

Upper Barwon River

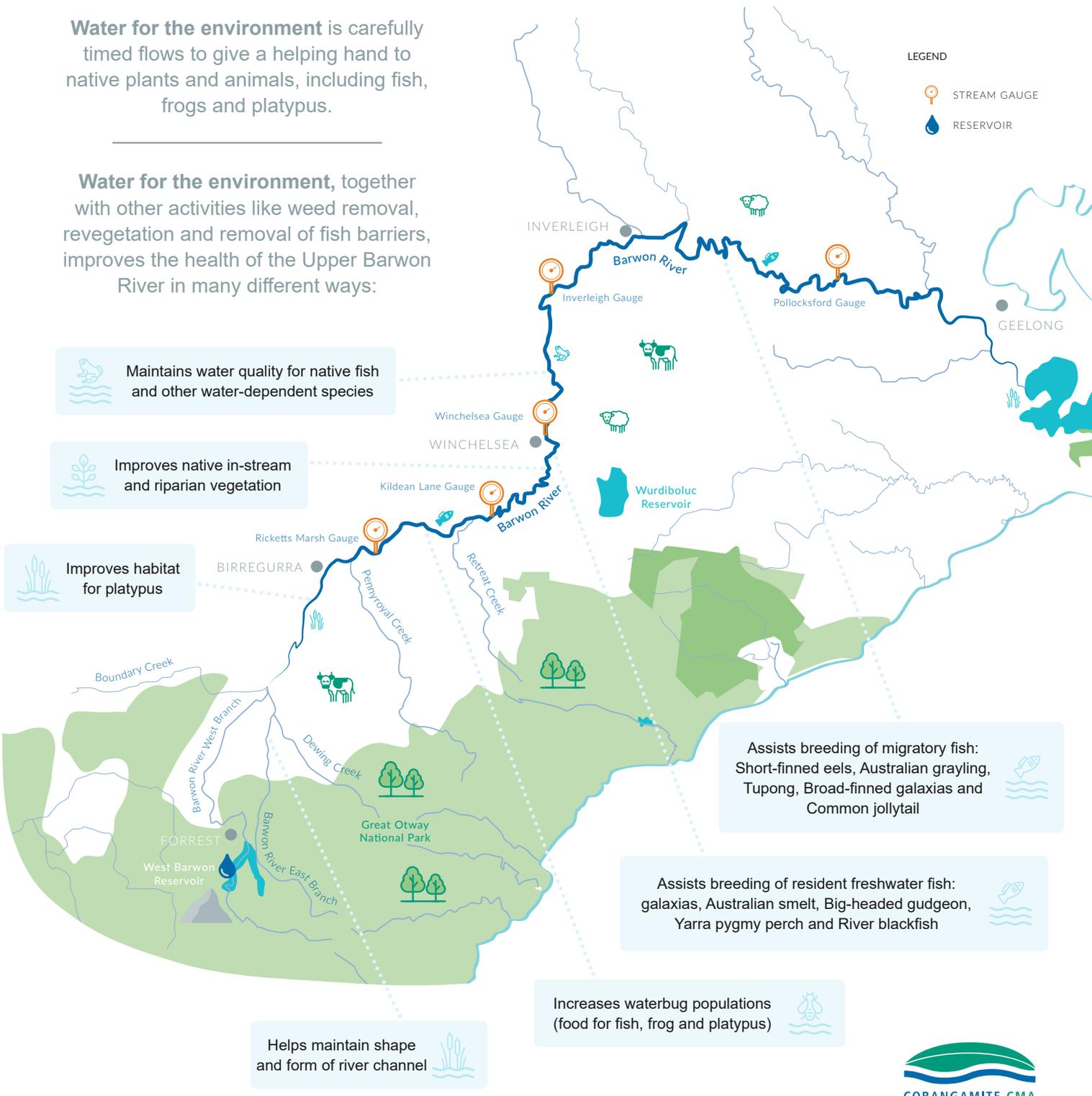


Water for the environment is carefully timed flows to give a helping hand to native plants and animals, including fish, frogs and platypus.

