



Beyond Bolac

Biodiversity Blueprint



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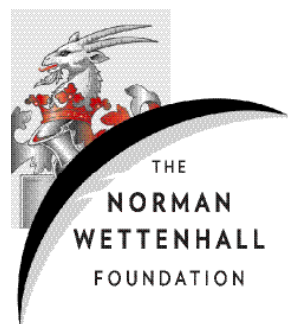
The Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group (BBCAG) respectfully acknowledges that Indigenous Australians are intrinsically connected to the continent- including the area now known as Victoria. The H11 and H12 catchment area is Djab Wurrung, Watha Wurrung (now known as Wada Wurrung) and Girai Wurrung people country and the Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group Committee pays their respects to Elders both past and present.

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This document and associated GIS mapping was composed by Jileena Cole under the guidance of the Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group.

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The protection and enhancement of the natural world is essential so that future generations can enjoy and reap the rewards of a healthy landscape for many years to come. The natural environment within the H11 & H12 sub-catchment is unique, the volcanic origins of the area have created a productive agricultural region containing patches of highly valuable grasslands, grassy woodlands, as well as lakes and wetlands which support a large variety of native plants and animals.

Nevertheless this area is under threat from weeds and vermin, unsustainable farming practices, climate change, pollution, erosion and salinity just to name a few. Agriculture in particular has altered the landscape, replacing large areas of native vegetation with different vegetation communities including introduced pastures, crops and shelterbelt plantings. These introduced species have radically altered the appearance of the landscape, as well as the biodiversity. However, the natural and increased fertility of the soils and generally consistent rainfall has provided favourable conditions for a vigorous living environment; many native species have been able to adapt to these changed landscapes and continue to survive (Weatherly 2016) in some areas.

The dedication of the Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group has been continuous since it began 2004, as an initiative of Lake Bolac Land Protection Council (Lake Bolac Landcare Group), when locals realised that unless collaborative action was taken, this precious natural environment would be lost.

This Biodiversity Blueprint tells the story of the Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group and the H11 & H12 sub-catchment. This document will be used by BBCAG to plan and implement vital projects throughout the catchment in collaboration with community member's and stakeholders to restore the beauty and biodiversity of the landscape for posterity.

The Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group

The story so far...

Beyond Bolac is a community group which was established in 2007 to undertake restoration of the Lake Bolac Catchment, including the Fiery Creek which flows into Lake Bolac and Salt Creek which flows from Lake Bolac to Hexham. Beyond Bolac aims to work with community groups, farmers, industry and government agencies to undertake restoration activities, which include fencing, revegetation, and pest plant and animal control.

It all started in 2004, when a meeting was called by concerned community members from the Lake Bolac Land Care Group and Michelle Calvert from Glenelg Hopkins CMA. The meeting was held in Lake Bolac and included government department representatives, Glenelg Hopkins CMA officers, and local residents. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the drying of and future management of Lake Bolac. Other concerns raised included control of salinity, future flooding and waterways management of the catchment. The major concern at the time was to discuss some means of controlling the overflow of the Lake to assist in salinity management. The GHCMA and its Waterways Implementation Committee, together with local residents, inspected the Lake and catchment to help decide on actions to address these issues.

The GHCMA produced the 'H11 & H12 Catchment Health Report, Lake Bolac, Fiery Creek and Salt Creeks'. The aim of the report was to review existing information on assets, current condition, threats, management options and information gaps. A Standing Committee of local residents and government representatives was appointed by the GHCMA, and this group stayed together long after the report's production to form a grassroots community group – the H11-H12 Catchment Action Group. In 2010 the group decided to change their name to 'Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group' to assist with communications, as the name would signify a connection to the wider catchment area.



Bill Sharp and Bill Weatherly at the Eel Festival

The Committee of Management

The Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group nominally comprises around 20 committee members, made up of local landholders, industry groups, environment groups and government agency representatives as well as the Executive Director of The Norman Wettenhall Foundation. The committee is not a closed committee and welcomes any person with an interest in natural resource management and or catchment issues to attend meetings which are held bi-monthly.

The committee has a core executive group who meet regularly with the appointed facilitator to address issues as they arise, outcomes of these meetings are then communicated to other committee members on an as needs basis. On occasion, sub-committees have been formed to address specific issues, outcomes of these sub-committee meetings are then communicated to other committee members at the regular bi-monthly meetings. Government agency staff are always invited to committee meetings, however when specific issues arise the relevant government agency representative is requested to attend to aid valuable discussion on the topic.

The Norman Wettenhall Foundation has been instrumental in Beyond Bolac CAG's ongoing success. Beyond Bolac is one of seven large scale landscape restoration projects The Norman Wettenhall Foundation has invested in and it will provide support and funding to increase the capacity of Beyond Bolac CAG to operate in a strategic way for the long term, enabling the group to successfully communicate and coordinate activities with its stakeholders and gain access to on-ground works funding.

Stakeholders and Partners

The Beyond Bolac CAG works closely with a number of organisations, including corporate, private and philanthropic; government agencies and community groups across the Catchment.

