



**EAST GIPPSLAND
CATCHMENT
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY**



Health of lower reaches of rivers

Improve the health of the lower reaches of the Mitchell, Tambo, Nicholson and Cann Rivers

Message from the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

Improving and maintaining the health of the Lower Mitchell, Tambo, Nicholson and Cann Rivers is very important for our environment and our people. The East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) is an important tool in ensuring that these rivers can continue to provide water for drinking and irrigation, support tourism and recreation and also provide habitat for many special plants and animals.

The continuing health of these rivers cannot be taken for granted. Their health relies on a co-operative partnership between community and government land managers and users over the long term.

The RCS and the East Gippsland Regional River Health Strategy (EGRHS) detail the management goals and priorities for these rivers. 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 in the lower reaches of the Mitchell, Tambo, Nicholson and Cann Rivers. I hope you find these features informative and take up the personal challenge to assist us in protecting and restoring these rivers.

Jane Rowe, Chair

The Mitchell supports good populations of the nationally vulnerable Australian Grayling and the habitat provided for the species is one of the reasons for the river's importance. The Mitchell provides a significant proportion of the freshwater flow into the downstream Gippsland Lakes. The lakes are Ramsar listed for waterbird habitat and support populations of estuarine fish species such as Black Bream.

The Mitchell is the major source of water for the East Gippsland community. The towns supplied from this system are Lindenow, Lindenow South, Bairnsdale, Wy Yung, Lucknow, Paynesville, Eagle Point, Raymond Island, Newlands Arm, Bruthen, Sarsfield, Nicholson, Johnsonville, Swan Reach, Metung, Lakes Entrance, Lake Tyers and Kalimna.

Some threats to the health of the Mitchell include sediment run-off from forests and farms, especially after the recent drought and fires. Weeds such as Willow, Blackberry, Blue Periwinkle and Ragwort need particular emphasis. The control of major weeds gives native vegetation a greater chance to establish which is much better for native plants and animals.

Lower Nicholson River

The Nicholson flows through mainly vegetated public land until entering the floodplain near Sarsfield. The lower Nicholson is that portion of the river that flows from the Nicholson River Dam to Lake King near the Nicholson township. From Sarsfield downstream the river flows through river flats comprising beef properties and small farmlets.

The Nicholson is a popular river for boating and fishing.

East Gippsland Water uses water from the Nicholson River to supplement the Mitchell River supply. Water is stored in a 640 ML on-stream storage upstream of the Great Alpine Road crossing.

Some threats to the health of the Nicholson include sediment run-off and introduced weeds such as willow and blackberry. Low flows in dry periods can also reduce oxygen levels in the estuarine reach of the river and have resulted in fish kills. Bank erosion caused by recreational boating, fishing and grazing stock are a definite threat to the river.

Cann River

The Cann River flows through sections of the Coopracambra and Croajingolong National Parks. The forests surrounding the Cann are significant for their unique natural state and diversity. They contain Victoria's largest stand of Cool Temperate Rainforest. The Lower Cann commences where it enters the fertile Cann River floodplain supporting agricultural industries including dairy and beef cattle farms. The Cann River flows into Tamboon inlet, a coastal lagoon that is intermittently open to the ocean.

Some threats to the Health of the Cann include introduced weeds such as Willow and Blackberry. The river has also become artificially wide, due to the impacts of vegetation clearing in the past. Lack of native streamside vegetation can cause significant erosion to the banks.

Lower Tambo River



Lower Tambo River

The Timbarra and Little Rivers are the largest waterways that flow into the Tambo River. The lower Tambo is that portion of the river that flows from around Ramrod Creek north of Bruthen to where the river enters Lake King in the Gippsland Lakes. The river flows through fertile river flats which support cropping, dairying and beef grazing.

The Tambo River supports very significant populations of the nationally vulnerable Australian Grayling and is renowned as a Black Bream fishery. Both these species are vulnerable to the impacts of the present low river flows. The estuarine stretch of the river carries a great deal of recreational boat traffic.

Some threats to the health of the Tambo include sediment run-off and introduced weeds such as willow, blackberry, and blue periwinkle need particular emphasis. Sediment entering the Tambo flows downstream into the Gippsland Lakes and can cause algal blooms. Bank erosion caused by recreational boating and fishing in the estuarine reach are a definite threat to the river.

Tambo River at Bruthen



Lower Cann River



The East Gippsland River Health Strategy establishes management goals and actions for these rivers over the next five years.

These goals will be delivered through the co-operation of community and government agencies. The features over the next few weeks will detail some of these co-operative works in the lower catchments of the Mitchell, Tambo, Nicholson and Cann Rivers.

Cann River at Gauge Track



Lower Mitchell River

The Mitchell is a Heritage River. It is the largest un-regulated river in Victoria, free of barriers to its natural flows. The lower Mitchell is that portion of the river which flows downstream from the water pumping station at Glenaladale and winds its way through the Lindenow Flats, past Bairnsdale and into the Gippsland Lakes at Lake King via the internationally significant Mitchell Silt Jetties.

Lower Tambo River



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NEXT WEEK

We look at the threats to the lower reaches of the Mitchell, Tambo, Nicholson and Cann Rivers.