Water for the environment, together with other activities like weed removal, revegetation and removal of fish barriers, improves the health of the Upper Barwon River in many different ways:

LEGEND

-  STREAM GAUGE
-  RESERVOIR



Maintains water quality for native fish and other water-dependent species

Improves native in-stream and riparian vegetation

Improves habitat for platypus

Assists breeding of migratory fish: Short-finned eels, Australian grayling, Tupong, Broad-finned galaxias and Common jollytail

Assists breeding of resident freshwater fish: galaxias, Australian smelt, Big-headed gudgeon, Yarra pygmy perch and River blackfish

Increases waterbug populations (food for fish, frog and platypus)

Helps maintain shape and form of river channel

The Upper Barwon River

The Barwon River rises in the Otway Ranges and flows close to the townships of Forrest, Birregurra, Winchelsea and Inverleigh, before joining the Moorabool River and flowing through Geelong and the Lower Barwon Wetlands, joining the coast at Barwon Heads.

The West Barwon Reservoir sits on the west branch of the upper Barwon River to provide urban water supply to Geelong. The presence of the dam and additional water extraction along the river has caused the river to partially shut down, with the upper reaches characterised by poor channel form and weed constrictions.

The Barwon River flows through Eastern Maar Country and Wadawurrung Country and has great cultural significance to both Traditional Owner Groups.

What is water for the environment?

Water for the environment is water in a river that is there for environmental benefit. This may be water naturally flowing in a river that is not extracted, or it may also be provided through an environmental water entitlement.

The Upper Barwon River Environmental Entitlement 2018 is held in the West Barwon Reservoir and is delivered by the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA) on behalf of the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH). This water is released down the river in a targeted way to maximise environmental benefits. Releases typically take the form of continuous low flow (base flow) or a fresh (pulse of water) to trigger a particular environmental response.

Why does the river need water?

Healthy rivers are living ecosystems that provide a range of services that we all benefit from, including nutrient cycling, water filtration, climate moderation and flood mitigation.

Healthy rivers are a home for birds, platypus, frogs and fish, and a place for people to recreate and enjoy too. Water for the environment is crucial for maintaining ecological health in regulated and extracted systems. Water flow also helps maintain channel form and prevent choke points.

Flow planning

The current environmental entitlement only provides a fraction of the Upper Barwon River's basic ecological needs, so the available water must be used very carefully.

Each year the CCMA develop proposed watering actions with community and partners for submission to the VEWH.



The Upper Barwon River near Yeodene.
Photo: Corangamite CMA

Water for the environment priorities in the Upper Barwon River

- 1 Low flows in the river through the dry period (Dec-May)**
e.g. to maintain connectivity and water quality, and if required at a minimum level through the wet period.
- 2 Fresh releases (pulses of water) during the dry period**
e.g. to allow down-stream spawning migration of adult fish, water fringing vegetation, flush pools and connect habitats.
- 3 Fresh releases (pulses of water) in spring and winter**
e.g. to trigger down-stream spawning migration of adult fish and upstream return migration of juvenile fish, transport organic matter through the system and promote growth of native vegetation.

The current environmental entitlement can have most effect on the river reaches between the West Barwon Reservoir and Winchelsea, with diminishing benefit to the reaches downstream. Listed above are the priorities for delivery from highest to lowest. There is insufficient water in the current entitlement to deliver them all, however they are all important. In addition to these priorities the upper east branch is prioritised over the upper west.

Watering actions are based on scientific advice (FLOWS studies) and delivered in priority order according to water availability. The current year's Seasonal Watering Proposal can be found on the CCMA website at ccma.vic.gov.au.

The CCMA website also has an interactive map of the Upper Barwon River which includes data on river flows, current and planned releases and other water parameters.

Community engagement

CCMA's partner and stakeholder engagement on the Upper Barwon is primarily through the Upper Barwon Surface Water Advisory Group (UBSWAG).

UBSWAG members include: Traditional Owner Groups, Upper Barwon Landcare Network, Winchelsea Landcare Group, individual landholders, Land and Water Resources Otway Catchment, Otway Agroforestry, Friends of the Barwon, Geelong Field Naturalists, Environment Victoria, Waterwatch volunteers, Southern Rural Water, Barwon Water, Colac Otway Shire, the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning, and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder.

Further information

Visit ccma.vic.gov.au
Email info@ccma.vic.gov.au
Phone 1800 002 262

*healthy and productive lands and waters
cared for by thriving communities*

