INTRODUCTION

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.

At the heart of the Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) is the need to increase community participation in the protection, restoration and enhancement of natural resources across the Corangamite landscape. A motivated community, combined with sound science, increased knowledge and adequate resources, is essential for improving the health and productivity of the catchment. More than two-thirds of the catchment is private land managed by rural landholders, and without their participation, investment and knowledge, we will not realise the vision in this strategy – a healthy Corangamite catchment valued by engaged communities.

A key to achieving success is growing and nurturing a range of partnerships. The Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CMA) recognises the role the Australian, Victorian and local governments play, along with numerous community, Aboriginal people and industry groups. To achieve the vision of the RCS everyone is important, and we can all do something to make a difference.

We firmly believe integration is needed to achieve success. Integrated catchment management brings together people, ideas and practices across land tenure boundaries, and across the range of natural resource management ‘silos’. It improves coordination of on-ground action, and can maximise the benefits of any action. Integration is the approach the CMA will use in delivering its programs, and we will encourage our partners to do the same.

Together we will make a difference
**Regional Overview**

The Corangamite region is rich in environmental, social and economic values and has important cultural foundations.

The region extends across:
- 1.3 million hectares of land, with 78 per cent in private ownership
- 175 kilometres of coast
- four catchment basins - Barwon, Lake Corangamite, Otway Coast and Moorabool.

**Natural Environment**

The natural resources of our region are critical to sustaining the lifestyle of its residents and visitors, as well as providing important habitat for flora and fauna. They support valuable industries such as agriculture and nature-based tourism, and underpin the region’s urban water supply needs.

**Population**

The Corangamite region has a population of more than 370,000. The population of the region is culturally diverse and highly urbanised, with around three-quarters of people residing in the urban centres of Ballarat and Greater Geelong.

**Agriculture**

Agriculture is the dominant land use of the region, with approximately 3,450 agricultural businesses operating across 772,436 hectares. Enterprises include sheep and cattle grazing, dairying, cropping, forestry and viticulture. Just over 75 per cent of private land used for food and fibre production is used for livestock grazing and 20 per cent is used for crop production, including timber. The gross value of agricultural commodities produced in the region in 2009 was $971 million, up from $770 million in 1999.

**Tourism**

The Great Ocean Road, one of Australia’s 14 National Landscapes, attracted 4.9 million domestic day trip visitors in 2010. This was 20 per cent of all domestic day trips to or within regional Victoria and 50 per cent (163,300) of all international overnight visitors to regional Victoria.
Natural resource areas of regional significance in the Corangamite Region

- Important marine areas
- Neighbouring CMA high value natural resources
- Higher concentration of high value natural resources
- Lower concentration of high value natural resources
THE NEED FOR ACTION

With less than 25 per cent of original native vegetation remaining, a growing list of threatened and endangered species and only 13 per cent of waterways in good condition, a disturbing picture emerges. It is clear that there is much to be done to maintain or enhance the condition and extent of the region’s natural resources, or even to halt their current decline.

The region's natural resources and communities face many challenges and to confront these we need to work together and integrate our efforts across the landscape.

Key challenges for natural resource management in the Corangamite region are:

- increasing participation
- identifying joint priorities for investment
- working together, integrating and coordinating management
- sourcing investment
- increasing and sharing knowledge
- accounting for investment
- population growth
- climate change
- achieving practice change on private land.

Community as the key agent of change

Many private landholders have made, and will continue to make, substantial investments in natural resource management on their land. Without this private investment – sometimes supported by government, corporate or philanthropic sector investment – very little would have been achieved, and little will be achieved in the future.

The Corangamite region has one of the best ‘care’ networks in Victoria. There are 152 natural resource management groups, including Landcare across the region with a voluntary membership of over 4,000 people. These groups are mature, with strong community ownership and a demonstrated capacity to initiate, plan, resource and carry out on-ground works in natural resource management at a considerable scale.

This RCS will strive to support community participation in the protection, enhancement and restoration of the region’s natural resources, as community are the key agent of change.
The vision and goal

This RCS provides a strategic framework to guide participation and investment to protect, enhance and restore the natural resources of the Corangamite catchment.

An integrated region wide approach to improving natural resource management is needed to achieve the vision and goal of the RCS.

**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.

**Foundations for change**

Four foundations of change have been identified in the RCS as the key elements needed to achieve the vision and goal of the RCS. They recognise that the community is the single most important agent of change in natural resource management. Even though funds are essential for achieving this change, it will not occur unless the community is motivated and engaged.

**The Four Foundations for Change**

- increased breadth and depth of participation
- increased investment and develop joint priorities
- improved integration and coordination
- increased and widely shared knowledge.