Key partners include:

- The Norman Wettenhall Foundation
- Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority
- Landcare Victoria
- Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group financial members

The group is strongly supported by:

- Victorian State Government, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DEWLP)
- Australian Government, Department of Environment
- Lake Bolac Development Committee
- Upper Hopkins Land Management Group
- Lake Bolac Foreshore Committee
- Lake Bolac Eel Festival Committee
- Southern Farming Systems
- Parks Victoria
- Southern Rural Water
- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria
- Ararat Rural City Council
- Martang Pty Ltd
- Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation
- Eastern Marr Aboriginal Corporation
- Trust for Nature
- Environment Protection Agency (EPA)

Strategic Plan

The Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group vision

is for a biodiverse, productive, resilient and safe catchment supporting vibrant communities and land managers

The aim of the group is

To engage, enable and assist land managers to implement projects to improve biodiversity in a productive, healthy landscape

Since its inception, Beyond Bolac CAG has been working towards implementing the recommendations from the H11 & H12 Catchment health report, these are outlined below:

- To optimise flows in the Fiery and Salt Creeks
- Identify salinity sources in the catchment and take remedial action
- Undertake salt and water budgets leading to a water management plan
- Conduct further research into water quality, stream flow and salinity
- Hold Community workshops to convey the findings of the report
- Develop a communications plan to keep the community informed
- Obtain further information and research relating to water use
- Audit and identify Aboriginal places of cultural heritage significance
- Continue to revegetate the catchment to combat salinity and restore Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC)
- Continue to collect and collate existing and new research relevant to the catchment

The priority issues the Beyond Bolac CAG have been tackling across the catchment include

- Waterway health, erosion, sedimentation and pollution
- Sustainable land use and productivity
- Reduced flows throughout waterways and into Lake Bolac and surrounding wetlands
- Wetland development and management
- Protection and enhancement of native vegetation, in particular riparian vegetation
- Biodiversity conservation
- Ground water extraction
- Pest plant and animal management

In March, 2016, the Beyond Bolac CAG reviewed its strategic plan. The Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group Strategic Plan 2016 – 2021 will provide the strategic direction for the group for the next 5 years, it includes eight key objective for the group to work towards with a number of strategies outlined for each objective to address the issues facing the catchment.

Table 1. Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group Strategic Plan 2016 – 2021 summary

| | Key Objectives for BBCAG | Priority Area | Strategies |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | To protect & enhance waterway condition within the catchment | Waterway Health | 1.1 Advocate for increased water flow along Fiery Creek 1.2 Provide incentives for land managers to fence off riparian zones 1.3 Provide incentives for land managers to undertake native revegetation along waterways 1.4 Obtain management agreements for all projects undertaken along waterways |
| 2 | To promote restoration of wetlands across the catchment | Wetlands Restoration | 2.1 Develop education material to increase knowledge and value of wetlands within the catchment 2.2 Provide stewardship payments to land managers for restoration and management of wetlands 2.3 Obtain management agreements for all projects undertaken for wetlands 2.4 Provide incentives for land managers to fence off wetlands |
| 3 | To encourage and support sustainable land use and productivity throughout the catchment | Sustainable Land Use and Productivity | 3.1 Partner with Southern Farming Systems to encourage sustainable farming practices across the catchment 3.2 Encourage a reduction in chemical use through the promotion of ICM principals to improve soil and waterway health 3.3 Assist land managers to complete whole farm plans with a biodiversity focus 3.4 Include where suitable extension officers/services within grant applications |
| 4 | To protect riparian vegetation and enhance biodiversity throughout the catchment | Protect and Enhance Biodiversity | 4.1 To identify priority biodiversity hot spots across the catchment using mapping 4.2 Work with landholders to develop site plans for future biodiversity projects 4.3 Provide incentives for land managers to fence off remnant native vegetation 4.4 Provide incentives for land managers to undertake native revegetation to increase biodiversity across the catchment 4.5 Obtain management agreements for projects undertaken for biodiversity values 4.6 Provide incentives to land managers to fence and revegetate along Fiery where there are currently gaps in the riparian zone |

| | Key Objectives for BBCAG | Priority Area | Strategies |
|---|---|----------------------------------|---|
| 5 | To reduce the impact of pest plant and animals within the catchment | Pest Plant and Animal Management | 5.1 Seek funding through government programs for weed and vermin management where appropriate 5.2 Encourage biological control of weeds and pest throughout the catchment |
| 6 | To engage and empower the community and stakeholders to address environmental issues within the catchment | Community Engagement | 6.1 Facilitate 'communities of interest' within the catchment 6.2 Increase use of local media and website to promote events and projects undertaken by BBCAG 6.3 Maintain relationships with schools and involve in tree planting projects where suitable 6.4 Investigate development of mobile app to provide an interactive educational experience for visitors 6.5 Develop annual program of community events, i.e. forums, expert talks on key topics, planting days, field trips, competitions 6.6 Provide recognition of Landholders who have made a measurable contribution to enhancing and protecting the catchment i.e. Local awards, profile display at community centre 6.7 Provide recognition of Landholders who have made a measurable contribution to enhancing and protecting the catchment i.e. Local awards, profile display at community centre 6.8 Engage with the 'CMA upper fiery creek project' participants to continue on-ground works along Fiery Creek |
| 7 | To increase knowledge and share information about the H11 and H12 sub-catchment | Knowledge and Research | 7.1 Contact local universities and develop partnerships to encourage students to undertake research projects within the catchment 7.2 Review and update website to enable easy access to all information relating to catchment 7.3 Develop easy to use Mobile App tool for landholders to record project information i.e. GPS maps, photos and statistical data (NB: Free online form builder applications available) 7.4 Hold a workshop/event/expo for new technologies to assist land holders with sustainable land management 7.5 Undertake analysis of salinity data for Fiery Creek each year 7.6 Develop easy to use Mobile App tool for community members to record flora and fauna sightings within H11 & H12 sub-catchment and link to larger online databases |

