a range of achievements.

Together we will make a difference
HIGHLIGHTS

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHANGE

“The RCS will have succeeded if it can achieve increased: participation, investment, integration and coordination (partnerships) and knowledge sharing.”

In the first three years of RCS implementation there have been a range of highlights that show significant progress towards achieving the four foundations for change.

Each of the foundations are headed in the right direction, with further work over the next three years to measure practice change and the depth of engagement to determine the changes that have resulted from participation in catchment or natural resource management.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Integration and coordination (partnerships)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On average more than 13,000 people are participating in natural resource management in the region each year.</td>
<td>Partnerships in the Corangamite region with regional community groups and stakeholder agencies are wide ranging, healthy and productive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in incentive based tenders and grant programs have more than doubled since the RCS commenced.</td>
<td>Collaborative research partnerships with Deakin University, CSIRO, Federation University, RMIT and the Southern Slopes Climate Change Adaptation Research Group (SCARP) have led to a significant increase in regionally specific climate change knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Corangamite CMA commenced an Indigenous Participation Program in late 2013.</td>
<td>A new partnership between Surfing Victoria and the Corangamite CMA is enabling both partners to increase the involvement of the surfing community in natural resource management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land managers, community groups such as Landcare and the broader community are the target audience for more than 73% of the events run.</td>
<td>A partnership between Southern Farming Systems and the Corangamite CMA is the cornerstone of the Land Health Program delivering local trials and local knowledge in a co-operative approach with the Landcare community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Corangamite Landcare Support Plan (2013) has been completed and is assisting volunteer groups to achieve local landscape change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment</th>
<th>Knowledge sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An Investment Recruitment Strategy has been completed to increase corporate and philanthropic investment for natural resource management in the region.</td>
<td>Accessibility to knowledge and information has improved greatly with four new web portals and two new websites developed to assist with knowledge sharing for flood information, climate change, soils, local planning, Waterwatch and Estuary Watch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘NRM planning portal’ developed in partnership with regional Landcare networks and Federation University is now available, and is testing how online mapping can be used to identify local and regional priorities and encourage partnership projects in the region.</td>
<td>Over 400 knowledge sharing events have been undertaken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The skills of more than 35 Aboriginal people have been increased through training and development opportunities. The staff of Corangamite CMA have gained increased cultural awareness, in particular of traditional burning practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Above: A Traditional burn conducted at Teesdale as part of the Corangamite CMAs joint fire project Wiyn-murrup Yangarramela ‘fire spirit comes back’ with Wadawurrung, Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative, Victorian Aboriginal community members, Golden Plains Shire, GHCMA, DELWP, PV, CFA, and other NRM community groups. Photo: Tracey McCrae, Corangamite CMA.
THE REGION’S NATURAL RESOURCES

“The RCS will have succeeded if it can achieve landscape change – greater protection, enhancement and restoration of valuable natural resources.”

In the first three years of RCS implementation there have been a number of highlights relating to the region’s natural resources.

Data from the mid-term review shows that on-ground investment is going towards high value and cost-effective projects, and the majority of investment has been within RCS priority areas.

Rivers, estuaries, floodplains, wetlands

The Corangamite Waterway Strategy has been finalised and sets regional priorities to guide on-ground investment to rivers, estuaries and wetlands. Development of a regional floodplain management strategy is underway.

There has been a significant increase in the amount of waterways (river banks and wetlands) that have been protected or enhanced. A majority of projects have occurred within or upstream of priority waterways.

New data being collected for waterway projects shows that the condition of waterways under contracted management is expected to improve.

Native vegetation

Investment in inland native vegetation projects has been targeted to high value and cost-effective projects. 87% of the benefits that were available from a pool of project proposals were purchased for just 40% of the total proposal value.

80% of all inland native vegetation projects have occurred within RCS priority areas.

95% of projects are protecting Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) that have a Bioregional Conservation Status of endangered or vulnerable. These EVCs include plains grassland, plains grassy wetland, herb-rich foothill forest and stony rises woodland.

Soils and agricultural land

The RCS has instigated the current Corangamite CMA land health program and increased the focus on soils and agricultural production within the region.

Average annual participation of landholders in the land health program has increased by over 400% on 2010-13 average participation rates.

Peer reviewed regional soil data spanning all 15 landscape zones is now available through the award winning Corangamite CMA Soil Health Knowledge Base.

Investment in coastal biodiversity projects has been targeted to high value and cost-effective projects. 97% of the benefits that were available from a pool of project proposals were purchased for just 38% of the total proposal value.

Almost 90% of all coastal projects have occurred within RCS priority areas. EVCs protected include heathy woodland, coastal alkaline scrub, estuarine wetland and coastal saltmarsh. Twenty different EPBC listed marine bird species and 105 sites containing these species are under contracted management for habitat protection.

Aquifers

Groundwater information is now readily available and easily accessed in the Corangamite region via Southern Rural Water’s online interactive portal ‘The Groundwater Hub of Southern Victoria’.

The Otway Lower Aquifer Local Management Plan LMP is being developed and will combine five current Groundwater Management Units into one plan.

Overall there are 52 threatened fauna across 247 sites and 20 threatened flora species found at 80 different sites that are being protected under contracted management.

Fauna species protected include the brolga, Corangamite water skink, Orange-bellied Parrot, Growling grass frog and Rufous bristlebird. Flora species include orchids, scurfpeas and eucalypts.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE FIRST THREE YEARS

• 27,993 participants at engagement events
• 842 partnerships
• 186 management agreements
• 151 km of fencing
• 3,941ha of vegetation management
• 6,131ha of weed control
• 40,591ha of agricultural practice change.

(Source: Victorian CMA Actions and Achievement reports 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16)
FUTURE NEEDS

USE AND IMPACT OF THE RCS
An online survey was conducted in late 2016 to understand the use and effectiveness of the RCS within the region. It was sent to 165 individuals from 62 different organisations and groups and there was a 26% response rate.

Results showed 90% of respondents used the RCS at least sometimes, and it was mainly used to understand regional priorities and plan for projects and/or on-ground works, however there was a preference towards using RCS sub-strategies for details associated with this planning. A key finding was that the RCS should remain as a high level strategic document and that over the next 5-10 years it should focus on:

- protecting natural resources
- continuing the focus on community participation
- identifying joint priorities for investment
- addressing climate change.

Below: Angelsea River
EstuaryWatchers conducting water quality testing of the Angelsea River

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE
Assessment of the achievements, gaps, new information and RCS impact through the mid-term review has led to over sixty recommendations being made. Key themes that are priorities for attention in the final three years of RCS implementation include:

- improving aboriginal participation in NRM
- embedding climate change knowledge into planning, decision making and on-ground activities
- implementing current RCS actions that are yet to commence
- increasing involvement of partners in RCS implementation
- expanding the spatial web based NRM planning portal, and investigating its effectiveness for use in planning the next RCS
- improving monitoring and data collection efforts to ensure that outcomes can be determined and reported
- adapting to changes that will occur as a result of the new Marine and Coastal Act (once complete).

Further information can be found in the RCS mid-term review final report, accessible at www.ccma.vic.gov.au

The Corangamite CMA’s progress against the Regional Catchment Strategy has been made possible through funding support from the Victorian State Government and the Australian Government National Landcare Programme.

© Corangamite Catchment Management Authority 2017
Published by the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Colac, Victoria, Australia. Design by GSDM.