The foundations’ objectives are in Table 1, and include a description of the actions needed to achieve these objectives, recognising some actions will contribute to multiple objectives.
THE RCS AT A GLANCE

Table 1: The vision, goal and foundations of the Corangamite RCS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision: A healthy Corangamite catchment valued by engaged communities</th>
<th>Goal: Increase the protection, enhancement and restoration of valuable natural resources to improve the health and sustainable productivity of the Corangamite catchment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Four foundations for change and their objectives</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased breadth and depth of participation</td>
<td>Increased investment and development of joint priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the protection, enhancement and restoration of natural resources by landholders, community, industry and agencies has increased. Natural resource management partnerships have grown and existing partnerships are adequately supported.</td>
<td>The aggregate investment to protect, enhance and restore the region’s natural resources has increased. Joint priorities for investment in the protection of natural resources are identified and pursued. Natural resource management programs and projects respect and protect Aboriginal cultural values.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **Foundation actions** |  |
| Work with communities across the region to identify, build and support beneficial relationships and partnerships, including collaborating with Traditional Owners to further engage Aboriginal peoples in natural resource management. Design and deliver a range of incentive programs. Undertake a community and land use profiling study to better understand the barriers to participation. Develop and implement a Corangamite Community Engagement Strategy that addresses barriers and opportunities for increased participation leading to practice change in natural resource management. Support activities that increase the conservation security and/ or functional connectivity of high value natural resources, such as conservation covenants or the critical or opportunistic purchase of land. | Bring together existing knowledge of the community about natural resource condition and management, and share this knowledge, to aid the development of investment priorities. Work with the community, including landholders, groups, agencies, industry, Traditional Owners and investors to complete Landscape Zone Action Plans to identify, prioritise and protect significant natural resources at the landscape zone scale. Develop and adopt an action plan which identifies new pathways for recruitment of private, government, corporate and philanthropic investment. Develop tools, strategies, programs and projects aligned with a broad range of investor interests to attract investment that delivers feasible and cost effective outcomes. | Establish and maintain a regional alliance of partners to guide natural resource management directions, including reviewing, delivering and reporting on the RCS. Revise and renew the Regional Landcare Support Plan. Establish and support existing partnerships to achieve coordinated and integrated natural resource management. Ensure protection of natural resources and productive land are considered through local government planning provisions and Regional Growth Plans. Develop partnerships with those outside the region to manage cross-border assets. Investigate impacts of planned burn regimes on land, water and biodiversity values and consider impacts in planning future fuel reduction programs on public land. | Encourage face-to-face sharing of knowledge, skills and experience by landholders and others. Conduct targeted engagement, extension and education activities and support agencies, groups and individuals to share and improve NRM knowledge and skills which leads to an increase in effective on-ground action. Support collaborative research partnerships to increase natural resource management knowledge, including climate change impacts and adaptation. Work with Traditional Owners to develop guidelines for on-ground works to assist natural resource management project managers to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage and to navigate Cultural Heritage legislation and policy. Continue to use, profile and add new information to knowledge databases such as the Corangamite CMA online Knowledge Base. |
Table 2: Natural resource category objectives of the Corangamite RCS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURAL RESOURCE CATEGORY OBJECTIVES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soils and agricultural land</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Soils:</strong> Maintain or enhance soil condition for continued environmental benefits and increased agricultural production.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Agricultural land:</strong> Secure the region’s productive agricultural land base so that future food, fibre and forestry demands can be met sustainably. Work with landholders to increase their participation in natural resource management activities and programs so there is reduced impact on the region’s natural resources from agricultural practices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rivers, estuaries and floodplains</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retain the ecological function of riverine and estuarine floodplains and protect community infrastructure and values. Protect waterways within Special Water Supply catchments. Maintain the resilience of indigenous aquatic and riparian flora and fauna to variable climatic conditions. Sustain the viability of populations of rare and threatened native fish species for the long term and show evidence of recruitment and a range of age classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wetlands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintain the extent of wetlands (by type) and improve their quality relative to 2009 benchmark data.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native vegetation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Halt the decline in quality (condition) and extent of high value native vegetation and enhance its connectivity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threatened flora and fauna</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manage the threat of species extinction so that key populations are resilient and secure in the longer-term.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coasts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintain the quality and extent of high value coastal assets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marine environments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limit impacts to the marine environment from the catchment such that they are within the bounds of its resilient capacity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aquifers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protect the health of groundwater resources for the environment and current and future users.</td>
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<td>MONITORING AND EVALUATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor and evaluate changes in natural resource condition and extent. Monitor and evaluate the progress of the strategy.</td>
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</table>

A detailed table including actions can be found in the Corangamite Regional Catchment Strategy on page 53.
OUTCOMES OF THE CORANGAMITE RCS

The RCS will have succeeded if it can achieve:

1. **Landscape change** - greater protection, enhancement and restoration of valuable natural resources contributing to a healthy and sustainably productive catchment.

2. **Participation** - greater breadth and depth of participation by the community, which includes individuals, private landholders, natural resource management groups, Aboriginal community members, agricultural and natural resource industries, agencies and investors, in effective and protective natural resource management, along with growth in natural resource management group membership.

3. **Investment** - increased investment from government, corporate, agricultural and natural resource industries, private and philanthropic sectors and the further development of investment priorities to meet the needs of all investors including community.

4. **Integration and coordination** - growth in, and maturing of, partnerships across the region, with a coordinated and integrated approach to natural resource management at the landscape scale.

5. **Knowledge sharing** - research undertaken to address knowledge gaps and increased knowledge sharing across the region for better management of the region’s natural resources.

The level of success for each component will be determined from monitoring and evaluation.

**Figure 1: The connection between community and natural resources**