| | Key Objectives for BBCAG | Priority Area | Strategies |
|---|---|------------------|--|
| 8 | To maintain and build organisational capability to deliver vision | Group Governance | 8.1 Review governance of BBCAG 8.2 Develop organisational operational plan for BBCAG 8.3 Review BBCAG Strategic Plan 8.4 Develop partnerships with GHCMA, Stakeholders and other community groups to value add (funding or in-kind support) to future projects 8.5 Attract new members who have an interest in the group by remaining open, honest and welcoming 8.6 Encourage active participation from existing members |

Key Achievements

The Beyond Bolac CAG has been very successful in securing grants from various sources, including Glenelg Hopkins CMA, the Commonwealth Government, Landcare, and The Norman Wettenhall Foundation. The below table provides a summary of the funding received by Beyond Bolac CAG since 2007. In total, the group have secured approximately \$837,683 in funding, with just over \$400,000 being provided to facilitate and manage the group, with another \$434,000 put towards projects.

Table 2. Summary of funding received by Beyond Bolac CAG

| | Year provided | Funding provider | Program | Funding received by BBCAG | Matching \$ and/or in-kind |
|----------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Facilitation | 2010-2012 | Norman Wettenhall Foundation | Research and Facilitation | \$53,698 | |
| | 2012 - 2015 | Vic. Government | DEPI Facilitator program | \$170,000 | |
| | 2015 - 2018 | Vic. Government | DEWLP Facilitator program | \$150,000 | |
| | 2015/2016 | Norman Wettenhall Foundation | Project worker | \$30,000 | |
| BBCAG Projects | 2008/09 | Commonwealth Government Water Grant | Comm. Water Grant Project | \$50,000 | \$20,000 |
| | 2009 | Watershed 2000 | Dr. Williams Research on Salinity. | \$6,600 | \$3,300 |
| | 2009/10 | Commonwealth Government | GHCMA "HERO" | \$90,000 | \$45,000 |
| | 2009 /10 | Victorian Government | GHCMA 2nd. Generation Landcare Grant | \$45,850 | \$22,925 |
| | 2012/13 | Commonwealth Government | Caring for Our Country | \$150,000 | \$75,000 |
| | 2012/13 | Victorian Government | GHCMA Victorian Landcare Grant | \$22,804 | \$11,402 |
| | 2014/15 | Victorian Government | GHCMA Victorian Landcare Grant | \$18,855 | \$9,428 |
| | 2015/16 | Victorian Government | GHCMA Victorian Landcare Grant | \$20,000 | \$10,000 |
| | 2016/17 | Victorian Government | GHCMA Victorian Landcare Grant | \$29,876 | \$14,938 |

Several of the projects funded focused on addressing community engagement and education, on-ground works and research & monitoring. Below is snapshot of the projects which have been completed by the group to date.



Research & Monitoring

- Salinity monitoring throughout catchment and particularly Fiery Creek
- Chinaman Swamp study using EM31 technology to detect concentrated salt intrusion into Fiery Creek



Community Engagement & Education

- Community workshops to convey findings of the H11 & H12 Catchment Health Report
- Groundwater forum
- Waterway monitoring lecture
- Wetlands workshop
- Floods & Fencing workshop
- Strategic Planning workshops
- Salinity Workshop
- Workshops & presentations at local schools
- Field Trips to neighbouring catchments
- Participation in annual Eel Festival in Lake Bolac
- Regular Newsletter articles
- Networking with stakeholders
- Fire Forum with guest speakers
- Display stands at various field days throughout the district



On-ground works

- Fencing off stock from waterways
- Revegetation in riparian zones along waterways
- Wetland rehabilitation
- Wildlife corridors across the landscape

A recent review of the project completed by Beyond Bolac CAG over the last ten years revealed a total of 28 grants were distributed to 20 individuals, totalling \$600,000 from investors, with a further \$600,000 of in-kind and/or cash being provided by landholders to complete on-ground projects. There have also been a number of landholders who have undertaken fencing and revegetation without having been provided a grant

from investors to do so, which has also contributed to improving the catchments health. Without the continued support and investment from the landholders within the Catchment, many of the on-ground works, such as fencing, riparian revegetation and wetland restoration would not be possible. Beyond Bolac CAG is very appreciative for the community support and hope that it can continue well into the future.